

CLIL

A Helpful Teaching and Learning Approach in the Changing Indian Educational Scenario

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Abstract

Approaches towards language teaching and learning always remain under scrutiny in terms of their goals and scope, their aims and their extent. With time, language education has welcomed several approaches from communicative language teaching to cooperative language learning. The approach of Task-based instruction has also seen an increased acceptance as a preferred method for teaching and learning. However, all of the approaches face pertinent questions about how well they work in given circumstances and how they can contribute towards a multilingual language setting. The article aims to introduce the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach as a welcoming alternative to the approaches used at present at various academic levels. and it moves ahead from the traditional approaches. The article presents an intervention study conducted in the city of Guwahati, to highlight the views of students and teacher-observers about the CLIL approach. The study, in a detailed manner, touches upon the stages of pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention, to give an exact representation of how the approach works and helps the teaching and learning of content and language together. The article reflects findings of the intervention, along with analysis and also highlights the limitations of the study, so as to encourage more research in the area, and to help the approach grow.

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THE CONTEXT

Various conferences and webinars have been held in recent times on English Language Teaching and Development, which have broadly focused on language learning and teaching courses undertaken for higher academic levels in India, and also to seek explanations to pertinent questions, such as:

- What should be the goals of language teaching?
- What approach would work best, and in what circumstances?

The above questions will act as the research questions for the study, and the present article would look at the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach as a possible solution to the questions raised and will try to provide a clearer understanding of CLIL as a much needed approach in India.

WHAT IS CLIL?

'Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach, in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and languages.' (Coyle et al., 2010). The CLIL approach, emphasises both content and language, with the relative importance of one over the other, depending on the lesson and the type of CLIL the teacher wants to use. Coyle stated that CLIL is different from other approaches as it emphasises the unification of context, cognition, communication students and culture

(Coyle, 2007). Thus, the crux of CLIL is to improve the communicative expertise of the learners, along with their content knowledge. The approach is performance-based, working on the principles of WALT (We are learning to...) and WILF (What I am looking for...) popularised by the educational consultant Shirley Clarke, making it easier for learners to understand and verbalise learning objectives in a less abstract manner.

CLIL in the Indian context

In India, the adoption of CLIL is at nascent stage and mostly limited to school level of teaching and learning, different from the greater acceptance and development in most of the developed world. In Asia, the countries of Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia and Japan have extensively contributed to the growth and research of CLIL as an approach.

Vency and Ramganesch conducted a study at the secondary level, in which the teaching of English and science was done through CLIL. This study demonstrated that language learning was made possible by using science and employing the CLIL approach (Vency and Ramganesch, 2013). Fabian Marbaniang conducted a PhD. research on CLIL among the Khasi tribe in Meghalaya in the year 2016. The research put the approach to test and found significant improvements in the demonstrable outcomes of English language education among the Khasis in Meghalaya. Lal and George suggested that the content and

language teachers should add more depth to their existing knowledge, for CLIL to be successful in India. They stated that the teachers should learn about other subjects too, as it would help them as CLIL teachers (Lal and George, 2017).

An important CLIL project named CLIL@INDIA was running in India from 2016 to 2018 and was co-funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union. The project centre was at the Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka. The CLIL@INDIA project was a three-year project that aimed at introducing CLIL methodology and pedagogy to the Indian educational system, especially at the school level. The Project aimed at developing a new model of bilingual education by adapting the CLIL approach to the Indian context. The project started the study of CLIL adaptation by using pilot CLIL modules in primary schools, both in the public and private sectors. It also tried to disseminate knowledge to the relevant stakeholders, such as academia, non-profit educational organisations and policymakers. The project began in the year 2016 and focused on six languages, namely. English, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Marathi and Punjabi. The team at CLIL@INDIA had on board former state level teachers as their associates, who provided much-needed support for the lesson plans. Activities played a significant role in classroom teaching, and the research associates were assigned the task of preparing charts, displays and

other fun activities for all the schools. The results from the intervention did showcase that CLIL, as a new method of education, can mainly address multilingualism in a much better way and that with the right impetus, it has the potential to be an alternative approach to the present system of education in India.

