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CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING: IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPANSION AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL IN ESL CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT:

The present article seeks to reflect on the characteristics of and benefits of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in ESL/EFL during its implementation in Indian classrooms at undergraduate level. CLIL is a two-fold focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of content and language with the objective of promoting both content and language mastery to distinct levels. CLIL is a methodological approach, particularly suitable for contexts where students learn content through additional language. The demand for teaching content through English Medium is rising. This provides an opportunity for the ESL/EFL teaching profession to both re-conceptualize restrictions of the

profession to gain new opportunities and to promote student learning outcomes. CLIL leads to larger linguistic proficiency, of greater interest, boosts motivation, and is suitable for learners of all abilities. Further, it leads to greater intercultural understanding. Initially the article presents the general aspects of modern and changing education in a globalized world. Secondly, Content and Language Integrated Learning defines itself by clearly addressing its dimensions. Lastly, the article offers a broad view about the inclusion of CLIL in English Language Teaching in India.

KEYWORDS: CLIL, Diverse contexts, Limitations, Linguistic proficiency, Dual focus.

INTRODUCTION

English Language teachers have used many prominent methods and approaches that have made their mark in English language teaching. The chronological development of English language teaching and its methods and approaches happened within an academic framework where the term innovation is essential. The world has changed drastically, globalization has gathered pace swiftly, and the English Language has come to direct the way new

ideas, methods and approaches have grown out of reactions to the prevailing paradigms of previous periods. Because of this, it seems strange now to think that many educators are not paying attention to the significance of being modern in their practice which means to be practical, creative and self-motivated.

CLIL Definition

The short form CLIL was first defined in 1994, and launched in 1996 by UNICOM in Finland and the European policy for Dutch Education. Marsh (2002) describes educational methods in which “subjects are taught through a

foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language.” This definition shows how CLIL not only implies the teaching of Content through English but explains the significance and potential that language has when teaching content. Teachers need to keep in mind that students are learning content through a language that demands instruction and background knowledge.

Therefore, the teachersought to plan content lessons that comprise a target language goal.

If one considers the dual focus of the other methods, the term CLIL becomes an umbrella term to include “learning through any language that is not the first language of the learner” (Ball, 2006). In effect, the educational system needs to be aware that while learning a foreign language, teaching content is implied in language learning while pragmatics, vocabulary and structures, among other linguistic features, are implied in the content being taught. CLIL helps teaching the foreign language, whereas, students learn a subject.

Marsh (2003) opines that CLIL includes a course of action when it is implemented efficiently, when students learn a subject; geography, history, etc., or science through the medium of a foreign language; foreign language acts as a vehicle for learning, as a result, teachers plan integrating not only content and language but also measures by stating how content will be taught in a such a way that it is important for every student. Content and Language Learning is an instructional approach too.

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) refers to any dual-focused education context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content. It is dual-focused because whereas attention may be predominantly on either subject specific content or language, both are always accommodated. (Marsh, 2003, ELC Information Bulletin 9)

CLIL focusses on interdisciplinary curriculum or cross-curricularpreparation. In this situation, teachers teaching English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), Language Across the Curriculum (LAC), Content Based Instruction (CBI), Content Based Language Teaching(CBLT), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or any form of Bilingual Education apply CLIL. From the time when English turned out to be the governing language in our social order, a need for language and content integrated learning arose in order to prepare future professionals to face this fast-changing world. This situation gives the learning of a foreign language the importance that it had never had before in the curriculum. It provides numerous advantages to the students in equipping themselves to meet the challengesposed by the new trends in the modern world.Students need to learn a language to deal with the challenges of this society; the studied language may offer a better status and the responsibility to use it for different purposes. In order to show the use of language, students should do some assignments, for example.

When using CLIL, both language and content are consecutively given attention asboth are essential in the learning process. The language is used as a tool to learn the contents of the subject, and these contents are used as a meaningful medium to learn the language.

CLIL Dimensions and Focuses

Marsh et al. (2001) mentions five fundamental dimensions that make a distinction of CLIL as an instructional approach:

1. Culture, 2. Environment, 3. Content, 4. Language & 5. Learning

Ball (2006) thinks that these dimensions are the basis for CLIL. Keeping in mind content and language implies both communication and knowledge, it is proper to consider these five dimensionswhich offer a framework for the approach.

First, Culture dimension: Itcontributes to the growth of intercultural knowledge resulting in most of the cases in cultural understanding. Culture dimension helps to introduce wider cultural context, learning about specific neighboringcountries and regions.

Second, Environment: CLIL prepares for internalization which is nowadays one of the main goals of the educational system where the environment plays a big role. The program curriculum may be heavily influenced by specific environmental needs or opportunities identified in the institution.Students should prepare for further studies or work which involves different languages, so as to get ready to face any culture with the necessary skills to take an examination in which their proficiency is appreciated. When integrating content and language, students have the opportunity to attain both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language

Proficiency (CALPS) with the former representing the social language skills and the latter the language skills to handle academic requirements (Cummins, 2000). It helps to communicate academically and, socially, it opens new borders while encouraging students to explore employment opportunities across the globe.

