CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING CLIL (CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING)

Tashmatova Gulnara Rafailovna
Teacher of English Language Department
Faculty of Foreign Languages Fergana State University
Fergana City, Republic of Uzbekistan

Abstract

Being one of the most effective teaching methods of both language and content subjects, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has spread all over the world in the past few years. Most of the educational institutions have started to integrate this technology in their curriculum and hire content teachers with appropriate language level. However, the implementation of CLIL is not easy as it may seem as this decision requires new curriculum, new pedagogy and qualified staff. The article reveals the main problems of implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning in teaching as well as primary considerations while designing the curriculum. The purpose of the article is to identify the main problems of CLIL implementation and point at the most viable ways of shifting to this new integrated way of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning, content learning, bilingual education, curriculum, syllabus, materials design, assessment, curriculum adoption.

Introduction

Implementing CLIL in Uzbekistan context in particular and in the foreign language acquisition context in general faces a number of challenges. These challenges are mentioned as follow. CLIL is quite a new approach in teaching and not all teachers know how to integrate it in their teaching. The use of CLIL requires qualified teachers who can deal with the problems related to the language and subject matters. Therefore, one of the most challenges that teachers may face while implementing CLIL is the potential of teachers to apply this method. Most content teachers in Uzbekistan do not speak English at the required level, so teaching the content of their subject in a foreign language cannot be possible without trained teacher staff. First of all, teachers should be able to at least explain and communicate in the target language. Moreover, these teachers have to adapt themselves with the new system, curriculum and policies, which usually can take a semester or two depending on the teacher and his/her abilities to understand and get insight from the new teaching approach. It

could be easy to check teachers` language level but it is difficult to check the abilities and their background knowledge about teaching. In fact, it is time consuming and there are no real guidelines to evaluate their practices. Hoare (2010) states that when institutions choose teachers for CLIL, they tend to choose the ones with excellent English proficiency and the ones who can accept new ways of teaching. From our experience this is not always the case where the schools and colleges sometimes need to fulfill the shortage of teachers by ignoring the level of these teachers.

Hoare (2010) and Lorenzo (2008) argue that teachers have limited understanding of theories and rationales of CLIL, due to the lack of enough and efficient training of language teachers. In addition, Costa and Angelo (2011) illustrate that one of the reasons that English-Medium Education fails is teachers' incorrect ways of teaching. Graaff et al (2007) suggest that CLIL teachers are supposed to facilitate the input, the meaning-focused processing, form-focused processing, output production and the use of different strategies. Similarly, the absence of proper training has led teachers into a rather uncomfortable situation (Moate, 2011). Teachers even feel 'tired, stressful and fearful' when they try to implement foreign language mediated approach of teaching (ibid). This feeling makes teachers more confused and willing to complete the academic years. We believe that this is one of the main reasons why expatriate teachers leave before they even complete their period.

Materials, Assessment and Curriculum Adoption

The learners studying through CLIL program at schools learn their content subjects in English. It is clear that each subject/major will require its own unique materials including course books, educational aids, and assessment designed for each one of them. The main problem of implementing CLIL at educational institutions is a lack or shortage of resources. Teachers sometimes have to design their own materials, which is time-consuming. Dalton-Puffer (2007) states that it is quite obvious that CLIL classes are not designed for language goals but there are still language expectations in CLIL classrooms. The danger of CLIL materials is that it has to cover both linguistic and content aspects (Coyle et al, 2010). This means that the current syllabus has to be reviewed and new course books have to be designed that suits the needs and objectives for each major. According to Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010: 372), 'the materials used in immersion programmes are aimed at native speakers, whereas CLIL teachers often use abridged materials'. This suggests another difference between CLIL and other approaches used in Bilingual education.

The assessment system in CLIL varies whether to assess language or content and what type of measurements used (Coyle et al, 2010). Teachers are asked to create new ways

of assessment that suits both matters of implementing CLIL. The current assessment criteria of CLIL depend on the regular tests (Morgan, 2006). However, according to Colombo and Furbush (2009), the disadvantage of regular tests is that they fail to assess various levels of English language. Regular tests mainly focus on the content areas and pay little attention to the language features (Morgan, 2006; Colombo and Furbush, 2009). As a result, Colombo and Furbush (2009) listed three principles of assessment. First: to measure deep comprehension of both the subject and the language conducted by the teacher. Second: using various ways of measurement. Third: matching assessments with students' performances.

Content, Levels, and Resources to be Provided

Most teachers at secondary state schools have very little knowledge about CLIL or have no clue what CLIL is all about. Therefore, content of the new syllabus and whether to focus on language or content is an issue that has to be discussed and addressed. As an example, if the content is difficult, learners will tend to use their L1. Therefore, the opportunities of using L2 might be limited (Bruton, 2011; Seikkula-Leino, 2007). In addition, Lorenzo (2008) claims that teachers in CLIL classes tend to spend more time on the content rather than L2 input. We believe that it depends whether the teacher is the language teacher or the major teacher. Again, this will reflect on the selection of teachers whether to concentrate on language teachers or subject teachers.