Need and Significance of the Study

This article aims at discussing and introducing the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach as a welcoming alternative to the approaches presently used at various academic levels. The need for this paper stems from the vital need of the educational system to introduce new and effective approaches to the teaching and learning process. The significance of this paper shall be in introducing CLIL as an approach, which can bridge the gap between language and content that shall benefit teachers and learners in their teaching-learning process.

Research Methodology

The present study is a quasi-experimental intervention research based on field work. It is dual in nature, as it is both exploratory and experimental. The qualitative nature of the research shall help in understanding the underlying motivations, reasons and opinions of the sample. The intervention study took place in three phases, namely the

pre-intervention phase, intervention phase and post-intervention phase.

The study used the following tools:

- In the pre-intervention phase, a need analysis was conducted, with the help of a questionnaire, devised to know language needs of the learners.
- The intervention phase included a pre-test, administered to check the language level and content understanding of the learners. Classroom observation by a teacher documented the teaching practices and methods applied to teach content and language in an integrated manner—the teacher concerned interspersing between being the language teacher as well as the content teacher.
- The post-intervention phase included a questionnaire, with both open- and close-ended questions that helped to decipher the learners' assessment of the course. Second, a post-test was conducted to test, both, the language and content knowledge of the students and put the intervention phase to test. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with teachers and learners. The interviews helped in the qualitative research and to investigate and broaden the answers given by the interviewees.

The Study

The intervention study was held at the institution—Kamrup College of Vocational Training (KCVT) in

Guwahati, Assam. The study included 20 students from the Secretarial Practice course, which was also the content area for the study. This study was for a period of five days. The classes were held for two hours daily, with a total time of ten hours for the intervention. Firstly, a need analysis was conducted before the intervention that helped understand the language needs of the learners. The need analysis questionnaire was designed based on the material of need analysis provided by the British Council, which states, 'Needs analysis is a part of building learner awareness and autonomy. Asking learners what they feel they need to practice is a good initial step. As well as providing data, it can encourage them to start thinking about their learning and taking responsibility for it.' (<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/needs-analysis>)

Next, a pre-test was conducted before the intervention to check the language level of the students. The test questions designed looked into the overall ability of the learners and included questions, which ranged from easy to challenging following a linear graph. The pre-test aimed at testing the language ability of the students in the word, sentence and paragraph level of language teaching and learning. This test was designed based on ASER 2007: Comprehension tasks. A sample of the question paper is given in Material 1.

Material 1

Choose the best adjective to fill in the blanks.

- a) I am sorry. We had _____ toys earlier, but we sold them.
Few / Any/ Most/ Some
- b) Yes, I would like _____ cake.
Most / Few/ Many/ Some
- c) _____ people think our country needs a new education system.
Many/ Any/ Few/ Each
- d) Due to rain we didn't get _____ support.
Few/ Several/ Many/ Much

A content test was also devised for pre-testing in consultation with the content teacher. A sample of the question paper is in Material 2.

Material 2

1. How would you define an office space?
2. What is the primary role of a secretary?

Next, material devised for the intervention used DARTs or Directed Activities Related to Texts, as suggested by Davies and Greene (1984), in which a text is seen through the prism of both language and structure. According to the 4Cs curriculum by Coyle, a CLIL lesson is not merely a language or a content lesson. A CLIL lesson is a combination of Content (knowledge related to specific elements); Communication (language to learn); Cognition (developing thinking and understanding); and Culture (shared understanding

and alternate perspectives) as also mentioned with much similarity in 'CLIL: A Lesson Framework' by the British Council (<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/clil-a-lesson-framework>). In a CLIL lesson, all of the four language skills, viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing should come together to focus on input, understanding, thinking and delivery. The material devised for the lesson 'Record Management', were used in the intervention. The intervention lessons connected Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture, and made the lessons impactful for the learners. The lessons included the language section, which concentrated on 'Describing', and the cognition section looked into 'Application'. Vocabulary and grammar also played essential roles in the lesson. Adjectives used in describing were discussed in the grammar section that helped in the understanding of both the content and language.

