

Artículo de investigación

Writing skills developed through Language Integrated Content

Habilidades de escritura desarrolladas a través del contenido integrado de lenguaje
Habilidades de redação desenvolvidas por meio do conteúdo integrado à linguagem

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to find out writing skills for business purposes that can be developed through Language Integrated Content. This was a experimental study and data was collected by questionnaires. To conduct this research, 20 teachers were selected as statistical sample. the results showed that there is significant difference in the performance of the students in the experimental group in which the CLIL was used. Students in the control group were taught features of business writing in the traditional way. Some sample business letters were also shown to them. Language teachers had a definitely positive attitude towards CLIL. They were prepared to create content with deliberate integration of desired language items or ready to identify content from various subjects that are packed with language items.

Keywords: CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), writing skills, literary content, language integration, grammar.

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es descubrir las habilidades de escritura para fines comerciales que se pueden desarrollar a través del contenido integrado de Language. Este fue un estudio experimental y los datos fueron recolectados por cuestionarios. Para llevar a cabo esta investigación, 20 profesores fueron seleccionados como muestra estadística. los resultados mostraron que existe una diferencia significativa en el rendimiento de los estudiantes en el grupo experimental en el que se utilizó el CLIL. A los estudiantes del grupo de control se les enseñaron las características de la escritura empresarial de la manera tradicional. También se les mostraron algunas muestras de cartas comerciales. Los profesores de idiomas tenían una actitud definitivamente positiva hacia CLIL. Estaban preparados para crear contenido con la integración deliberada de los elementos del idioma deseado o listos para identificar el contenido de varias materias que están llenas de elementos del idioma.

Palabras claves: CLIL (Contenido y aprendizaje integrado de idiomas), habilidades de escritura, contenido literario, integración de idiomas, gramática.

Resumo

O objetivo do estudo é descobrir habilidades de escrita para fins comerciais que possam ser desenvolvidas através do Conteúdo Integrado da Linguagem. Este foi um estudo experimental e os dados foram coletados por questionários. Para conduzir esta pesquisa, 20 professores foram selecionados como amostra estatística. os resultados mostraram que há diferença significativa no desempenho dos alunos do grupo experimental em que o CLIL foi utilizado. Os alunos do grupo de controle foram ensinados recursos de escrita de negócios da maneira tradicional. Alguns exemplos de cartas comerciais também foram mostrados a eles. Os professores de línguas tinham uma atitude positiva em relação ao CLIL. Eles estavam preparados para criar conteúdo com integração deliberada de itens de linguagem desejados ou prontos para identificar conteúdo de vários assuntos que estão repletos de itens de linguagem.

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Palavras-chave: CLIL (Aprendizagem Integrada de Conteúdo e Linguagem), competências de escrita, conteúdo literário, integração linguística, gramática.

Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning is nothing but a new version of an age-old method. As Coyle says, “we are entering a new era of content and language integrated learning.” (Coyle, 2007). CLIL can be said to date back to the times when Latin was used as the language of instruction in Europe. Subjects like philosophy, law, theology etc. were taught in Latin. Scholars who were interested in the respective subjects learnt the subject as well as Latin through the subject content. In the last decade, CLIL has found tremendous interest in Europe. In Times of yore, a language book invariably consisted of a selection of passages and poems, stories, essays and plays. The underlying premise is that if the selection is apt, suitable to the age of learners, standard, and one that serves the objectives of learning, it is bound to bring about the desired change in learners and acquaint them with language elements. The method was pushed into the background as old and traditional since the advance in research and advent of innovative language teaching practices that resulted from studies in psychology, education, linguistics and philosophy. Integration of technology in education is insisted all over the world, and the Iraqi government encourages the use of technology by supporting it in many ways. New approaches led to new theories of second language learning. While the new methods flourished the benefits of CLIL were forgotten and neglected. Yet, some genuine linguists could not ignore the value of textual content loaded with potential language elements which can become valuable learning material particularly for students of EFL. CLIL is recommended in Europe where a great deal of value is given to the knowledge of foreign languages. According to the Eurydice Report (2006) conventional language teaching methods are not adequate for fulfilling the needs of future learners in a globalized society. In CLIL programmes, any foreign language can be used as a medium of instruction; but in most cases, it is English. (Baykalova et al, 2018).

