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A Long Hard Climb – Getting from the Bottom to the Top of the CLIL Incline *Une ascension longue et difficile – comment gravir la pente de l’EMILE*

Keywords

ESP/EAP, CLIL, EMP, cooperation, shared objectives, language policy, reflective practice, teacher development

Mots-clés

anglais de spécialité/anglais académique, EMILE, PEIA, coopération, objectifs communs, politique linguistique, pratique réflexive, formation continue des enseignants

Abstract

Even in an educational system which imposes many formal restrictions, has limited financial resources and is not renowned for its success at language teaching and learning, English Medium Programmes (EMP) implementing a CLIL approach can be successful. This success depends on multiple factors: the support of management at all levels; a belief in the (added) value of EMPs; determination to identify and achieve shared objectives; an awareness in all stakeholders of what EMPs entail with particular consideration of the implications of teaching/learning in an “international” classroom; and a high degree of interaction and cooperation between discipline teachers and language teachers. Only when this cooperation is fully operational can we talk about CLIL rather than ESP/EAP running alongside the core disciplines of the EMP. This paper outlines the pitfalls, challenges and achievements of the transformation of an Italian “Laurea Specialistica” into an International English Medium CLIL Programme.

Résumé

Même dans un système éducatif imposant beaucoup de contraintes formelles, dépourvu de ressources financières importantes et loin d’être réputé pour l’enseignement et l’apprentissage des langues, les programmes d’études intégrés en anglais (PEIA) s’appuyant sur l’approche EMILE peuvent aboutir à de bons résultats. Leur succès dépend de plusieurs facteurs, parmi lesquels le soutien des gestionnaires à tous les niveaux, la confiance en la valeur (ajoutée) des PEIA, la volonté d’identifier et de parvenir à des objectifs communs, une prise de conscience collective de l’enjeu des PEIA – notamment les implications spécifiques de l’enseignement/apprentissage dans un contexte international – et enfin, un niveau élevé d’interaction et de coopération entre les enseignants de langues et les enseignants des autres disciplines. Seule une coopération effective permet de réfléchir en termes d’EMILE, par opposition à l’anglais académique en parallèle aux disciplines fondamentales des PEIA. Cet article met en évidence les dangers, les défis et les réalisations de la transformation d’une Laurea Specialistica italienne en un PEIA international.

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Introduction

This paper describes the gradual transformation of the two-year, Italian “Laurea Specialistica in Studi Europei e Internazionali” (LSSEI) into the International Master’s Degree in European and International Studies (MEIS) at the post graduate School of International Studies (SIS)¹ at Trento University. After a brief introduction I will first provide an outline of the national and local context, followed by a description of how the programme has evolved. I will then move on to a discussion of the obstacles encountered and the challenges ahead, to conclude, on a positive note, with an evaluation of what has been achieved so far. A list of acronyms is provided in Appendix 1 and, in Appendix 2, a timeline of the long climb to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)² at the SIS.

In the race to internationalise, Trento, like many other European universities, has been eager to offer Master’s and PhD programmes in English. Most are local programmes for a predominantly local student intake, though a few have been specifically introduced to attract foreign students. Trento now offers 12 two-year Master’s in English. One thing that marks many of these courses is the indiscriminate way they were introduced. At policy level, prior to internationalisation there was little discussion of whether the content or structure of English Medium Programmes (EMPs) should differ from those offered in Italian (they don’t). There was also a general lack of awareness of the implications and consequences of offering programmes in a non-local language. For example, little, if any, attention was paid to the need for language support for either students or teachers or to the demands of the multicultural classroom (Schaller-Schwanner 2011). Nor was any mention made of whether a different teaching approach would be appropriate (e.g. Mehisto 2008; Marsh 2009; Otalora 2009). At the SIS, the decision to transform the LSSEI into an “International Master’s”, instead, was one which matured over several years.

¹ <<http://www.unitn.it/en/ssi>>.

² Throughout this paper CLIL is used to refer to a teaching/learning approach adopted on foreign language medium programmes. In particular the case of English Medium Programmes will be discussed, given that English is not only the language of the case study, but that of most CLIL programmes at university level.

1. The context

1.1. The national context – HE in Italy

As part of the European Higher Education Area, the Italian university system, overseen by the MIUR (Ministry for Instruction Universities and Research), has embraced the Bologna process and as a consequence the 4 + 3 system³ was replaced by the 3 + 2 + 3 system⁴. Two-year master's programmes were introduced in the early 2000s. These were initially called Laurea Specialistica (LS) – “Specialist Degrees” and admission was dependent on the discipline of the undergraduate degree. These have since been relabelled Laurea Magistrale (LM) “Master's Degrees”. With the introduction of the LM in 2007 first and second level degrees were “unhooked” and graduates could apply for an LM in a different discipline area. This change impacted directly on the LM student intake and had immediate didactic implications.

A second important factor to bear in mind is the high degree of Ministerial control over degree courses in Italy. Each degree course has a specific “scientific” label⁵, LM-52 Relazioni Internazionali for the MEIS. The MIUR identifies the core discipline areas to be included (settori scientifici disciplinari)⁶, leaving room for manoeuvre only within discipline areas and in the few ‘free credits’ (electives). Among other ministerial requirements, in addition to fluent Italian, graduates must be fluent in at least two other languages, one of which must be an EU language. The MIUR, notably, does not make use of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001) to indicate what ‘fluent’ means.

