

## Round Table *Content and Language Learning (Part 2)* 29<sup>th</sup> Annual TESOL-SPAIN Convention, Universidad Complutense, Madrid, March 24-26, 2006

AM = Anne McCabe  
DA = Dave Allan  
TG = Teresa Gerdes

TR = Teresa Reilly  
Alex M = Alex Mackenzie  
ART = Antonio Roldán Tapia

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Dave Allan is Director of NILE, a specialist institute which has trained some 10,000 English language teachers and trainers from 50 countries in the last decade. NILE works closely with ministries and education authorities worldwide and has been a major provider of professional development for teachers and trainers from Spain, including recent projects for primary, secondary and CLIL teachers from Madrid. Dave is a regular speaker at conferences in Spain. [dave@nile-elt.com](mailto:dave@nile-elt.com)

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### PART 2

**AM:** All of the speakers have just endorsed the teaching of language and content, and provided evidence that research is showing that both can be carried out together. But a couple of issues have come up from what you have been saying. The school needs to be involved, Dave you mentioned the preparation of teachers as being key to carrying this out, and perhaps even the wider community needs to change their way of thinking about education. So, preparation for teachers, number one, and support for those teachers. Number 2, testing. In the U.S., I would think that things like high-stakes testing would go against this change in education, this kind of learning. Because if kids need to be demonstrating something, whether it be language, on the one hand, or content, on the other, in a high-stakes environment which is going to affect the

funding of the school, and/or the educational future of that child, how will, how does assessment take place? How does teacher development need to take place?

**TR:** I'd like to make a reference to the MEC project and the whole idea of optimum conditions. Ideally, no one would start a project like this unless the conditions were optimum, because we would all wait until we had teachers who were completely bilingual, and they'd be bilingual content teachers. This would be an ideal world, but we don't live in an ideal world, and we can't wait for the ideal world to happen. The world moves on while we're waiting. So what we did 10 years ago when the project started, with the agreement of the Ministry of Education, was that we brought in, and are still bringing in British teachers to the primary schools in this project; In each of the 57 primary schools there are 3 or 4 British teachers. Now these teachers are not bilingual, and in very many cases, they didn't speak any Spanish. But they are British-trained primary teachers, and they bring in perhaps a different dimension, a different dynamic to the classroom, which perhaps lends itself more to teaching through a curriculum than teaching English as a subject in itself. They are a very valuable asset in all the schools we have, but the future of this project and the ultimate success of this kind of project do not depend on bringing teachers in. It actually depends on developing the Spanish teachers, changing the chip on how they approach teaching English. Looking at Spanish teachers of English in primary and helping them to actually move towards thinking of teaching through a curriculum, rather than teaching English as a subject in itself. And for 10 years, we have been involved in running training courses for these teachers, mainly using trainers from English as an additional language context, from the mainstream sector, in the UK. We have found that after 10 years, it is becoming successful. David Graddol, who has just recently produced a publication called *English Next*, talks about bilingual contexts, about content and language integrated learning, about countries moving towards becoming bilingual. And he takes the Nordic countries as an example. He says that it has taken 30, 40 and 50 years for it to happen there. I don't think 10 years down the line we can be saying that we're at the same level as the Nordic countries. Maybe it's going to take another 10, 15, 20 years, of continued training for teachers. One of my views of teacher education is this: people sometimes say: oh, you've brought in these specialist teachers. Sooner or later, you're going to get rid of them. And I say: possibly not. Possibly this is the beginning of thinking about how we can be using British-trained or bilingual teachers coming back from the States in programs such as this one here in Spain, and how we can use Spanish teachers to be doing exactly the same in the UK. And, believe it or not, it is beginning to happen in the UK. There are far more teachers going over to the UK and working in primary schools in England and Wales and delivering Spanish, French or German through the curriculum. And perhaps this movement of teachers is something that we will be seeing far more of over the next 10 or 15 years.

**ART:** I was thinking back 10 or 12 years ago, and realizing that now we have the second wave of content. Spanish teachers, if you remember the LOGSE, there were the diseños curriculares básicos. They said that in the secondary schools we should use project work. That was content-based. That didn't work very well for different reasons. The teachers were not trained for that type of teaching, Selectividad didn't change. So at one point that first wave was not a success. Some people changed and tried it and it worked somewhat. And now we're in the second wave of content, and this apparently is a more serious way. The point is, what happens to teachers? Universities are still the same. Selectividad is still the same. So, new teachers are still trained the same way as 30 years ago. So universities have to take the step and accommodate to the new situation. Because even though it is very slow, administration, the politicians are already taking some steps. They already are saying that it is positive to have languages for *oposiciones*. So they are doing *oposiciones* for content teachers with language. They are going to open new positions for CLIL teachers. So the machinery of the Ministry is already working on that. If the administration is already taking steps, the universities shouldn't go so slowly. *Filología Inglesa* is still the same. With *Geografía* or *Historia* they don't have a single credit in a foreign language.