- Significance of the study. EFL students find it difficult to master writing skills, both creative and business correspondence. They may not be interested in creative writing because the majority of EFL students study English for getting jobs and communicating effectively in the corporate world. Students who have to

communicate through the written mode regularly feel handicapped without sufficient knowledge of English and necessary rules, formats and norms. At times, they may feel embarrassed if they happen to overlook etiquettes in writing and someone points it out to them. New trends in EFL focus on developing all the four language skills from the corporate point of view. Accordingly, they design a syllabus consisting of a number of sentence patterns, vocabulary and conversational situations. Drilling and practice is emphasized complemented by role playing and few activities as dictated by new methods (Hassan et al, 2019).

The researcher is of the opinion that the learners of EFL find the whole exercise meaningless and mechanical. At times, learners have to remember rules or mug up patterns, words and meanings. Such a syllabus that focuses on a purely functional dimension of language is without charm and unable to arouse the interest of learners (Tambunan, 2018).

The researcher felt the need to do away with the mechanical part of the learning process by providing the EFL learners with interesting, meaningful content that would be capable of sustaining their interest. The researcher believes that if the content is specially prepared or modified to suit the needs of learners and is packed with the desired language elements that cater to business communication, the purpose will be served. Hence the researcher selected first year college students for the experiment, pursuing a degree in commerce and who would be graduating in business related subjects (Hojati et al, 2014).

One might feel that by teaching short stories or literary passages, only creative writing skills can be developed. However, the researcher wants to show that if basic writing skills are mastered, an individual can deal with every kind of writing effectively, including business writing which is extremely formal in nature.

The researcher assumes that every individual has an innate love for creative language that stories are universally popular and that literary passages can fulfil the natural artistic, aesthetic potential and at the same time, develop language skills incidentally. CLIL is particularly significant when the medium of instruction is other than L1.

In countries where there are multiple first languages, a second language is adopted as the medium of instruction, as in countries like South Africa and India. Coyle (2007) suggest that “convert a language problem into a language potential.” Otherwise, proactively perceived CLIL allows creation of situations which reinforce multilingualism.

Travelling to foreign countries for study or trade has become very common. Thus, the study of foreign languages has been promoted in European school curricula. Globalization has led the younger generation to become acutely aware of the significance of multi-language skills in the international market. CLIL classes take care that learners get plenty of opportunities to process and use foreign languages. CLIL pupils are expected to learn more language for social communication and in order to develop considerable academic language proficiency.

- Aims and objectives.

- To develop suitable content for teaching business writing skills to college students, integrating it with language components.
- To implement the CLIL treatment in the classroom.
- To test the effectiveness of CLIL in developing business writing skills of students.
- To understand the viewpoint of teachers regarding the effectiveness of use of CLIL in the classroom for development of specialized writing skills at college level.

- **Limits.** The study is limited to students and teachers from College of Education IBN Rushd for Human Sciences, English department.

- **Procedure.** The sample students were divided into 2 equal groups. The control group was taught business writing in the normal way. The experimental group was given CLIL content. After three weeks of practice. A test was conducted on both the groups and the performance was compared. The t-value was computed to understand the difference in performance of both groups. The attitude of teachers was tested through a questionnaire.

Theoretical Background

The term CLIL was first coined in 1994 in Europe. CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used

for the learning and teaching of both content and language’. With regard to ELT, CLIL is quite similar to previous methods like ‘Content based instruction’ or ‘Bilingual Education’ or ‘English across the curriculum’. Whatever the label what is emphasized in all three methods is integration of language elements in the content. The content is taught in a language which is not the learner’s mother tongue. Natural flow of language is embedded in the content. Language is acquired in real-life situations. Fluency in the use of language is given more importance in CLIL rather than errors. Errors are natural in language learning.

CLIL assumes that understanding subject content is not affected by lack of language competency. Most CLIL programmes being followed in many countries are yet in an experimental stage. Sound research in CLIL has not been conducted until date to establish the method in its own rights.

During the 1980s, a need was felt in US to find alternatives to classroom practices that catered to learners from immigrant communities, where content-based language teaching was introduced (Washburn, 1991).