1.2. The academic context – A traditional approach

The academic context also deserves a mention as Italian universities, and Trento is no exception, have a very traditional approach to teaching and learning. In other words, “talk and chalk” (or “sage on the stage” as Taillefer 2013 calls it) have precedence over interaction, “book exams”, whether oral or written, are the norm, and there is very little, if any, continuous assessment. Students rarely carry out individual research or produce papers. Indeed, on some programmes, the first time students have to write, other than to answer exam questions, is their final

³ Four-year undergraduate degree followed by a three year PhD.

⁴ Three cycles more or less equivalent to a bachelor's, master's and PhD.

⁵ For the complete list of degrees possible in Italy go to <<http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/universita/offerta-formativa/classi-di-laurea>>.

⁶ Professors belong to a specific discipline code and cannot officially teach core subjects outside their own restricted discipline sector. Thus an International Law professor should not teach European Law or Comparative Law. This places serious restrictions on the courses offered - if there is no EU Law professor who is able to teach in English the programme should not be offered. The lists of these sectors are available at <http://www.miur.it/0002Univer/0021Offert/0092Settor/index_cf2.htm>.

dissertation. Student presentations are also rare, even on Master's degrees. Peer assessment is unheard of and collaborative learning/project work is confined to the laboratories in the science and engineering departments.

Attendance is not compulsory, and students can take exams without attending a single lesson. Students can also take exams as many times as they like, refusing a mark if they consider it too low. Repeating exams is possible as there are up to six exam sessions a year. Students tend to focus on accumulating credits rather than learning course content or developing competences and skills. Moreover, despite being compulsory on all degree courses since 2001, languages are afforded very little attention until they become an obstacle to graduation⁷.

1.3. The local context – The School of International Studies at Trento

Trentino is an outward-looking, politically autonomous province, “at the crossroads” between eastern and western Europe, northern and southern Europe⁸, northern and southern Mediterranean countries. Eager to promote international initiatives, the Province gave both political and financial support to the Academic Senate⁹ for the creation of the SIS in 2002.

However, the SIS was not an independent institution within the university but rather an interfaculty initiative. Any decision or proposal regarding programmes at the school had to pass before five different institutional organs for approval¹⁰. This form of governance did little to facilitate the evolution of the programme.

The next section provides a detailed account of the first three years of the LSSEI to illustrate the complexity of trying to coordinate, cajole and convince all stakeholders¹¹ that there is far more to EMPs than switching the language of delivery (Marsh *et al.* 1999: 17).

⁷ See Riley (2012a: 51-52) for a discussion of the implications of the scant regard afforded to languages in Italy.

⁸ Until the end of the First World War the region, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol, was part of Austria and in the bilingual province of the South Tyrol German is still the majority language – 69 % in 2011.

⁹ The highest academic organ of the university was composed, until March 2013, of the Rector and deans and delegates from each faculty/department. Since March 2013 a new organ has come into being with fewer (eight) members, half of whom elected, the others appointed.

¹⁰ Proposals/decisions by the Degree Board (the ‘Giunta’ – made up of one teacher from each of the four founding faculties, namely Law, Economics, Sociology and, as a “junior” member, Humanities) required approval by the Degree Council (all the teachers on the programme), the School Board (School Director plus Deans of the founding faculties), the Faculty Councils of each Faculty, before gaining final approval from the Academic Senate.

¹¹ See Ruiz-Garrido & Fortanet-Gómez (2009: 183) for an overview of the ‘Stakeholders’ relationship’ in a CLIL programme.

2. From ESP to CLIL¹², from LSSEI to MEIS¹³

2.1. Year one – A slow start

The LSSEI, initially created in 2003 for national students, admitted only graduates in Law, Economics, Sociology and Political Science who passed admissions exams both in the core disciplines and English language or had an internationally recognised level B2 certificate.

In its first year, other than the English language course, the LSSEI offered two of its eleven courses¹⁴ in English: European Law and Contemporary History. There was no coordination between the English Language module and discipline courses. English Language focused on ESP with an additional short English Language Support (ELS)¹⁵ course on English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

The “experiment” of offering courses in English was deemed such a success students thought other courses should be offered in English. Nonetheless, two major issues were highlighted. Firstly, those who had never studied Law expressed difficulty in coping with new concepts in a second language, a concern expressed also by the lecturers. Secondly, the 48 hours of English were deemed insufficient to reach a level of C1, or cover ESP in the core disciplines. Moreover, the English course required much more time and effort than any other module, despite bearing the same six credits.

The Director of the School, who was strongly in favour of “internationalising” the LS, thought that by introducing more courses in English, the School would also attract more students from other Italian regions. Surprisingly, dissent came from two English L1 lecturers who thought the students’ English skills would be inadequate to study in English¹⁶. Nonetheless, a large majority of the Degree Council voted in favour of more courses in English.

The students felt very strongly about the second issue. They saw the need to improve their language skills as a key learning objective of the degree but knew they needed both more time and effort to achieve this, time and effort which should be acknowledged in terms of more credits. Content teachers’ objections to this were based on a commonly held belief (Bryan & Habte-Gabr 2008) that there was no need for any ESP at all: students would learn specialist language by studying in

¹² What the CLIL approach actually is depends on the definition given, as indicated in the numerous attempts at definitions in the literature. Moreover, other labels have been used for a similar approach. (see Fernández 2009 for a comprehensive discussion). In the case of the LSSEI/MEIS a broad interpretation is intended.

¹³ For a timeline of the main events in this transition see the table in Appendix 2.

¹⁴ A Master’s course can have a maximum of 12 exams, including the final dissertation.

¹⁵ ELS courses are offered by the University’s language centre.

¹⁶ See Aguilar & Rodriguez (2012) for a discussion of L1 and L2 lecturers’ perceptions of students’ language and vice versa.

