

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on line: time perception

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ABSTRACT

After running an on line CLIL course for 4 years at Universidad de Las Palmas in 2015 we have decided to ask our students about their time perception when studying and doing the on line tasks . CLIL on line is a course offered as an extra curriculum course by the Universidad de Las Palmas, and it is not a compulsory course, but an optional one offered to future foreign language teachers. We have asked students if the course should be longer and if the Moodle platform was user-friendly. The course had 60 hours, but the survey results showed that only 12% spent those hours on line, 54% claimed that it was not necessary for the course to be longer and almost 90% affirmed that the Moodle platform was user friendly. These data show that when teachers plan the activities on line they tend to assign more hours that students need to do the tasks. Moreover, more than 50% stated that the course had the right time length although more than 50% of students have spent only half of the estimated time on line (20- 40 hours). In addition, Moodle platform was considered useful and appropriate almost reaching 100% of satisfaction. A part from quantitative data we have gathered their opinions and suggestions above the above mentioned issues. The most common recommendation was the course to be longer and more time to do the activities. In 2016 we are going to do the same survey having amended the length and the number of tasks..

Keywords: CLIL, on line, time perception, Moodle, user- friendly.

1.INTRODUCTION

On line learning is in vogue in Tertiary Education. In order to have a closer look into the virtual world of learning we should first define what learning and knowledge are. About the latter issues, the author Siemens (2014) states that “knowledge is an objective (or a state) that is attainable (if not already innate) through either reasoning or experiences. Behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism (built on the epistemological traditions) attempt to address how it is that a person learns.” (2) It is true that research about knowledge and learning are essential to future and current teachers and even more importantly to those who teach on line since the concept of learning on line is still underresearched. Regarding the concept of learning we should mention some approaches. For example, cognitivism describes how people interact with stimuli and construct their own learning by means of the mental processes of thinking or reasoning, and cognitivism is one of three main perspectives on learning in the SLA literature:(i) the Behaviourist perspective of learning as a process of conditioning by means of responses to external stimuli; (ii) the Cognitivist perspective and learning as a mental operation; and (iii) the Constructivist perspective, empowering learners to think for themselves and build on previous knowledge (Larsen- Freeman, 2012: 3). Moreover, constructivist theories are concerned with the social features of learning; how learners create their own conceptual structures to make sense of the world. For instance, social-constructivism directs its attention towards the cognitive process that happens as people learn through social interaction: “The emphasis is placed upon interaction between the learner and the others” (Pritchard, 2013:24). These theories complement each other and are highly relevant when we investigate on line learning. Therefore, the teacher-student relationship is considered to be quintessential. These kinds of learning theories are more student-centred; some examples of learning tasks are problem solving and simulation, as well as collaborative work and dialogues. When doing courses on line we mimic collaboration via means of forums and closed dialogues (tools offered by Moodle platforms). In recent years, there has been a lot of research about individual difference (ID) or learner variables (Bygate, Swain and Skehan, 2013) mainly because it has been proven that IDs have a great influence on leaning learning success. Thus it is challenging to run a course on line since we have very little information about students and it cannot be compared to the information we can obtain if they were coming to face- to – face lessons. The anonymity behind a virtual user hinders some students ‘traits that teachers should be aware of when teaching on line. “A growing body of research is

demonstrating that on-line learning can be both effective and satisfying. In the next few years, we can expect even more spectacular growth in virtual education. Yet the tendency of people within as well as outside higher education to focus on distance education has obscured what will be a far more important phenomenon: the impact of digital technology on pedagogy, especially in the traditional classroom. “(Newman and Scury, 2015:2).Some research shows that on line learning is assessed positively by higher education students. Maybe, it is still too soon to confirm this theory but the mainstream investigation is proving this hypothesis.

