



The Implications of Content and Language Integrated Learning in EFL Practice: Parameters and Context

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ABSTRACT:

This paper reports on the CLIL reflection on the features and considerations when implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in EFL contexts . Initially, this paper aims at reflecting the role of CLIL as an innovative and changing educational approach. Secondly, Content and Language Integrated Learning is defined along its implications by fostering the attention to CLIL benefits. Lastly, the article offers a broad view about the inclusion of CLIL pedagogy in classroom practice. The questionnaire was adopted to collect data from CLIL teachers in international schools in Khartoum State. The main findings of the study are as follow: CLIL encourages learner's view of foreign language; also in the long run it helps in developing EAP and ESP in tertiary education. The study recommends: the importance of the implementation of CLIL in EFL practice either fully or partially. Projects and studies from CLIL classrooms are needed to measure the value of this approach in EFL context.

Keywords: Raising self-awareness .Language development, Types of Interaction

المستخلص:

تتناول هذه الورقة على إنعكاس التكامل بين اللغة والمحتوى (المادة الدراسية) وتعلم اللغة من حيث الخصائص والإعتبارات عند تطبيق هذه الطريقة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من حيث المفهوم . مبدئياً تهدف الورقة على عكس دور التكامل بين اللغة والمحتوى كنهج تعليمي حديث ، ثانياً : بعرف التكامل بين اللغة والمحتوى بمضامينه للفت الإنتباه إلى مزايا هذا المنهج . إستخدم الإستبيان كوسيلة لجمع المعلومات من الأساتذة الذين يمارسون تدريس هذا المنهج بالمدارس الأجنبية بولاية الخرطوم . جاءت نتائج الدراسة كالاتي : أن التكامل بين اللغة والمحتوى يحفز الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، وهو أيضاً على الأمد البعيد يساعد في تطوير اللغة للأغراض الأكاديمية وللأغراض الخاصة . أوصت الدراسة على أهمية تطبيق هذا المنهج كلياً أو جزئياً في حال تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، أهمية الدراسات العملية من داخل قاعة الدراسة لقياس قيمة هذا المنهج في صياغ اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية .

1. INTRODUCTION:

Globalisation and internationalisation are making increasing demands on the foreign language skills of European citizens. In reaction to this, a trend has emerged in schools throughout Europe to use English (and other foreign languages) as a medium of

instruction, not as an elitist project but also in mainstream education. In these so-called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classes a language other than the L1 of the students is used in teaching a non-language subject matter, the aim being to increase the students exposure to the language and to create a motivating, low-anxiety environment in which attention is paid to the message conveyed rather than the accuracy of the linguistic forms used. In this way the language competence of the students is to be enhanced and they are to be better prepared for life and work in a globalised society and economy, where English, in particular, dominates as the Lingua Franca of today's business world. While the basic idea underlying CLIL, i.e. to provide students with more language input and thus to further their language proficiency, seems compelling, the question arises to what extent increased exposure translates into tangible improvements in the quality of language output and what aspects of language proficiency are most likely to be affected. The main aim of this study is to investigate the impact of CLIL provision on the language output produced by students in EFL classroom. The study will give a short overview for the underlying concept of CLIL and its implication in EFL practice.

The current state of EFL practice requires innovations inside the classroom thus, to implement appropriate input and influential interaction in order to fill the gap in the learners appropriateness which is regarded as a prior demand to be addressed both through language content. Also to reduce the drawbacks resulted from classroom insufficient exposure in EFL practice to drive a circular approach namely as Content and Language Integrated Learning.. The study also measures the values and approaches which enhance the integration of language and content and their impact on teaching and learning in EFL classroom.

Bearing in mind reviewing relevant literature, this study puts forward the following two research questions:

- (1) Are CLIL students more motivated to learn English than their EFL counter parts?
- (2) How do teachers and learners co-construct meanings in CLIL approach?