English. As the credit ‘pie’ had already been cut, there were no further credits available for languages. Therefore to increase English credits to nine it was decided that the credits for the compulsory second foreign language be reduced from six to three.

As for the difficulties encountered in the Law courses, the ELS was to take the form of Legal English, rather than EAP, to be run during the same semester as the Law courses.

2.2. Year two – The first steep steps

In the second year, Macro Economics and International Politics were also offered in English. Positive feedback convinced even professors who had expressed misgivings about students’ ability to cope, though some were still reluctant to teach in English¹⁷.

Students still found the amount of time needed for English language insufficient. Once again, a “political” solution was found. So as not to have to recut if not rebake the credit pie, it was decided to modify the degree regulations, requiring approval at all five institutional levels¹⁸. English Language would have a ratio of twelve teaching hours per credit, rather than eight¹⁹.

As for climbing the CLIL slope (Greere & Räsänen 2008: 6), after an evaluation of the outcomes to date, lengthy discussions with students and teachers, and some focused needs analysis (Ruiz-Garrido & Fortanet-Gómez 2009)²⁰, further changes to the English Language Program²¹ (ELP) were deemed necessary. Students had found the Legal English course extremely helpful and asked if similar courses could be offered to support the Economics courses. Given the multidisciplinary nature of the degree course, offering ESP in all core disciplines was obviously unfeasible. Thus rather than specific ESP courses running alongside the modules, ELS would take the form of language support specifically **for** the Law modules.

Over that summer, there was a great deal of coordination between the English lecturer, the ELS teacher and the Law lecturers (International Law and European Law). A syllabus of case law was created which would form the basis of both the Law courses and the ELS-Legal English course. The Law professors were pleased to cooperate not least because the time dedicated to content would increase.

¹⁷ Mainly because they felt uncomfortable teaching in an L2.

¹⁸ See note 10 above.

¹⁹ Second language lessons are held at the Language Centre. Students can attend as many courses as necessary to reach the required level (B2 CEFR). There are two fifty-hour courses for each CEFR level, e.g. B2a French plus B2b French is a total of 100 hours tuition.

²⁰ See Taillefer (2007) for a general discussion of different forms of needs analysis and also Long (2005).

²¹ The ELP comprises the credit bearing English Language Programme and English Language Support (Legal English and EAP).

2.3. Year three – Gaining momentum

The approach used in the ELS class involved much negotiation of meaning, promoting deeper learning (cf. Coyle, Hood & Marsh 2010, Casal 2006 cited in Pistorio 2010). Transferable language skills, competences, learning strategies and metalinguistic knowledge²² were developed in the English Language and ELS classes and applied to other discipline areas using materials and input, wherever possible, from discipline lecturers.

A further change to the ELP was introduced in the then compulsory second year module. This entailed a shift towards professional literacy²³, skills and competences, albeit discipline-focused (for a full description see Riley 2012a). Thus the ELP had three overarching objectives²⁴: academic (discipline-specific) English²⁵, professional English and, not least, the development of language awareness, skills, competences and learning strategies to promote lifelong learning²⁶. This approach embodies the knowledge triangle as outlined in the recent EU report on the Bologna process²⁷.

During the third edition of the MEIS, this “adjunct” approach (see among others Räsänen 2008; Costa & D’Angelo 2011; Fernández 2009) received strong positive feedback. Other discipline lecturers began to see the advantages of a closer cooperation with the English language teachers and some co-taught simulations were introduced in second year courses.

2.4. Year four to the present – Onwards and upwards

In 2005 the English Lecturer was appointed member of the Degree Board, facilitating all discussions regarding language support and coordination with all the discipline areas.

There was a gradual change in most disciplines to a more interactive teaching and learning approach and especially in forms of assessment, from book exams to more

²² According to some authors, (e.g. Costa & D’Angelo 2011: 10), a focus on form by some authors is precisely “What CLIL is not”. I would disagree with this rigid approach. Some attention to language, including grammar – as and when it occurs in the content – **does** have a place in a successful CLIL approach.

²³ For a definition of literacy in this context see Kern (2000: 16). See also Flowerdew (2005) regarding the professional development of learners.

²⁴ See the CLIL Lanqua case study for details: “Promoting Collaboration between Content Teachers and Language Teachers for the Master’s In European and International Studies” <<http://www.lanqua.eu>>

²⁵ The distinction between EAP and ESP on this particular course is unhelpful.

²⁶ See also Cummins (1984 and 2008) for the BICs and CALPs approach to course design, Stoller & Grabe (1997) for the six Ts approach, and Coyle (2007) as well as Coyle, Hood & Marsh (2010) for the 4Cs approach (Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture).

²⁷ The EU and the Bologna Process (2012: 3 and 10).

continuous assessment (presentations, papers, etc.). The ELP adapted to meet the evolving needs of students providing adjunct ESP, EAP and Professional English with an increase in tutoring hours.

In 2007, the degree was transformed from an LS to an LM (MEIS), with students from a much wider range of disciplines applying. This presented new challenges for both content and language teachers. The discipline exam was eliminated but the English Language exam continued to be the main tool for establishing applicants' level of English. Student intake was still predominantly Italian nationals. Fewer courses, mainly electives, were still held in Italian. Appreciation of the “adjunct CLIL approach” continued and students also appreciated the fact that they were given a voice in deciding the content of the ELP.

By 2008 the whole programme at the SIS was offered in English including electives. The programme was marketed to an international audience and 10 places were reserved for non-EU nationals. The English admissions exam was maintained as it was feared that not enough national students would have certificates or think far enough ahead to obtain a certificate in time for applications.