**TG:** With one of the content-based books I'm a consultant for, in one of the first meetings we had for teachers was about methodology, because many of the teachers felt a bit uncomfortable with how to go ahead and teach this. Because what they saw was there was a high academic level in the textbook, and they just weren't sure how to approach it. What I find nice about the SIOP model is that you have a step-by-step approach, which is one of the things is needed. We don't necessarily have to have the SIOP model, but a set of common criteria should be designed so that teachers will have the tools to make their teaching more effective.

**DA:** Like Teresa Reilly, I'd like to take a short-term, mid-term, long-term view of it. David Graddol, in a couple of his sessions recently, has given a number of projections. The good news for CLIL teachers is that you are the future; there's a big shock coming for ordinary language teachers. That the expectation will be in some countries over the next decade, over the next 20 years in others, that you've got the ability to use languages, English in large part, but other languages as well, a plurilingual approach in some countries at least. Language will be learnt earlier and earlier, and it will be taken for granted that language and subject will be done together. So, what are the conditions for that? A couple of days ago in Bologna, Gisella Langé, who has been a leading light in Italy in this area, was setting out a blueprint for the next decade in Italy in CLIL, and she was basically saying: we need structural change, we need proper training, we need time, and so on. There are some countries where these pre-requisites are in place already because the training system provides for the training of teachers of English *and* of a subject, Germany's one, Switzerland's another, where I've seen such good results. I think major structural changes of the kind which you've been mentioning are the kind which are required if things are going to happen en masse, long term, sustainably. Without that, it's going to be difficult, it's going to be piecemeal. However, you've got to start somewhere. The reason that we, in my teaching context, have ended up actually running courses for CLIL teachers from all over the world, including from Spain, is because there is a need for something. So there are two levels needed: one is long-term strategic planning, which requires the back-up of the politicians, and really serious commitment, and that does take time – David Graddol was saying that it takes a generation for that kind of thing to happen. But the short-term is possible and the short-term brings gains as well, of the kind we have heard about in terms of changing school cultures. I've worked with some teachers who've only had a course for couple of weeks, but I hope that the benefit of that couple of weeks, in some contexts the benefit of a couple of weeks where you're actually meeting up with people coming not just from Madrid, but from other parts of Spain, from Finland, from Germany and from Austria and from Bulgaria and from South America, is significant. So there are aspects of teacher training and teacher development that are available and in a number of TD contexts. If teachers are willing to put the time in, courses are available, Comenius funding is available. There are massive projects taking place in some parts of Spain training teachers. Little bits, short-term, not perfect, but helping them on their way. I was in Andalucia in the autumn, and there was talk there of 250 teachers being trained in a package of two weeks. So things are happening. More needs to be done, but it is encouraging. Things are on the move.

*At this point, comments and questions were invited from the audience. The first comment related to university subject teachers at a private university being asked to teach in English because of the influx of Erasmus students, which actually perhaps could raise the status of language teachers in universities. However, often the content teachers do not always have much preparation in advance; besides, they would need support as they're teaching.*

**TR:** I think they do need support. Basically, what we're looking at in the MEC project in the secondary school is that subject teachers teach the subject, English teachers don't teach the subject. We've only been going two years in secondary so we haven't got there yet. But English teachers in the school support as far as possible the subject teachers both in their language difficulties and in areas of the language that the children may need in order for them to develop their skills in the subject. What we've certainly tried to do is to support the teachers of science and geography (these are the two main subjects taught in secondary) in how to deliver their

subject through English. It does mean that they have to deliver their subject in a different way. You can't go on teaching in a bilingual context in the same way as you would teach if you were teaching English as a foreign language or if you were teaching science through Spanish. It needs a different approach. And what we're looking it is ways of supporting the subject teachers through this different approach. Unfortunately, it's a drop in the bucket, as you can say the two week course. It needs an awful lot more support. But it's bit by bit.

**Alex M:** I think teachers need to be trained in how to give task-based classes, and basically that's the difference, because you're giving the opportunities to the students to develop their language, instead of where the teacher stands up at the board and talks, and you listen. That's the cultural change that you need to see in the classroom. You can imagine in maths, that would be quite difficult to change: how can you have a language-focused maths lesson? Geography or science might lend itself more to ways to exploit language, but maths? Where do you get the language from? Well, it's fascinating to see because it can be done. The students are in pairs or in groups, the teacher says much less, there's more monitoring, there's problems that they have to discuss together. It's all maths, but there's so much language there. They're pre-taught the specialist language, maths language, which is new to everybody, just as in Art, I pre-teach the specialist art language. But if it's a task-based lesson for 40 minutes, well that's how it works.