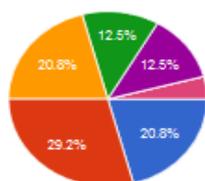
2.METHODOLOGY

In 2015 we have asked 25 students of an on line CLIL course about the following issues: general time perception about the course, time needed to do tasks, course length and Moodle platform use. We have come up with a list of questions as cited here: How much time did you spend working on the course tasks? Should this course be longer? Was it the moodle platform user- friendly? We have carried out a quantitative research as well as qualitative one. In order to address the research questions we have decided that our research design had to be three-fold: qualitative, quantitative and mixed. In our opinion, only one type of research design would have been deficient, for it would have failed to give a full vision about the beliefs regarding time and course length. Moreover, we have not only illustrated mere statistics, but we have also gained more knowledge behind the individual answers It is said that quantitative research is more concerned about theory verification and qualitative research deals with theory generation. In our case, these concepts are intertwined in all aspects of the research; we have studied some theory before our research, but we had first chosen the items to be included in our survey, and once we have analyzed the answers, we have come up with results and recommendations that can be transformed into theories. The data are expressed with pie charts as can be seen in the results chapter. The survey was conducted once the course was over and students have had a week to reply questions and give some comments.

3.RESULTS

Here we represent the quantitative data. The questions are expressed in percentages. N = 25. All students have participated in the survey.

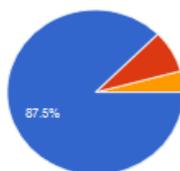
1. How much time did you spend working on the course tasks?



10-20 hours	5	20.8%
20-30 hours	7	29.2%
30- 40 hours	5	20.8%
40- 50 hours	3	12.5%
50- 60 hours	3	12.5%
more than 60	0	0%
less than 10	1	4.2%

We can see that only 12,5% has spent 60 hours reading, participating in the forums and doing the tasks, whereas almost 50% spent half of that amount. 12% spent 40- 50 hours with the same percentage as the whole course time length. The lower percentage is expressed with less than 10% accounting for 4,2% of students.

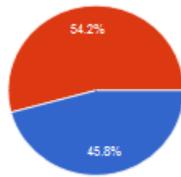
2. Was it the moodle platform user- friendly?



Yes.	21	87.5%
No.	2	8.3%
Opción 3	1	4.2%

In this question almost 90% of students consider that the Moodle platform is user friendly.

3. Should this course be longer?



Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	11	45.8%
No	13	54.2%

This question shows that over 50% of the students consider that the length of the course was a suitable one. The number compared to data saying that it should be longer does not show a wide gap being the difference of only 10% between affirmative and negative answer.

In order to have a deep insight into the above mentioned questions we have asked them to comment each question. For question number 1 the most common comment was that they have had enough time to read, participate and do the tasks and they it was not a stressful course. Some of them complain that the content layout should be clearer since due to this hurdle they had to spend more hours on line.

Regarding question number 2, the majority of students affirm that it was easy to use the platform thanks to the forum posts sent by teachers reminding them about deadlines and where to find information at all times. Question number 3 showed that there is a slight difference between two contrary opinions about the course length. As most general comments we can mention the following ones: more time to answer forums questions, more information and activities since the course content is a complex issue and cannot be taught in only two month period.

4.RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2016 we are going to ask the same questions and compared them to the this study. We are going to make changes recommended by students and give them more time to do the activities. Content analysis should be done with the general comments and we should change them into suggestions and recommendations. Here we would like to mention work by Gladieux (2000:4) who states that the virtual univeristy has arrived and that the traditional university is going to dissappear in 30 years time. " The trial-and-error process is already underway in the United States and at colleges and universities around the world." Thus, we can consider our on line CLIL course as trial and error in order to establish how to come up with the perfect calculus of time for student on line learning. Also, since: "Several powerful forces are fueling a global market for distance learning. The first is exploding demand. Human intellectual capital is the acknowledged coin of the realm in the increasingly globalized economy. Worldwide demand for education and training will continue to grow on into the new millennium." (200:4). Therefore investigation about time perception and on line learning in general should be more researched.

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