In 2010 the programme became fully “international”. This means that an international English language certificate is required for admission, lessons are all in English, as are all exams and the final dissertation. All internal communication with students is also in English as are all extracurricular activities such as guest lectures and seminars, the Film Club, careers talks and informal debates. There are still 10 places reserved for non-EU nationals. However, the degree is still an Italian “Laurea Magistrale”, and therefore still governed by the restrictions described above.

Continued appreciation of the ELP resulted in the compulsory first year course being awarded more credits. At ten credits it became the “weightiest” course on the programme. The second year language course became an elective (six credits).

3. Challenges encountered on the rocky climb

As can be seen from the long and at times fraught developments on the MEIS, the journey is not an easy one; and many factors undeniably influence the effective implementation of CLIL at University level.

3.1. Sharing a vision

First and foremost there must be a belief by course lecturers in the added value of offering courses or a whole programme in English. While on the whole students are convinced of this fact, not all faculty members are equally enthusiastic. Despite ample evidence to the contrary, even if largely from high school studies (e.g. Marsh 2009), over the years, several colleagues have commented that there is a

cost to pay in terms of content²⁸. This is particularly the case with teachers who have a more notionistic or knowledge-based approach²⁹. Professors who had studied in English-speaking countries, or who had a more interactive approach to teaching, were far more ready to embrace the idea of teaching in English than those used to the more traditional Italian approach.

In the early years, only those professors willing to teach in English were encouraged to do so. It was thought that forcing staff to teach in English, for whatever reason they were reluctant to do so, would have been counterproductive. This policy was to pay off. Those who had deemed the level of English of most Italian students insufficient to cope with studying in English saw that motivation, made up for any lack in language proficiency. In sum, it is essential for the content lecturers to be willing to don their harness and crampons and accept the challenge if the programme is to even leave the base camp below.

3.2. Strong and steady leadership

Equally important to successful introduction of EMPs, is the support of the institutional organs, in particular the programme coordinator (Ruiz-Garrido & Fortanet-Gomez 2009). In the case of the LSSEI/MEIS, there was the full backing not only of the whole of the Degree Board but it was also the express desire of the Director of the SIS to move towards a fully international degree. Therefore the problem was not so much strong leadership and institutional backing, but rather ensuring that the changes not be sweeping or imposed but based on discussion, reflection and consensus.

3.3. Language leading the way

The appointment of the English language lecturer to the Degree Board in 2005 was fundamental in ensuring languages and the ELP in particular were central to the evolution of the Master's. To a large extent, the other three members of the board were willing to not only listen but also take heed of what was said, as did the School's Director. Pursuing the "common good" rather than individual (academic) ambitions and interests prevailed. In part this may have been due to students' great appreciation of the cooperation between the ELP and the core disciplines in terms of content, joint simulations, etc. It would not be the first time that language programmes and their innovative pedagogical approaches have influenced policy at a wider level: "campus literacy faculty have found that by working with faculty in linked arrangements, we can be effective advisers and campus change agents" (Johns 1997: 85).

²⁸ E.g. a colleague who had taught several years in Scandinavia was convinced that students studying in English, even if extremely proficient linguistically, had a far narrower knowledge base than Italian students taught in Italian.

²⁹ See Brady (2009) for a discussion on how a knowledge-based didactic approach was transformed into a skills and dialogic based process.

3.4. Listening to the learners

The role of the students in ensuring the transition to a full CLIL English³⁰ Medium Programme (EMP) is clear, whether in terms of “market force” (prospective students), student voice (current students) or former students (alumni network). Each year 120-150 students apply to the MEIS and 35-40 students are admitted, of which currently around 20 % are international. In the Italian context this can be considered a success story. The facts that the Master’s is in English, or that “English is taken seriously at Trento” are by far the most frequent reasons cited for applying.

In other words, ensuring the continued success of the programme has depended in part on listening to, and acting upon, student feedback, something which is quite rare in the Italian (and I suspect other Mediterranean) context (SPEAQ 2013, second year reports).

3.5. Sound preparation

Establishing and applying the admissions criteria was another issue which has engendered considerable discussion. Alongside a core discipline exam, an English language exam was deemed necessary, initially because it was thought that Italian students would not think about applying until it was too late to obtain an international certificate. Moreover, an internal test meant that students who had a good academic background and/or scored well on the discipline test but failed the language test could still be admitted if the Board deemed it acceptable. However, the Degree Board soon realised they were doing these students no favours by admitting them, and subsequently the level of students’ English on entry began to rise. This had considerable impact on the dynamics of the class and levels of interaction, so much so that some content professors admitted that they had underestimated the importance of strict admissions requirements (Anderson 2011).

Now fully “international”, the admissions criteria³¹ are based on academic career, motivation and language certificates (B2+), criteria that the Faculty now agrees are necessary to ensure the programme is successful. Interestingly, students on the recently instituted Student-Teacher Committee³² have proposed stricter admission requirements also for the second foreign language, currently at “basic” level, and also more stringent criteria for content discipline knowledge.

³⁰ While of great relevance to EMPs, it is not in the scope of this paper to discuss issues such as ‘which English’ (Matsuda & Friedrich 2011) and the ‘ownership of English’ (Holliday 2005: ix).

³¹ To view current admissions criteria visit <<http://www.unitn.it/en/ssi/10826/admission-requirements-masters-degree-european-and-international-studies-meis>>.

³² The Italian Quality Assurance Agency (ANVUR) became fully operational only in 2012 and this is the first academic year QA tools are being introduced.