2- LITERTURE REVIEW

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is often seen as an “umbrella term” for different methods of teaching language through content Peeter Mehisto et al (2012: 29-30). CLIL gives learners a different learning experience, if compared with traditional foreign language teaching, and prepares them for real-life situations in the global, technological society where knowledge of other languages is essential.

Content and language in English language teaching is deuced the acronym CLIL (Edurydice 2006. P.8; Luietto. 2008. P.29). CLIL is an approach in which various methodologies are used to achieve dual-focused for of instruction in language and content. Furthermore, CLIL researches used the term umbrella and several definitions to refer to the curricular variations prescribed in Europe. The council of Europe has included CLIL projects in its medium term programmes due to the interest in developing the plurilingual competence of their citizens (Dalton Puffer, 2007, P1-2), March 2002). This plurilingual competence may be developed through a framework which facilitates the interrelationship between subject-matter knowledge and language knowledge through communication, culture and cognition.

Developing language skills through CLIL

While planning a CLIL lesson, it is important to build up a framework based on a combination of four language skills – reading, listening speaking and writing (Darn: 2006). The preferences of skills are considered thus:

Reading, using meaningful material, is seen as the major source of input.

Listening is a normal input activity, vital for language learning.

Speaking focuses on fluency. Accuracy is seen as less important.

Writing is a series of lexical activities through which grammar is recycled.

Language across the curriculum. Consequently, acquiring the knowledge of the target language together through mastering the four essential language skills is one of the main outcomes often associated with CLIL. According to Bentley (2010: 11), CLIL without exploring the language should not be considered CLIL. The main focus of CLIL approach is on understanding the subject and being able to communicate ideas, rather than on grammar structures. Bentley advises not to exclude grammar from integrated teaching but to present both grammar and vocabulary in chunks. Yet, it has to be taken into consideration that certain language competence aspects benefit more than others from CLIL. Christiane Dalton-Puffer (2007: 4-6, 15) acknowledges that vocabulary, receptive skills, morphology, creativity, fluency gain most, whereas syntax, writing, informal language, pronunciation and pragmatics would remain unaffected.

Raising self-awareness and developing learning styles.

To sum up the previous, in planning a CLIL lesson it is important to integrate language and learning skills, base lessons on reading and listening texts, approach the language rather lexically than grammatically and take into consideration students' learning styles (Darn: 2006). On the whole, being aware of students' learning styles can be described as a stepping-stone to learners' personal achievement and can help the teacher to create links for further positive communication (Mehisto et al 2008: 167-168). Learning styles are classified by Mehisto into visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. Students themselves may be unaware of their individual learning styles and raising their awareness is one of the teacher's roles in organising the teaching process. It is beneficial to start a CLIL course with students evaluating their personal learning styles because it helps students to gain control of their learning process. In addition to that, students develop a capacity of self-evaluation and understanding of themselves as a part of learning community.

Developing cognitive skills through CLIL.

In addition to the positive traits of CLIL mentioned previously in this paper, good CLIL practice, according to Peeter Mehisto et al (2008: 30), should involve higher levels of thinking and cognition: recognising, judging, reasoning, imagining, analyzing objectives. In the context of the present work it is important to take into account Bloom's taxonomy and Bloom's revised taxonomy which are described by Mehisto et al (2008: 155) as the main teacher's tools in lesson planning, materials' design and evaluating the process of learning.

Learning outcomes of CLIL

CLIL is a widely adopted approach to achieve the goals of internationalization. Though it is started in Canada and North America, it has gained great attention in Europe and recently the Middle East. Nevertheless, the introduction of CLIL has always been accompanied with controversy at different levels.

Despite the reported success of CLIL in North America and Canada, Europe has been a different issue. In Europe, CLIL is not used to introduce a second language. In fact, it is introduced to meet the EU political goals at the level of education as stated in the 2 + 1 formula (sometimes referred to as MT+2). The formula according to (Eurydice 2006: 8) states that every European citizen should be able to speak two languages apart from their mother tongue. However, the implementation of this formula has never been a straightforward easy mission. It has raised a lot of questions regarding the effectiveness of this new approach at the political and educational level.