Johnson and Swain (1997) identified some key features that are typical to a CLIL immersion programme. Accordingly, following are the principles of CLIL:

- In CLIL programmes only L2 is the language of instruction.
- There is over support for development of L1
- Learners have limited knowledge of L2
- Teachers are competent to handle the dual language programme
- The L1 and L2 curricula are parallel.
- The classroom culture is of L1 and not L2 community

- **Review of Literature.** CLIL means teaching content or subject in a non-native or target language. Hence, there is confusion in the teaching community as to who should use CLIL: language teachers or subject teachers. However, the underlying essence of CLIL is that “Second language content teachers are language teachers. There is a difference between English Medium Instruction and CLIL as the former implies the use of English to teach academic subjects while the latter does not necessarily involve an overt focus on language (Dearden, 2014). ‘I’ in CLIL is crucial. It refers to ‘integrated’ learning that means that pupils learn both content of the subject and the target language at the same time.. Angeliki and Thomai (2015) in their study

compare the impact of CLIL on young learners' strategy use in three CLIL and non-CLIL primary classes. They have also considered the impact of age and gender on the use of strategies. They administered a questionnaire to the pupils on the basis of which they concluded that CLIL classes have a certain positive impact. The learners also said that they use more strategies than their non-CLIL peers. The findings of this study continue to indicate important differences between CLIL and non-CLIL students regarding the type and range of strategies that are preferred and how often they are used.

Many studies have found higher EFL proficiency levels for pupils attending CLIL classes in addition to regular language classes. This was the case even when pupils were at the very early stages of CLIL. Most studies on CLIL focus on the effect of various CLIL strategies used in the classroom. These strategies are employed at school level. This study aims to study the effect of CLIL in improving the business writing skills of college level students.

Research studies that focus on affective outcomes such as motivation, positive attitudes towards language learning, satisfaction and increased confidence have also showed good results as far as CLIL learners are concerned. CLIL learners tend to be more motivated to learn the foreign language than their non-CLIL counterparts and have more positive attitudes towards language learning.

They exhibit better communication skills and experience satisfaction when they succeed in learning the various subjects in the foreign language. It is a feeling that boosts their motivation and confidence.

Methodology

- Data collection tools.

- Mean scores obtained from pre-test and post-test
- Questionnaires for teachers / instructors

- Participants and implementation. 20 teachers were selected for the experiment. Since only 4 teachers from College of Education IBN Rushd for Human Sciences are experienced in using CLIL, teachers from outside colleges were also included in the study. The criterion was that they must have an experience of implementing CLIL in the classroom for minimum 3 years. Out of 20, 10 were subject teachers and 10 were language teachers.

144 students pursuing English as a second language from the English department were included in the study.

The teachers were asked 10 relevant yes/no questions. The data collected was tabulated systematically and the percentage of positive and negative responses was calculated. The performance of students in the control group and experimental group were compared by calculating the t score to find out the difference.

Students in the experimental group were presented with a paragraph that described a fictional event. In the event was included a formal business letter. The letter was embedded in the event and seemed to be part of it. Students were taught the fictional event including the letter. Then they were asked to notice some sentence constructions that sounded different. The teacher explained that the style was formal because they were business letters. Students also discussed the features of the business letter and pointed out the special norms followed. This session was followed by a home assignment in which the students wrote business letters on the topic given by the teacher.

- Advantages of CLIL

- Achieving high degree of language awareness
- Accommodating diverse learning styles
- Provides greater exposure to L2
- Helps to improve communicative competence
- Increases learner motivation
- Useful for all four language skills

Data Analysis

On the basis of the responses of teachers, it was observed that most of the subject teachers found it difficult to prepare content that included linguistic elements. They said that they would be glad to get readymade, from language teachers. They were also reluctant to evaluate students for linguistic competencies.

Most language teachers said that although it is easy to create content integrated with desired language elements, there is readymade content available in every subject. Only one must be able to identify which language elements it contains. A volume of creative literary pieces rich in language content exists, in all subjects as well. While the subject teachers did not object to CLIL, they seemed to be less enthusiastic than the language teachers. All the teachers admitted

that students enjoyed CLIL classes. They found them engaging, fruitful and meaningful.