3.6. Addressing discipline demands

As the MEIS is an interdisciplinary course, the CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency – Cummins 2003; 2008)³³ skills required by each discipline area differ, as do the professional cultures and genre norms (see Raftery's discourse communities – in Johns 1997 and Bhatia 2004)³⁴. Thus the only way for the ELP to face this multiple challenge was to develop transferable skills, competences and strategies alongside language awareness, metacognitive and higher order thinking skills (Casal 2008) which can be applied to any content and context. Students are provided with the tools (genre analysis – Bhatia 2004) to help them identify and comply with the different discipline norms. Group work, collaborative writing tasks, peer evaluation and student-led seminars all promote metacognitive awareness. Moreover, lecturers are invited to provide students with clear instructions and examples of discipline norms when setting assignments (SPEAQ 2013).

3.7. Time and effort

One final major challenge posed by CLIL is the greater time and effort needed both by teachers and students than on courses in students' L1. MEIS teachers report spending more time on: preparing clearer slides, creating an accessible bibliography, marking assignments and exams, etc. (Riley 2012b). Students report that they spend a lot of time reading, writing, preparing presentations etc., in particular in the first year. Bryan & Habte-Gabr also found "the students ended up dedicating more time to the material than they would have otherwise" (2008 :7). Only in the second year do students realize (Papaja 2012) that the extra effort pays higher dividends on both content and language learning.

4. A final push to the top?

In a reflective practice approach to teaching, which is cyclic in nature (LANQUA quality model 2010), the summit can NEVER be reached. Or rather arriving at the top of one summit, we can perceive the next summit to be scaled. Pursuing the next peak ensures that things are not taken for granted, left to drift or worse, stagnate. In other words, any educational process is precisely that, a process, which can be modified, updated, enhanced, but is never ending, and CLIL is no exception. At the SIS in Trento, we still have a steep climb ahead to reach our first summit. The main obstacles I see still lying across our path are outlined below.

³³ While Cummins developed this framework for a school context, I agree with Anderson (2011: 52-53) that the same principles can be applied to the HE context, and also to professional contexts, where CALP is intended as formal technical competences.

³⁴ Not all discipline teachers are aware of these differences and they expect students to automatically adopt the appropriate academic practices for their own discipline, without making these expectations explicit.

4.1. Guiding the guides

The most difficult challenge still to be faced, at least from the author's standpoint, is a delicate one and regards the content teachers. Teachers' independence as to what goes on inside their classrooms is sacrosanct in the Italian context. What methods they adopt, of both teaching and evaluation, is their responsibility and theirs alone, as is the content of the course. The Degree Board can (diplomatically) make suggestions, but there is no guarantee these will be heeded. Moreover, pedagogical training is a concept which is foreign to Italian university teachers, whose disciplinary expertise is the key (only) criteria.

While it is not expected that discipline teachers become experts in CLIL methodology, there is a need to develop an awareness of the implications of teaching in an L2, as has frequently been expressed in the literature (e.g. Mehisto 2008; Ruiz-Garrido & Fortanet-Gomez 2009; Lyster & Ballinger 2011). As Otalora (2009: 46) observes:

Effective content teaching required pedagogical considerations distinct from those used in native language instruction, as there are new challenges in the process of delivery of content material such as the production and assimilation of information and the ability to communicate with the language in another context.

Teachers need to put themselves and their approach into question and to engage in reflective practices with other teachers, in particular the language support teachers (Bryan & Habte-Gabr 2008: 4).

When some content professors were told about the TACE (Teaching Academic Content through English) programme, a CLIL teacher development programme run by the University of Jyväskylä³⁵ (SPEAQ 2013), they were bemused at best and sceptical at worst. Aguilar & Rodriguez (2012: 183) also found "great reluctance to receiving any CLIL methodological training" in Barcelona.

Interestingly, with no knowledge of TACE, a group of international MEIS students (Riley Forthcoming) suggested that such a programme be introduced in Trento, though they were sceptical about being heard. Moreover, they also underlined difficulties in understanding the Italian system and lack of clarity about expectations. In short, the students have understood that the L2, multicultural, multilingual learning space requires teachers to develop greater awareness of and sensitivity to teaching methodology, language and learning culture issues (Singh & Doherty 2004, Intl-Uni Year 1 report forthcoming). Papaja (2012) also reported similar awareness in students and a similar diffidence regarding the teacher's ability to adapt.

Others have pointed out that there are also teaching methodology issues with some language teachers on CLIL programmes (Deller & Price 2007: 6-7) They may not

³⁵ Go to the programme website for syllabus information <http://jyutace.info/>

be aware of the most appropriate approach or kinds of tasks which best develop discipline skills and competences, or which assessment and evaluation methods and criteria are most suited to specific disciplines (Hönig 2010). The need for language teacher development should also be emphasised in order not to point the finger solely at the discipline teachers.

Teacher awareness and teacher development remain one of the most sensitive but urgent issues. The challenge is to find a way to “educate the educators”. A bottom-up approach might be more effective than top-down imposition from above. If teachers can be shown to see the benefits of discussing their own experience, they may become less defensive and more open to the suggestion of “workshops”³⁶ or other forms of teacher development (SPEAQ Year 2 reports).

4.2. On equal footing

One further area which needs continuous investments of effort and good will is the collaboration between language teachers and content teachers. In short, the content teachers need to work together with the ELP to identify objectives which will foster knowledge creation, develop skills and competences, both linguistic and related to the discipline³⁷, and become more aware of the whole process of learning and learning through language. Neither language nor content should be prioritised, but work together.