This controversy, Dalton-Puffer (2008) states, is witnessed “on the level of local grass-roots activity on the one hand and on the level of EU policy on the other, “(p.1). The debate has been always around issues such as which foreign language to introduced, at what level, what type of teachers and the amount of foreign language teaching. The other issue regarding CLIL has been how natural is CLIL or how good or bad is it. Marsh (2002) notices a gap in deliver between the curricula and the learning outcome of CLIL. The supporters of CLIL find it as a fast and natural method to teaching an additional language. They believe that by presenting language in a meaningful context will motivate the students and expand their cognitive skills (Kasper 1997. p. 318).

However, the process is not that straightforward. More coordination between the language and content is proved to be important (Snow et al. 1989, p.204). Teachers preparation is another issue that has appear to the surface. Kinsella (1997, P.50-51) criticised CLIL heavy dependence on the teachers' skills and making them directly responsible for simplifying the input and making it comprehensible for the students. De Graaff et al. (2007) investigate the effectiveness of the teachers' role in CLIL. They investigate how non-native teachers who lack a professional background in language pedagogy can play an efficient role in their students' acquisition of a foreign or a second language. Genesee (1994) notices the few opportunities available for the students in CLIL which, he argues, makes them listeners more than speakers. Those debates in addition to others have motivated linguists to investigate CLIL as an additional language learning context but before we get into studies into CLIL , we have to look at the methods within which classroom in general is investigated.

Specific criteria for constructing CLIL materials.

It is necessary to pay attention to specific CLIL criteria listed below. These specific principles are based upon a tool for creating CLIL materials developed by Mehisto (2010, 2012: 15-33). The tool consists of characteristic features of quality CLIL learning materials:

1) *making the learning process (language, content, learning skills) visible to students* by providing clear instructional goals and a systematic feedback on student's progress. Learners should gain some control over their learning.

2) *systematically fostering academic language proficiency*: scientific language should be empowered throughout the whole learning process and simplified if needed. (Cummins 2007:126).

3) *fostering learning skills development and learner autonomy*: materials can include learning skills tips, can guide students to determining what they think/feel. Reading activities can involve examining the text for different purposes (skimming and scanning) and help teach them learning strategies (Hattie 2012: 193)

- 4) *including self, peer and other types of formative assessment*: materials contain assessment of planned outcomes for achievement of content/language, learning skills goals.
- 5) *helping create a safe learning environment*: cognitive overload is avoided in materials (provide language scaffolding, ‘chunking’ and logical framework of the content).
- 6) *fostering cooperative learning*: material introduce criteria or an assessment grid to analyse group work results and improve critical thinking.
- 7) *seeking ways of incorporating authentic language and authentic language use*: materials establish cultural connections and help construct knowledge about ethnically and culturally diverse people. Language should be used for authentic purposes (problem solving, creating a project)
- 8) *fostering critical thinking*: fact-based questions should be avoided, instead activities should be cognitively challenging and incorporate high-level thinking processes.
- 9) *fostering cognitive fluency through scaffolding helping student to reach well beyond what they could do on their own*. According to Mehisto (2012: 24), scaffolding can be provided for content (highlighting ideas and terms, adding subtitles, connecting the topic to learner’s personal experiences); language (shortening sentences/paragraphs; introducing synonyms; providing explanations of some key vocabulary in the margins; grouping language according to use e.g., procedures, equipment; incorporating dictionary links for difficult terms); learning skills development (providing a sample correct answer at the start of an exercise, asking students to guess meaning from context, providing samples of error correction techniques).
- 10) *helping to make learning meaningful*: materials should establish connections of the content with students’ interests and prior knowledge, deepen it by presenting new facts. Materials should provide cross-curricular links and projects.