A few of the activities conducted during the intervention include: **Cloze activity**—to reinforce vocabulary development and usage in various contexts

Matching terms and definitions activity—to give the learners a sense of the contextual terms and their use

Multiple choice questions— used to help learners build on their thinking skills

Reading— as an activity used to help learners with their confidence

Speaking in pairs—used to encourage teamwork and discussion

Information gap— to help students build communication tactics and to understand the use of language

The intervention was closely monitored by the language and content teacher. The teacher-observer was provided with a checklist to assess the class. The checklist designed under the blueprint prepared by Mehisto et al. (2008) helped with the observation. The teacher-observer observed all the aims that the CLIL teacher had mentioned, thoroughly and objectively. The data collected from the checklist was utilised in consonance with the semi-structured interview of the teacher to draw a final analysis.

The views of the students were collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire had two sections—open-ended questions and close-ended questions. Thirteen close-ended questions tried to know the students' reaction towards the classes and the CLIL approach. The seven open-ended questions tried to gauge the extent of receptivity of the CLIL approach among the students.

The final, post-test was conducted to check the Content and Language Learning of the students using the CLIL

approach. The final post-test focused on listening and speaking skills, as the needs of the job-market placed a premium on these two given skills. Two questions based on content and language given to the learners tested their skills. To mark the students for their listening and speaking skills in the formative assessment during the post-intervention stage, 'Rubrics, Band scales and Boxing weights' (Ball et al., 2019) were collectively referred to. These bases of assessment analysis helped understand the growth of learners in both content and language. A Holistic Rubric (at Table 1) was formed, to fairly judge the students based on their competence.

The assessment for the intervention was formative, made test an approach—a new method of teaching and learning. The criteria for choosing the formative assessment was to help the learners with their self-assessment and also encourage peer assessment. This formative assessment is more associated with on-going continuous assessment. It is linked to the notion of 'assessment for learning', in that it is more diagnostic than the others, and usually takes place during a course. It also includes within its broader remit practices, such as self-assessment, peer assessment and performance assessment.' (Ball et al., 2019).

Findings

The findings of the need analysis showed the apparent need of the learners to improve their writing and speaking skills, while being least

Table 1
Holistic Rubrics

Criteria	Excellent— 5	Good— 4	Satisfactory— 3	Almost satisfactory— 2
Students could use language confidently	Expresses ideas, opinions and feelings clearly and in an engaging manner. + fluency	Expresses ideas, opinions and feelings clearly but needs work in fluency	Expresses ideas, opinions, feelings with partial clarity	Expresses ideas, opinions, feelings with limited clarity
Students could use and understand content terms	Listens attentively to ideas and opinions, understands it and uses it confidently while speaking	Listens attentively to ideas and opinions but hesitates a little while using the content words	Listens to some of the ideas and opinions but falls short in using them while speaking	Demonstrates limited ability to listen to ideas and opinions related to content. And finds it difficult to use content words while speaking
Active listening and interaction were seen	Listens attentively and interacts wilfully	Listens attentively but not very comfortable in interacting	Tries to listen but puts least efforts to interact	Demonstrates limited ability to listen or interact
Students could identify the information shared or question asked, and could form their own questions	Identifies, understands and asks insightful questions	Identifies and understands but lacks questioning skills	Basic identification and understanding without any questioning skills	Pays attention but finds it difficult to identify, understand and ask questions without help

concerned for their listening and reading skills. However, listening and reading skills are as important as writing and speaking skills for the secretarial practice course. This analysis further the understanding that without the development

of adequate skills of input; the development of the skills of output was difficult.

The pre-test findings disclosed that majority of the students had difficulty at the word level, which indicated their lack of vocabulary. At

the sentence and paragraph level they had a better result, which suggested on the emphasis of the writing skill with grammar in our education system. The content questions also showed the lack of understanding about the content area among the students.

The teacher-observer had observed the aims of the class and the methods using the checklist. The teacher even commented that such an approach would benefit the students in their Content and Language Development. In the semi-structured interview, the teacher-observer mentioned how she favoured such an approach as she felt there was a gap between the content of the subject and language education in the classes. Comments were made on how vocational education looked at employability and how such an approach used in the classroom would benefit the students in their careers.