Cooperation is also needed on deciding both shared and separate assessment methods. As Hönig (2010) has pointed out, traditional forms of assessment might need adjusting to take account of the CLIL learning context. In an ideal CLIL programme, the assessment of both language and content is integrated, with content assignments being assessed in part on language and language assignments on content. (Fernández-Santiago 2011: 50-51). While at Trento the latter is true, at present, there is very little indication that content teachers would be willing to include any language criteria in their assessment.

Taillefer (2013: 32), citing Hellekjaer & Wilkinson (2003), points out that “true dual focus (where content and language reinforce each other on equal footing) is not common”. This does not mean we can take comfort in being among the many who currently do not achieve this aim, but rather we need to find ways of promoting collaboration between language and disciplinary teachers.

³⁶ It is the more sensitive and aware faculty members who have discussed this favourably, rather than those members who might actually be deemed most in need of such training.

³⁷ I would contest Wolff’s claim (2010: 557) that “content subject language competence is to a large extent text competence”, in particular in relation to the second year programme where professional practices, such as being able to analyse a specific political, social or ethical context and adopt appropriate ways to act using the appropriate tools (within the specific disciplines), are of great importance.

4.3. Leading the learners

Even when a teacher embraces a more interactive, student-centred approach “in many cases [...] learners may lack comparably appropriate CALP in their L1, and may often be unaware of this lack” (Anderson 2011: 64). This is understandable in a system where many students graduate without ever having written a paper, given a presentation, participated in a tutorial, led a seminar or done any group work – all practices used in MEIS courses. It may also explain the preference of some students for a more teacher-centred approach (Covill 2011: 94) where the course professor has all the answers or “spoon feeds them (easily digestible) baby pap” (see also Otolara 2009). In short, not only are some professors reluctant to put themselves into question but some students are also reluctant to accept responsibility for their own learning³⁸.

An awareness of what is expected from and by both teachers and students as well as the use of some teaching and learning strategies would certainly promote the development of CALP. As Papaja (2012) has found, student expectations affect attitude towards CLIL and ultimately learning outcomes. Moreover, Anderson (2011) suggests that for university students CALP in the L2 can be developed in CLIL programmes even when not present in the L1.

4.4. Ensuring and developing teachers’ L2 proficiency

While students’ language proficiency is no longer an issue on the MEIS, there remains that of the teachers. Ideally all teachers would do a language test, and if necessary, take a language course at the language centre. Students have also suggested, in various fora, that some criteria for teacher language proficiency be introduced, but the idea has not received a warm welcome at any level. If Trento had a Language Policy (see following section) this would no longer be an issue.

It is important for content teachers to understand that without (adequate) language proficiency, their courses would be impossible to follow. The disciplinary skills and competences in content modules, CLIL or otherwise, all involve language: “academics, professionals and employers talk about skills like team-working, networking, negotiation, collaboration, or presentation as if these skills had nothing much to do with language.” (Räsänen 2007: 56). Any professional development should thus also include a focus not only on the discipline language, but also on the language of the classroom and general communication skills (Marsh *et al.* 2012).

One thing which must be guarded against, however, is that neither teachers nor students expect “native-speakerism”. More than one student has commented that they preferred it when the teacher was not L1 English as they felt they were not being judged on their language and thus more at ease to speak. The issue of native

³⁸ Papaja (2012) also found that only in the second year of CLIL programmes did students feel happier about content thanks to improved language and academic skills learned during the first year.

speaker norms is highly complex (Subtirelu 2013). Negative self-perceptions should not be underestimated; to quote Holliday, who coined the term (2005: 6):

[...] the perpetuation of the native/non-native dichotomy causes negative perceptions and self-perceptions of ‘non-native teachers’ where ‘the non-native speaker Other is seen as culturally deficient’ as ‘non-’ usually signifies a disadvantage or deficit.

4.5. Guidelines from above

Although the university administration is wholly in favour of the introduction of EMPs, a major hindrance to developing a university-wide approach to EMPs is the lack of a university Language Policy (See Tudor 2006 cited in Taillefer 2013: 33). While administration pays lip service to the importance of languages, this is not borne out either in funding or in the adoption of a clear policy document. Such a policy would ideally promote language learning in general and bilingual learning on EMPs, guarantee adequate opportunities to develop language skills, set minimum levels of L1 (Italian) and L2 proficiency for teaching and, not least, promote adequate training for teaching staff on EMPs. This remains, then, an important issue to be addressed at institutional level, if Quality Assurance (QA) principles are to be pursued³⁹.

4.6. Planning en route

In an ideal world, extensive needs analysis, along with teacher development programmes would have been carried out before the programme was introduced. Or as Banegas (2012: 47) puts it “for administrators to implement CLIL programmes responsibly, serious needs analysis must be carried out before any actions actually begin”. Banegas goes on to conclude:

What is important in implementing CLIL [...] is that it should be part of a negotiated enterprise amongst administrators, curriculum planners, and teachers – and it is this last group that will be responsible for the success of CLIL implementation (*Ibidem*).

In Trento, with no Language Policy, no institutional policy on internationalisation and in an educational context where administrators are not involved in course planning, this “ideal approach” was impossible. Nonetheless, year on year the Degree Board has striven to improve all aspects of the MEIS. Moreover, needs analysis is carried out each year by the language teacher involving both current and former students. Planning and cooperating with some content teachers also ensures a high degree of quality in those disciplines, in particular in the adjunct ELS.

³⁹ Like in France (Taillefer 2013: 33), in Italy there is little awareness of QA issues and little desire to engage in reflective practices. It is hoped the pursuit of excellence on the MEIS can buck this trend and innovate from the bottom up.

