TEACHERS AS SOURCES OF INTEGRATION OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE

ABSTRACT

Teaching a language is taken to be the job of only the language teacher. In contrast, the content teacher uses the language as a vehicle to teach their content using the language. In this article, teachers are considered the sources of integration, who integrate language and content to help their learners develop using the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. This article's basis is the discussions held with the language and content trainers, who are both practising CLIL and are also new to the approach. Teacher-observer questionnaires, open-ended discussions and collaborative lesson planning were used for the analysis.

Keywords : *CLIL, Teacher's view, Language Teaching, Language Learning, Content Learning.*

Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational initiative that simultaneously advocates learning academic content and a foreign language(Richards & Rodgers, 2003, pp.201; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010, pp.6; Wolff, 2005, pp.11). CLIL has been seen to improve knowledge of and competence in foreign language learning and teaching and renew interest and motivation among school children (Coyle, Holmes and King, 2009). Moreover, it is seen as enriching the "experience with teaching content matter through more than one language is bringing new insights into improving general education programmes" (Baetens-Beardsmore, 2001, pp.10).

In the CLIL approach, the degree of collaboration and integration between the content teacher and the language teacher is noteworthy and unique. Through collaboration and integration, the teachers support students' needs in both their language difficulties and academic necessities.

Background of the study

Bullock (1975) stated, "All (subject) teachers are teachers of language". Hence, in the CLIL approach, the teachers of content and language are asked to collaborate and integrate their work and learn to help students in their overall content and language development.

Shared and collaborative practices by the teachers help build impactful and enriching bridges. The "hybrid teacher", according to Ball, Kelly & Clegg (2019), is one "whose expertise is no less specialized, but instead specialized in a broader sense. The language teacher can benefit from all three dimensions of content (concepts, procedures, and language), not just one (language). The subject teacher benefits too, by becoming more aware of the language dimension, and becoming more adept at making the role of language more salient in the classroom." (p. 272)

It has been seen that the success of programmes involving teaching content through another language does not solely depend on the language teacher and the learner's language ability. Such programmes' success depends on a balanced level of linguistic and subject competence and the collaboration between the teaching content subjects and languages. However, a language lesson is not possible without content. Hence, the CLIL approach brings content and language learning together in an integrated and collaborative platform wherein the language and content teachers work with one another based on the needs of the learners.

Significance of the study

CLIL is a relatively new approach in India compared to Europe and other parts of Asia. Extensive work has been done in the western countries of

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Argentina, Spain, Germany, and Poland. Closer home, the Asian countries of Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Japan have had a lot to contribute to the growth and research of CLIL.

In India, CLIL is at a nascent stage; Vency and Ramganesh (2013) conducted a study at the secondary level in which English was taught using science through CLIL. This study had a positive response, and the researchers found that language learning was possible using science and the CLIL approach. Research states that CLIL produces lifelong learners who are motivated, confident and can collaborate in real life, thus making CLIL a well-rounded approach for educational gains at all levels. Hence, a study and discussion with the teachers involved in language and content areas is an important step to test the impact of the CLIL approach in India's educational framework. This article shall further broaden the approach's spectrum of reach, making it a laudable teaching approach.

Objectives

This article's objective is to discuss the roles of teachers as sources of content and language integration based on the reactions of teachers towards the CLIL approach based on the teachers' observation of the intervention study conducted by the researcher and on the discussions held by the researcher with teachers. The teachers' responses towards CLIL shared in the article shall help CLIL grow as a trusted teaching and learning approach in the Indian educational context.

Integration in a CLIL classroom

Integration in a CLIL classroom works on the content and language understandings shared with a learner. A CLIL teacher's role is to absorb these understandings and work towards integrating the content and language lessons together to help the learners receive the integrated input.

The "hybrid" teacher in the CLIL classroom who integrates content and language lessons must possess certain attributes and skills. This includes "a broad profile"…

i.   The teacher guides input and supports output.

ii. The teacher scaffolds language and learning.

iii. The teacher never assumes that the student understands.

iv. The teacher's methodological repertoire widens.

v.   The teacher varies the forms of interaction in the classroom.

vi. The focus of the teacher's assessment reflects a more significant concern with the 'process.'

vii. The teacher recognizes that academic language consists of different types of subject-specific discourse.

viii. The teacher understands that education requires a journey from BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) to CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency).

ix. The teacher makes the role of language (in cognition) more salient.

x.   There is no doubt that a CLIL-teacher needs a specific type of training that goes beyond the formation of a foreign-language teacher or a subject teacher…." (Ball et al., 2019, pp. 273).