Different types of interaction

Relationships between learners and teachers are more formal and remote in some educational sectors than others. Crandall and Tucker (1990: 187–200) claim that such a social distance is often due to the subject matter of the course, the atmosphere at school and the attitude of individual teachers towards learners. In CLIL, the teacher may recognize that by teaching in a L2 he/she may be in a slightly disadvantageous position. This may be due to reduced personality syndrome or to the demand of being a good teacher. The notion of reduced personality refers to “a condition in which a person feels constrained when communicating in a language other than the mother tongue” (Appel, Muysken 1988: 46). What is more, in some schools, teachers report that they feel more dull or boring when teaching in the L2 because they “can’t be themselves” (Marsh, Marsland 1999: 34). Additionally, they avoid being humorous because of L2 constraints and as a result they are perceived by the learners as very strict and serious people. In fact, CLIL facilitates movement towards learners adopting a more adult-adult relationship with the teacher who becomes a professional facilitator. Van Lier (1988: 94–120) established an interaction framework which I decided to adopt in my study. Van Lier (1988: 94–120) distinguishes four basic types of classroom interaction:

- 1). the teacher has no control over the topic and the activity;
- 2). the teacher controls the topic but not the activity;
- 3). the teacher controls the topic and the activity;
- 4). the teacher controls the activity but not the topic;

In a further development of this framework, van Lier (1991:P. 48–64) adds another dimension, namely the function of the language. He distinguishes three types of function: 1). *ideational* (telling people facts or experiences); 2). *interpersonal* (working on relationships with people); 3). *textual* (signaling connections and boundaries, clarifying, summarizing and revising); The above mentioned types of interaction can also be observed in the CLIL classroom. However, one important issue should be brought in here, which may have a huge impact on classroom interaction, namely, learner autonomy. In a typical CLIL language classroom, it is the teacher who is in the centre and therefore it is mainly teacher-learner interaction.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection, it contained twelve items aimed at eliciting data from teachers who teach English and those who teach other subjects through English.

Participants

The study involved 50 secondary level teachers in Khartoum State. The schools where the research took place are: Confluence International School, Kibeda International School and Alqabas International School. All these schools teach other subjects through English, so there is sufficient classroom exposure to teach both language and content

Data collection Instrument

The data of the present study was collected from questionnaires distributed to teachers in four international schools in Khartoum, the questionnaire was distributed randomly among the study samples, the only variable has been taken into account is that: the population of the study were content teachers and language teachers..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results shown in the table bellow, the teachers' responses to the statements;

Table (1): Teacher's role in CLIL classroom

NO	Statement	Yes	No	To some extent
1-	The students know the basic vocabulary	30 (60.0)	10 (20.0)	10 (20.0)
2-	Do students know how to explain new content in English?	35 (70.0)	5 (10.0)	10 (20.0)
3-	Do you ask open questions?	40 (80.)	5 (10.0)	5 (10.0)

As it can be seen from Table (1) most of the respondents agreed that their students know the basic vocabulary of content (subject), 10 of them made the variable no as their choice while the rest of the respondents form 20.0 percent of the total number. According to the second statement do students know how to explain new content in English, the percentage shows that (70.0) of CLIL teachers said that their students can explain new content in English, (10.0) of the teachers answered in no and (20.0) in to some extent.

Table (2): classroom activities

NO	Statement	Yes	No	To some extent
1-	I have activities to enhance classroom communication	35 (70.0)	10 (20.0)	5 (10.0)
2-	I always do to pair work	25 (60.0)	15 (20.0)	10 (20.0)
3-	Scaffolding helps to tackle communication	30 (50.)	10 (20.0)	10 (20.0)

In general looking at the above statistical results, (70.0) of CLIL teachers have activities to enhance classroom communication. (20.0) don't have while (10.0) to some extent. With regard to pair work, the percentages showed that the majority of the respondents form (60.0) to the option yes, while the other options are equal with (20.0) for each option.