5. Looking back to see how high we have climbed

This final section focuses on the positive outcomes and achievements accomplished so far, in the hope that they will give courage to those who have yet to embark on the climb, in particular in contexts where the obstacles may loom like a sheer rock face.

5.1. Carving out solid footholds

CLIL and the international classroom foster a cognitive (Coyle *et al.* 2010: 29-32), socio-cultural approach (Vygotsky 1978, Bakhtin 1981) and, according to Järvinen (2009), an “ecological approach” to learning, language learning and meaning building⁴⁰. Moreover, in the CLIL classroom language has to be activated more (Chávez 2013); it is not merely “output” but in Swain’s terms, “languaging”, which she sees not only as “a conveyer of meaning” but “an agent in the making of meaning” (Swain 2006 cited in Järvinen 2009: 168). By asking the student to actively participate in making his/her own meaning, it makes them not only more responsible for their own learning but also more aware of the learning process as a whole, of evaluation and assessment (self and peer) as parts of that whole (metacognition). Students become “agents” in their own learning processes (Van Lier 2007), thus enhancing the learning experience and indeed learning itself. In short, learning by acting/doing, thinking/reflecting and self evaluating promotes learning. Student feedback suggests the MEIS provides an environment which fosters this kind of approach and this kind of language development. This would support Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols’ (2007) claims that CLIL also develops awareness of learning processes. Moreover, discussing how the students learn and not only what they learn, as advocated by McKinney (2007 cited in Brady 2009: 4), also promotes learning.

5.2. Letting learners lead the way

The willingness of teachers to adopt a more interactional approach to teaching, and relinquish some of their “power” in the classroom, will greatly depend on their own experience as both a learner and teacher. This approach is increasingly being adopted on the MEIS: By the second year, students have had time not only to appreciate the benefits of this approach but also have adjusted to a new learner role⁴¹ taking on some of the responsibility for their own learning. Pistorio (2010: 1) found that by using cooperative learning within a CLIL programme, of which there is much on the second year of the MEIS, “learners learned how to learn, became more autonomous, self-directed and intrinsically motivated.” She quotes Casal’s

⁴⁰ See Coyle *et al.* (2010, Ch. 3) for a thorough and clear discussion of the theoretical underpinnings to CLIL, see also Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols (2007) on the CLIL ‘triad’ of the integration of language, content and learning skills.

⁴¹ See Riley (2012a: 53) for a discussion of the different perceptions students and teachers may have of their respective roles in the learning process.

claim that the “development of cognitive and personal growth” are also promoted (Casal 2006 cited in Pistorio 2010: 3), both claims I would support in full⁴².

5.3. Focused determination

Instrumental motivation⁴³ is extremely high at the School. In the “knowledge society” we now live in, the ability to process and critique huge quantities of information in real time, the so-called “information literacy competences”, may soon be essential for professional survival (Anderson 2011: 52⁴⁴). Students’ belief in the importance of acquiring advanced language skills has over the years been corroborated by visiting expert practitioners and former students, not least during careers days:

For what concerns general requirements in an international working environment, all speakers concurred on the fact that language, too, plays a pivotal role, since fluency in English and possibly in another EU language (usually French) is mandatory. (Zanotti 2012: 5-6)

This view is repeated regularly in personal communications to the author from alumni now employed in high level positions in international organisations the world over.

5.4. Enjoying the climb

While it has been reported in the literature (e.g. Papaja 2012, Schaller-Schwanner 2011) that on non-specialist degrees intrinsic motivation levels regarding “language learning” *per se* are not necessarily high, this has not been the case at the SIS. Most students become keenly interested in developing metalinguistic awareness, in particular regarding such things as collocation, colligation, genre⁴⁵, style and register. In part this might be explained by the approach to language teaching which specifically aims at developing transferable, life-long language learning skills such as noticing (Schmidt 1993, 2010), investigating and verifying (with software and corpora).

The level of student engagement in the course and involvement in the School and its activities is also greatly enhanced by the fact that it is an EMP: English is used not only in class but also in social interaction outside the classroom. This has resulted in a greater sense of community and collaboration at the SIS than elsewhere in the University. Italian students in particular comment on the benefits of the multicultural environment and how this contributes to their overall

⁴² One may ask whether it is CLIL which is having this effect on enhanced content learning or whether the teaching approach is mainly the cause, but undoubtedly, as Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols (2007) have discussed, the benefits of this integrated approach to both content and language are undeniable.

⁴³ For discussions on the role of motivation in language learning see Gardner (2002), Dörnyei (2001), Dörnyei & Ushioda (2010) and Brown (2007).

⁴⁴ See also Dupuy (2011) for a discussion of CLIL within a multiliteracy framework.

⁴⁵ See Cendoya & Di Bin (2010) for a discussion of the importance of genre awareness in CLIL.

development. Intrinsic motivation is therefore extremely high, making many of the steps taken in recent years much easier.

5.5. A joint endeavour

Laurillard (2002)

considers learning as an iterative process involving discursive, adaptive, interactive and reflexive qualities, with the main focus being on teacher-student relationship since academic knowledge becomes known through social interaction between teacher and student (cited in Pistorio 2010: 4).

With this more interactive approach, authentic negotiation of meaning occurs, both between teacher and student and between students, enhancing the effective environment advocated by, among others, Mehisto (2008)⁴⁶. Moreover, this positive relationship, in encouraging more dialogue, also gives the students a “voice” in Pennycook’s meaning of the term. In other words, students engage in authentic language use to “find means of articulation amid the cultures, discourses and ideologies within which we live our lives.” (Pennycook 1997: 44), including academic and professional discourses.