Testing the CLIL approach

The base of responses for the paper came from two sets of teachers- ones who were introduced to CLIL for the first time during the intervention carried out by the researcher in their institution. The second cohorts of respondents were teachers already using the CLIL approach in their classrooms.

The teachers who were introduced to CLIL for the first time were both Language and Content Trainers at vocational institutions[1] catering to the service industry[2] in Assam, India. The intervention of 10-days was their first introduction to the CLIL approach. They observed the sessions and tried their best to absorb every element of the class conducted by the researcher to incorporate the same in their future lessons. Eight teachers from the set of first-timers were part of this study.

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[1] *A vocational institution is a type of educational institution, which is designed to provide vocational education, or technical skills required to complete the tasks of a particular and specific job. The vocational institutions parts of the study were: Kamrup College of Vocational Training, Don Bosco Institute, Jettwings, Assam Downtown University, and PragatiEductech.*

[2] *Service industry, an industry in that part of the economy that creates services rather than tangible objects. The service industries included in the study were: Hospitality, Aviation, Retail, BPO, and Secretarial Practice.*

The experienced CLIL teachers were a part of an eight-week-long online teachers' training in Content-based instruction called The Online Professional English Network, a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and administered by FHI 360. These teachers came from around the world and were a good mix of understanding and experience. Twenty teachers from this set were part of this study.

Teacher-observers, who were part of the research intervention from both the content and language areas, were provided with a questionnaire and an observation sheet. The questionnaire consisted of twelve questions that tried to gather the teachers' understanding of the CLIL intervention, their response to it, and their understanding of the need for such an approach for their target learners in the service sector.

Responses to the CLIL approach

The teacher-observers were optimistic about the observer's sheet, as all eight had observed the aims in class mentioned in the sheet. They commented that such an approach (CLIL) should benefit the students in their content and language development. In the questionnaires and discussions, the teacher-observers mentioned how they favored such an approach as they felt a gap between the content subject and language education. They mentioned how vocational education looks at employability and how such an approach would benefit the students in their job sectors if used in the classroom. The respondents also mentioned how language played an essential role in developing students who opt for the course, as the job sector (service industry) is communication driven. Speaking and Listening are the critical skills the learners need in their content area, and hence language ability in these skills is of primary importance.

Even though these teacher-observers were first-timers to the CLIL approach, they warmed up to the positives of the approach. They commented on how an integrated medium could be beneficial. There was a positive "Yes" in agreement with teachers being the sources of integration in a CLIL classroom. They were more than ready to collaborate with the content/language teacher to integrate the teachings to conduct a CLIL class in their institute.

The teachers' areas of concern were developing lesson plans and devising the integrated mechanism. A teacher responded, "CLIL is a good approach and very informative, but we need to learn how to use it and find the right balance between content and language."

The experienced CLIL teachers shared their classroom experiences and how the CLIL experience added value to their class and teaching. They mentioned in-depth examples of how the integration of content and language was helpful and needed as every content teaching is language-driven. No course can be taught without language, so why should the two (language and content) be taught in parallel? These teachers also mentioned that teachers' workshops on CLIL are essential to get the language teachers and content teachers to work together. A teacher shared, "The hybrid teacher in CLIL is not a magical being, but it is us. We (content and language teachers) join our forces to help our students and to give them the best."

Finding the right blend and working on a workable collaboration makes CLIL a practical approach' or something along those lines. It is less complicated if the goal is clear and exemplary efforts and expertise are implemented. These teachers, too, agreed wholeheartedly that the teachers help in the integration process. The teachers blend the two areas (content and language) and work on a combined and collaborative framework that works in tandem with the learners' needs, wants, and goals. As for the end question about CLIL being a learning process for the teachers, the twenty respondents clearly stated how "learning can never end for a teacher". Teachers must keep the knowledge flowing to help their learners with their learning needs.

Conclusion

Teachers are central to the teaching and learning process; through their dedication and hard work, the learners explore the benefits of knowledge and learning. Over the years, language teaching has seen numerous approaches which have helped learners in their academic pursuits and communicative endeavors. However, through CLIL, the age-old gap between content and language

integrates as one. The paper highlights how teachers are the sole torch-bearers of this integration in the CLIL approach and how a "hybrid" teacher comes into the forefront with the content and language teachers' collaborative efforts. It also highlights the importance of teachers' workshops to help with the approach. This study is limited in terms of respondents it reached and provided the scope for more research on the approach, making it more acceptable in the Indian educational system.

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influenced by one or more socio-demographic predictors. The significant predictors were the type of school, area of residence, mother's education, and a class of study.

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