The responses received from the students were positive. The students were excited about the approach and felt it could be useful in the future. The limited time allotted for the classes was mentioned as a hindrance to understand the approach better, and they expressed their wish for longer CLIL classes, to further imbibe the benefits and positive effects of the approach. In a random sampling method, five students were selected and interviewed informally. The students showed great interest in the approach and wished to carry forward their classes using the

approach that integrated the content of secretarial practice with English language learning.

The assessment rubric showed a high degree of confidence and awareness in both content and language among the learners. From the level of 'Below Average' to the level of 'Satisfactory' and 'Good', marked quite a leap of development for the learners under the CLIL approach.

The tools used—need analysis, pre-test, classroom observation, post-intervention questionnaire, post-test and the semi-structured interviews with learners and the teacher, were found to be very useful and helpful to carry forward this research. The tools of need analysis and pre-test helped understand the learners' previous knowledge and learning. This helped the teachers to either correct or widen the knowledge and learning base of the students, and also helped them with their lesson plan. Through classroom observation, a strict watch was kept on the functioning of the class and access the effectiveness of the intervention in real time. The tools of post-intervention questionnaire, post-test and semi-structured interviews helped analyse the intervention stage and get views of the students and teachers. These tools tested and questioned the learners' current level of development in language and content based on the interventional study, which used the CLIL approach.

Analysis

The study conducted put the research questions to test by providing answers that could prove beneficial in future. The CLIL approach tried to present the view that the goal of language teaching is to make learners confident and able users of the language, to help in both their content and language needs. This approach also suggested that the aim of a language course should be overall development of the learner in both—content and language, as each of them is important. ‘...the content of core subjects, though designed to be transacted preferably in English (as most of the content textbooks are pared in English) following a Content Based ‘immersion’ model, is often taught in the mother tongue, with the teacher playing the role of a translator. The unfortunate result is the dual inadequacy and incompetency in the two targeted aims, content learning and proficiency in the second language.’ (Lal and George, 2017, p. 39).

In the higher academic levels, wherein content and language development work simultaneously, an approach, such as CLIL can be beneficial with its emphasis on integration. ‘The CLIL students are aware of the advantages and disadvantages of CLIL. When being asked about advantages they mostly enumerate better opportunities in the future. They seem to treat CLIL as a way towards achieving their goals.’ (Papaja, 2012, p. 53). Culture too plays a significant role in the

CLIL process; the native language of the learners is seen as an aid in the given multilingual language learning setting. ‘...CLIL materials can be time consuming and challenging to produce, collaborative work can reduce the load and become a way of sharing materials, practices and experiences. In doing so, (one)...can explore new avenues for professional development and reflect on CLIL principles and CLIL enactment according to curricular demands and local needs and opportunities.’ (Banegas, 2015, p. 32).

The study showed a major difference in the pre- and post-test when compared. The 20 students were hesitant while writing the pre-test and showed low self-esteem in terms of language and content skills before the intervention, but after the intervention, the students showed major changes. They displayed confidence in the areas taught and were ready to speak and share their thoughts. The score for majority of students in the pre-test was ‘Below Average’ but in the post-test, the majority of students were in the ‘Good and Satisfactory’ rating.

The study also indicated the need for Formative Assessment as, ‘The task-based nature of formative assessment provides a wider variety of classroom interaction that it requires, to assess the child; inevitably making it more comfortable candidate for the assessment in CLIL. Didactic units tend to be longer, for conceptual sequencing, more group work, and with a greater choice of

formats available for the presentation of work. These elements increase the possibilities for teachers to work out the schemes of on-going assessment that take procedural and process-oriented objectives into account.' (Ball et al., 2019)

The study also highlights the areas of development in terms of parameters of the CLIL approach, the guidelines and criteria for designing material, the validity and authenticity of the material, the objectives and outcomes of the assessments, and the role of teachers and learners in the system of teaching and learning.

CONCLUSION

This study was a minimal attempt to bring the approach of CLIL into higher

academic levels of education through the vocational and skill sector. The approach needs more research in various areas, to help in its growth and to establish it as an approach, which will work best in the Indian educational scenario. The National Education Policy 2020 provides for the integration of various subjects, removing the divide between the content areas and focusing towards more practical and applied knowledge. In the light of this new policy, CLIL as an approach can be extremely helpful in bridging the Content and Language gap for the learners and to make the teachers more equipped with the amalgamated use of language and content.

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