Subject teachers said that they had to prepare the content by themselves because no such readymade content for say History or Geography is available. One has to deliberately fill History with desired linguistic elements, which is rather difficult for non-language teachers.

- Research design. A fictional event was created by the researcher for the purpose. The event was of general interest for college students. It

included a formal business letter that contained typical phrases and expressions that are necessary for business writing. The format, greetings, beginning, end etc were pointed out to the students deliberately, yet the teacher drew the attention of the students towards the content of the event in general and the letter in particular. The letter was taught as part of the content.

The two group design was used for the experiment.

Table 1. Table showing the design of the study

Groups	Independent variable	Treatment	Dependent variable
Experimental group	Mean score in test	CLIL programme	Mean score in test
Control group	Mean scores in test	--	Mean score in test

- **Statistical analysis.** The sample consisted of 144 students. It was divided into 2 equal groups, experimental and control group. There were 72 students in each group.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students

in the control group and experimental group after implementation of CLIL programme.

Table 2. Table showing the scores of students in both groups

	Experimental group	Control group
N	72	72
Mean in the final test	88.63 (M1)	83.24 (M2)
SD in the final test	24.36 (σ 1)	21.62 (σ 2)
Standard error of mean	2.89	2.57

Gain: $M1 - M2 = 5.39$

$t = D / SED$ (SED = 2.30)

$df = 72 - 1 = 71$

$= 5.39 / 2.30 = 2.34$

Correlation between final scores (experimental and control groups) = 0.65

Interpretation: Entering able t with df 71 the critical value of t at .05 level is 1.67. The obtained value of t is $2.34 > 1.67$. Hence the difference is significant at .05 level.

Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and research hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

This is a two-fold aim; it requires a special approach to teaching. The content subjects are not taught in a foreign language but through it and along with it. This cannot be possible without competent teachers who are not only masters in

their own subjects but at the same time, possess sufficient knowledge of English and grammar and vocabulary to integrate it in their teaching and content. CLIL being still in an experimental stage, special training can be arranged for subject teachers. The basics of grammar and vocabulary can be taught through short duration courses so that subject teachers are able to handle CLIL in their classes. Teachers must take care that the content delivery is not affected seriously while language inputs are given. They have to decide the priorities or change them from time to time, as per needs of the class. It must also be remembered that students should not be at a loss

while they study different subjects before they learn the basics of English. Such a condition may result in a total waste of time and energy.

It appears that CLIL is often performed in a rather casual manner and not very seriously. The obvious reason is that teachers do not get training for teaching in a foreign language. In order to realize the potential of CLIL it is necessary to provide training to university professors. The training must be adapted especially so that they will not be reluctant to adopt new methods like CLIL.

Today's graduates who look forward to enter the international market must be prepared linguistically as well as interculturally. The success of their employability depends upon these factors.

Conclusion

The above analysis shows that there is significant difference in the performance of the students in the experimental group in which the CLIL was used. Students in the control group were taught features of business writing in the traditional way. Some sample business letters were also shown to them. When the same items were integrated in a fictional passage, students were able to master them incidentally while learning fiction. At the same time, teachers admitted that they made less grammatical errors when they answered questions either orally or in written tests.

The questionnaire revealed that language teachers' attitude was more positive towards CLIL compared to that of subject teachers. Subject teachers seemed to be of the opinion that if they are provided with readymade content in their subject already integrated with linguistic items, they were willing to implement it. Or, they would teach the content of their subject as it is and perhaps some linguistic aspects would be picked up by the students incidentally, as every piece of content irrespective of the subject is bound to have a degree of language elements.

Language teachers had a definitely positive attitude towards CLIL. They were prepared to create content with deliberate integration of desired language items or ready to identify content from various subjects that are packed with language items. They also agreed that students found the lessons lively, meaningful and interesting.

Suggestions and Recommendations

There is need for more research in CLIL. Experiments can be carried out using CLIL at all levels from school level to college level. All 4 language skills may be developed through CLIL.

If CLIL is to be used on a large scale where there are multiple languages as in a country like India or in countries like Iraq where most of the instruction in various courses takes place through English in a non-English speaking place, then teachers must be appropriately trained to handle CLIL effectively.

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