Third Content: CLIL provides opportunities to learn content all the way through different perspectives. Marsh et al (2001) claims that "Languages, and the cultures associated with them, sometimes reveal differing world-views that can be seen in the ways in which some content is taught." One evident example lies in how educational curricula in different countries may explain shared chronological events. CLIL enables learners to learn through these different perspectives that can lead to achieving an understanding of the content. Handling a subject matter from different perspectives certainly fosters decisive thinking and broadens students' perspectives on diverse issues. The Content aspect even offers access to target language terms. CLIL is appropriate to all levels of education, from elementary to graduate or vocational to professional studies.

Learning the fourth dimension: Marsh (2001) affirms that CLIL complements individual learning strategies. CLIL mainly adapts to the learner-centered methodologies that try to advance learning by paying attention to students' needs in terms of student thinking and social skills. One broad issue relates to how the brain processes information (Sousa, 2006). Brain differentiates among learners, different learning styles or even how the arts influence learning. Learning dimension suggests that CLIL helps to increase learner motivation which is at the very heart of the education system.

Fifth Language Dimension: CLIL is an important approach to improve overall target language competence. According to Marsh, this one is the most common reason, both historically and more recently, for the introduction of CLIL. It enhances the language experience through the integration of language and non-language teaching.

The five dimensions lastly enrich student's attitudes and their profiles by enhancing their competence in the foreign language. This focal point often involves a learner being able to use a language for specific purposes while developing cultural, personal and social understanding. Marsh et al. (2001) points out that the dimensions are idealized and must not be viewed as standing alone, since they are usually closely interrelated in CLIL implementation.

CLIL Implementation and Expansion

Teacher training is one of the most relevant aspects in the professional development of teachers. Subject teachers must be effectively trained in the target language, while, at the same time, language teachers teaching content need to be trained in the core subject. It can be said that CLIL supports real cooperation among teachers from different areas and departments as well as teaching collaboratively.

CLIL is a rational way of doubling the amount of exposure to the language, without the necessity of adding more scope in the timetable for language lessons. Students increase language instruction time while acquiring new concepts. The language can be acquired by normal means, leading to genuine use of it. CLIL is based on language acquisition rather than imposed learning. Teaching subject content in foreign language makes the use of that language more contextualized, factual and meaningful for students. Language is to fulfill real purposes, its use is valid and much more meaningful for the students, and as an additional outcome, motivation is improved.

Making use of innovative materials and methods can be an appealing factor for students as well as teachers. Study materials which address topics that students are familiar with and, if possible, which they have recently studied in their native language, will enable students to learn further as they are already acquainted with a lot of content and context. This acquaintance enables them to pay attention to the information that they might otherwise ignore. As earlier mentioned, while explaining the CLIL dimensions in terms of the Language, Content and Environment, study materials need to be chosen according to social contexts and the learner's level and interests. They must reflect existing knowledge, contextual clues and thinking skills and if possible the inclusion of interdisciplinary experiences that motivate the learner's active participation.

CLIL implementation demands that educational institutions offer teachers ample opportunities for the professional development, enhanced teaching and learning sessions. Teaching practising the CLIL approach differs from the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) mode. In the EFL, the study material topics are predetermined by interest or age-related factors; that is, students, in one unit, can go for discussing friendship and in the next one move on to environment pollution. The contents must be disposable, they serve to introduce or go about practising a linguistic objective, and they may not be goals by themselves. In CLIL, students will be using the language meaningfully and higher cognitive skills will be keenly developed - judging, analyzing, categorizing, arguing, comparing etc., CLIL develops oral communication skills and brings cultural awareness among the learners. Emphasis must be laid on teacher training on how to deal with diverse topics, on how to plan lessons for diversity or multilevel skills. Teachers need direction on how to assess students, whereas content is the focus, but the means is language. Though we are aware of that for the new technologies, the Internet, the World Wide Web and other ways to be connected with the outside world, English is the lingua franca. Therefore, CLIL in addition provides the opportunity of social inclusion and a broad cultural perception.

Unless and until the teachers are not supported by the authorities of the educational institutions, no method or approach can work wonders. CLIL believes in teachers' expertise and their ability to productively implement modern technology.

CONCLUSION

Education signifies innovation in the adaptation and adoption of different approaches as well as methodologies. CLIL is an instructional approach with the purpose of encouraging content knowledge through language which requires careful planning according to different contexts and present day demands of the industry.

For the implementation of the CLIL approach, there are some considerations: intercultural communication, policies, subject knowledge, language proficiency, and teacher training among others. Teachers of English must work closely with the subject teachers to make certain that language improvement is properly achieved: in other words, content and language are really integrated. The present article is a small effort to highlight the advantages of implementing CLIL method so that the students and teachers do well by engaging in critical thinking, academic performance and collaboration all the way through different interactions in the classroom teaching. Since English has developed into an essential skill, indispensable to any academic program across the world, it has come to occupy a position where it is becoming a subject by itself that students learn in order to improve their employment opportunities. CLIL, with the dual focused direction, envelopes this functional view of the English Language. It inculcates a hunger to learn in the learners. It also gives an opportunity to the students to think about and develop the language skills in general, even in their first language. In conclusion, to facilitate the implementation of CLIL in diverse contexts, authorities of the educational institutions need to reflect on and take a positive course of action in the following aspects: Teacher cooperation, sufficient study materials in the target language, adequate subject knowledge and decent target-language competence.

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