Recent feedback from students mentions this “innovative” (for them) approach to learning and in particular the positive relationship between students and teachers as major strengths of the course (Stroia 2013). The change from “a pedagogy of information transmission to a pedagogy of meaning construction” (Kern 2000: 21 in Dupuy 2011: 24) fosters this relationship. The changing roles of the teacher and student within the learning environment as a result of changing teaching and learning practices has thus become a virtuous circle.

6. Is the view from the top worth the climb?

In a globalised world, where people from different cultures speaking different languages are mixing more than ever before, it is not surprising that multilingualism is becoming a necessity, rather than an added value. We owe it to the future generations to give them the tools and skills to operate not only professionally, but also socially, to the best of their ability. CLIL in itself provides no magical answer to developing multilingualism. However, when it is adopted coherently and with awareness of all the issues involved and the methodological shifts implied, it can help promote both language and content learning. Therefore I believe that, discussions of language hegemony aside (Holliday 2005), offering well-designed English Mediated Programmes is not only more than possible, even in a relatively problematic context, but it is both inevitable and laudable. Using the metaphor of the mountain may have given the impression that it is an arduous

⁴⁶ Ideally, this strength should be exploited further by closer cooperation between language and content teachers to develop more focused activities also from the language point of view, perhaps with joint tasks and assignments.

journey. While there may have been some rock fall and one or two sprained ankles on the way, I am in no doubt that the scenery at the top is well worth it. Go climb that mountain!

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – List of Acronyms

CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EMP	English Mediated Programme
ELP	English Language Programme (credit bearing English Language Course + English Language Support offered by the Language centre)
ELS	English Language Support
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
LANQUA	Language Network for Quality Assurance (EU-LLP funded project)
LS	Laurea Specialistica (Specialist Degree – a two-year Master’s)
LSSEI	Laurea Specialistica in Studi Europei ed Internazionali (Specialist Degree in European and International Studies)
MEIS	Master’s in European and International Studies
MIUR	Ministero dell’Istruzione, le Università e la Ricerca (Ministry for Instruction, Universities and Research)
SIS	School of International Studies
SPEAQ	Sharing Practices for Ensuring and Enhancing Quality (EU-LLP funded project)
TACE	Teaching Academic Content through English – a teacher development programme run by the University of Jyväskylä
QA	Quality Assurance

Appendix 2 – Timeline of the Long Climb to CLIL at the SIS

Timeline	Major events at national and institutional level which have had/will have an effect on the evolution of the programme.
1999	Italy signatory to Bologna Process.
2001	Former 4 + 3 system becomes 3 + 2 + 3 at Trento. 4-year first level degree becomes 3-year degree. Introduction of two-year Masters – Laurea Specialistica (Specialist Degree).
2002-2003	Creation of the interfaculty post graduate School of International Studies (SIS) backed by the Province. One-year Italian “Master in Studi Internazionali”. Three-year PhD in English – intake predominantly international.
2003-2004	First year of “Laurea Specialistica in Studi Europei e Internazionali” at the SIS: Intake mainly Italian. EU Law, Contemporary History and English Language in English. Other courses in Italian. English requirement B2 by means of admissions exam or international certificate (not strictly applied). C1 expected by end of degree. Compulsory English Language – ESP + EAP for 6 credits (48 hours) over two years. No collaboration with any discipline teachers.
2004-2005	LSSEI English Language increased to 9 credits (72 hours) over two years (6 + 3). Additional language support for EAP + Legal English course.
2005-2007	LSSEI English Language lecturer appointed to Degree Board. Language admission requirements applied more rigorously. More core courses held in English each year. Collaboration with Law lecturers to create joint case law syllabus for both content and language support courses (adjunct CLIL). Focus on skills and competence development and metalinguistic awareness in language classes. Additional EAP language support (short course + tutoring) provided in first year. Focus on professional literacy skills in second year.
2007	Introduction of ‘Laurea Magistrale’ to replace ‘Laurea Specialistica’ at national level. LSSEI becomes MEIS (Master’s in European and International Studies). Students no longer need to graduate in core discipline subjects to be admitted.

- Intake still predominantly Italian.
Most courses in English (a few electives still in Italian).
Still an Italian 'Magistrale' with exams and final dissertation in Italian if wished (or other EU language).
English credits increased to 8 + 4. Courses still compulsory.
Greater collaboration between English and discipline teachers regarding content and materials.
Teaching approach and assessment methods on discipline courses gradually change.
- 2008 MEIS becomes EMP.
Whole programme in English.
10 places reserved for non EU-nationals.
Marketed as international degree.
Still possible to do exams and dissertation in Italian.
Joint simulations with content and language teachers introduced with some joint assessment.
- 2010 MEIS becomes 'international'.
Language admissions requirement by international certification.
All courses/seminars in English.
All exams in English, including final dissertation.
All extra curricular activities in English.
All communication with students in English – administrative and with teachers.
Compulsory first year English language course increased to 10 credits.
Second year Advanced English Workshop now elective (6 credits).
- 2012-2013 Institution of the Italian Quality Assurance Agency (ANVUR).
The SIS becomes an independent department (Centre) of the University.
Decisions regarding the programmes at the School no longer have to be approved at 5 different levels.
Creation of Student-Teacher Committee to oversee Quality Assurance.
MEIS
English remains a main reason for applying to the degree.
The adjunct approach is a main reason for student satisfaction.
International environment perceived as an added value.

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