Table (3): Classroom interaction in CLIL

No	Statement	Yes	No	To some extent
1-	Can students answer open questions?	27 (54.0)	13 (26.0)	10 (20.0)
2-	Do students speak English with peers while doing pair working?	28 (56.0)	10 (20.0)	10 (24.0)
3-	I always speak in English inside the class	40 (80.0)	5 (10.0)	5 (10.0)
4-	Do you feel comfortable with CLIL lesson?	30 (60.0)	12 (24.0)	8 (16.0)
5-	I value students communication	27 (54.0)	13 (26.0)	10 (20.0)
6-	In CLIL lesson the teacher focus on both language and content	30 (60.0)	10 (20.0)	10 (20.0)

When analysing the answers provided by the respondents for the first statement: Can students answer open questions?, (54.0) chose yes, (26.0) no while (20) chose to some extent. Due to speaking English while doing pair work, the majority of the respondents agreed upon this point, 20% of CLIL teacher said no and 24% of them chose to some extent. The frequencies and percentages showed that the vast majority (80%) of the respondents agree that of most of the teacher's talk is in English, compare with the other variables the summation is equal 10% for each one.

Although CLIL is believed to foster because of the level of authenticity and challenge and because it encourages the view of foreign language as important and meaningful as other subject in the curriculum. The nature of CLIL as a dual-focus practice helps in developing learner's overall communicative competence in this respect CLIL learners can outperform their counter parts who involved in EFL programmes, also in the long run CLIL helps in developing EAP and ESP, evidence from researches prove the need for innovation in these approaches in tertiary education.

Based on the implementation of CLIL features a successful marriage will take place between the students limited linguistics resources and the use of these resources to interact in their learning context. Also through CLIL approach are learning processes such as identifying, comparing, drawing conclusions and finding similarities and

differences that are considered as requirements for learning in CLIL. We can conclude that if we believe learning is a social activity that is strongly influenced by involvement, engagement and participation then it is important to raise teachers awareness of their use of language inside CLIL and to encourage them to give the students opportunity to display having access to those higher thinking skills by techniques that are more sophisticated than just using questions.

CONCLUSION

Due to the previous discussion, we can conclude that though CLIL is considered as a more natural and economic environment for language learning than the traditional EFL classroom, it still has its own requirements that are not necessarily required in the EFL classroom. Those requirements include a specific level of the target language upon which teachers can build. It also requires some learning skills such as the ability to justify and explain in the target language, so it is a must to implement this approach either fully or in partial phase. It might be argued, though, that such skills are usually acquired at earlier stages by the virtue of learning the same content subjects in L1 at earlier stages but this is not always the case especially when CLIL is introduced at primary and secondary stages which may be a base line for developing EAP and ESP in tertiary education.

The findings of this study can potentially be very useful for CLIL teacher and main stream teacher consequently, the researcher recommends: giving due consideration for studies in the field of content and language integrated learning as a recent and trendy approach for forgiven language teaching. Also assessment of the existing body of CLIL in EFL classroom in general and Sudanese setting in particular is vital.

Suggestions for Further Research

As for further research, it would be interesting to compare EFL and CLIL teachers' use of the L1 to analyse whether the type of approach used has an impact on L1 usage in class or whether this is similar irrespective of the approach. When compared to Little wood and Yu's (2011) results, ours seem to point to a commonality with some minor differences, which would imply that similar guidelines would be valid for both approaches (EFL and CLIL).

Teacher's and Learner's perception is also suggested as a rich area of inquiry so as to examine teachers and learner's attitudes towards CLIL implementation in EFL classes. Also aspects of interaction and types of interaction in CLIL approach are encouraging factors of research investigation.

Finally the data of this study and its findings suggest that there is considerable potential for further research on classroom discourse and driving both content and language in EFL classroom. As a result, alternative ways of viewing such data can take place.

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