Another issue is the level of the new syllabus and the criteria of moving from one level to another at some educational institutions. This will require consultation and some school and college policies have to be amended. This is why the educational system of the school might also affect the implementation of CLIL (Bruton, 2011).

Implementing CLIL will of course require new resources. The educational establishments have to arrange and prepare all materials needed for both students and teachers. Students will basically need new course books and new recourses to be placed in the library. Teachers of each major will require specific materials and tools. For example, biology teachers may require some materials for demonstration in their classes and this is the case with all other majors. Teachers' rooms have to be fully equipped with all needed requirements. Training also might be unavailable for most teaching staff due to the financial circumstances (Bruton, 2011). In general, there will be additional expenses to implement this approach but still can be achieved if CLIL implemented gradually and not out of a sudden decision.

Pedagogical Implications and Qualified CLIL Teachers

First, it is well known that teachers who are qualified to use CLIL in teaching are not usually available. Moreover, the levels of the teachers and how they teach become very vital in implementing CLIL in classrooms (Coyle et al, 2010). This tells us that we need to train and develop our current resources -teachers- to be the first pillar of implementing CLIL. Therefore, the best way is to train teachers, the new teachers in particular. Obviously, the college should provide a plan for their two years teaching contract. The plan must include training and the proposed achievements among the two years. This allows the new teachers to renew their contract after their first period due to the fact that the institute offers training opportunities rather than working routinely.

The lack of training has lead teachers into a rather uncomfortable situation (Moate, 2011). It also gives the management of the college an opportunity to keep the current teachers rather than asking for new teachers. The management of English language center should take into account group training, peer observation and university-wide awareness rising constantly with the college management. Bruton (2011) suggests efficient teacher training in the development of the language, content focusing on language and skills. Training should aim to develop the needed skills for teachers to implement proper CLIL. Each teacher will be allocated with subject tutor from the beginning of his work at the college. This allows the teacher to acquire and gain knowledge about the content of the specialization. Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols, (2008) propose subject and language teachers collaborate and participate their issues into their classes.

Students' Awareness

Students often tend to compare with other systems applied in other colleges and they may ask why they study English in this method rather than the usual general classes. Therefore, there is a need to conduct a conference about the implementation of CLIL to inform students and rise awareness about its usefulness and to address any doubt raise by students. Introducing CLIL for learners so they have awareness and reason for studying content and how it facilitates their studies. This can be in an orientation at the beginning of the semester or academic term or can be explained by teachers. Informing students about the implementation of CLIL will attract their attention and will raise doubts of misunderstanding. This will lead for quality implementation of CLIL.

Syllabus Development and College Policies

The new syllabus should follow the objectives and vision of the school or college. Therefore, it is very important to be consistent with college/school rules and bylaws. As a result, making some standards regarding the application of CLIL will promote the actual and effective implication. The policies of the College have to be revised in a way that suits all three parties: institution, teachers and students. The new framework of implementing CLIL should present a new system of education that satisfies teachers' practices and students' needs. Lasagabaster (2008) mentioned that in fact making my context, especially my college to be a leading institute in the area on the best practices and experienced common place for CLIL programs. Collaboration with other colleges, universities, and institutions will increase the level of good practice. Taking the views and ideas of other similar contexts will benefit the actual practice of CLIL.

Materials, Assessment System and Resources

Teachers can prepare their own materials once they can consider both language and content learning. They can also modify the current materials according to the specific purposes and use discussed with the subject teacher. Teachers can use all present materials including magazines, articles and academic textbooks. In addition, it is more important to train teachers on how they can implement CLIL and make full use of classroom practice. Teachers can provide students with possible resources of their study and encourage students to explore more by themselves. Language and subject teachers should have a sequence of regular meetings and discuss what to be included and what to omit. These meetings are concluded with one main meeting with other subject and language teachers to decide learners' needs and the new trends in the field so they can adopt efficient and proper materials.

Conclusion

Content and Language Integrated Learning is a promising area of study and it represents unique methods of delivering language with content of different subjects. It is also a complex method and different variables are included in this process. Therefore, future studies should take in account different variables and paths for implementing CLIL in this context in particular. This will affect the final conclusion and success of implementing CLIL properly and to developed current practices of this method. This paper presented four angles of implementing CLIL at the Higher College of Technology. It started with a discussion about the position of CLIL in bilingual education and its relation to other approaches. This paper then highlighted the

benefits and challenges of CLIL at the Higher Colleges of Technology in Oman. Thereafter, it concluded with the best ways and practices on how to implement CLIL.

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