*A question was put forth from the audience with respect to the national curriculum, existing textbooks, and the bilingual schools project – whether materials are translated from existing textbooks or specially created.*

**TR:** I think part of the answer to that question is that, because this is a Ministry of Education project (although education is devolved to the various regions, the overall responsibility for the development of the curriculum remains with the Ministry of Education) what the Ministry has done for this particular project over the years is to produce with the British Council a special curriculum, for primary and for the first two years of secondary, which will then go over to the third and fourth years, which every region is welcome to use. Quite a few other regions outside the MEC project are sort of dipping in and out of it. In that curriculum there are aspects of the Spanish “knowledge,” shall we say, aspects of the English “knowledge.” But what we found when we looked at both the ‘knowledge’, was that the knowledge for science in Spanish in English was the same body of knowledge. Not a different body of knowledge. So again what was needed was a different approach, and a far more skills-based approach, and far more hands-on approach. I'm not putting forth any accolades for the English education system, but it does tend to be a far more skills-based, hands-on approach. So a lot of the materials which are being suggested for use in secondary schools are actually based on UK material which is used in secondary schools there. But what has not been advocated is the use of textbooks as such. In the curriculum, there are lots of materials suggested, lots of textbooks suggested, but not Spanish textbooks translated, which, we found, is death by textbook.

*A question was put forth regarding, if a third language is taught, whether this is also done through content, and whether remedial teaching takes place in the L2 (correcting, etc.):*

**ART:** In our model, the third language has a role; the third language in *tercer ciclo de primaria* is compulsory. They will follow with this third language all through the *ESO* and the *Bachillerato*. Initially, it is not content-based. It is going to be for the development of communicative competence, the idea of using a third language in the sense of developing plurilingualism: the competence of communicating in any language. At the moment, the curriculum is just integrated with the first foreign language, not with the second one. And actually the schools that are taking part in the program have not arrived to the point of the third language. So it is in the planning; in two years time we will have the first primary students who will be taking Spanish, English and French.

With respect to the second part of your question, recommendations from the *Conserjería de Educación* are that content classes are content classes. Generally, whatever problems of interference, whatever happens with the language should be sorted out in the language class or

with the auxiliary teacher, with the native speaker. In all the schools we have an assistant teacher, so the content teacher of course has to correct minimal things, but focusing on content. That's why they involve all the departments. That's why the Spanish, the English and the French department all need to be involved in the program. We have to design what is called an integrated curriculum.

**DA:** A couple of sources of potential information: in the Basque country, English is the third language in many situations; there's been a very interesting project running there for at least 8 or 9 years. I was talking to Philip Ball and a colleague of his at the BC conference in Berlin recently – if you don't know him already and the crew who are working there, they've got a lot of very good ideas related to this question. And the Canton of Zurich have second and, I think at one stage third language partial immersion programs as part of a pilot study in content and language integrated learning. They've got a five year programme just coming to a conclusion, which seems in most aspects to have been very successful.

*A question was asked regarding the trilingual program: whether the learning of the third language will be on a par with the second.*

**ART:** The school is bilingual for the first foreign language. Of course, the number of hours that the students are exposed to the third language is half the number of hours that the students are exposed to the first foreign language. So even though the students will progress with two foreign languages, the second one doesn't come close to the same level of development as the first. It's been said that ideally they want the students to get to the level B2 by the end of the project with the first foreign language. In many Comunidades Autonomas, the second foreign language is an alternative for students who need support in Spanish or in Math. So, all the students will not be taking the second foreign language.

*A question was asked regarding when the language support takes place, outside the content classroom; in other words, what the dynamics of the classroom are.*

**TR:** Well, we have 57 schools and 57 systems. In some schools there are always two teachers present. In the secondary schools, there's probably the subject teacher only present, with possibly the language assistant, who then also works on the language outside the classroom.

**ART:** The other day I was talking to a trainer from Valencia and they were doing real team teaching, the content teacher and the language teacher together in the same room. When I was in the States, I was both the language teacher and the social studies teacher.

**Alex M:** Teaching is such a personal thing – anything goes, really. Whatever works for you. We try it this way this week, and see how it goes. The advantage of this kind of program is there is a lot of conversation going on about learning.

This ended the discussion.

*A plea came from the floor that next year we hold a Round Table discussion on the issue of testing and assessment.*