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EXPLORING THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USEFULNESS OF CLIL MODULES AND ICT INTEGRATED LEARNING IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This study outlines students' perceptions of the usefulness of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) modules and ICT integrated learning in English lessons at a local public university. CLIL offers the ability to illustrate to students that both the material and language in CLIL lessons are given equal consideration. As it can be part of other subjects such as history, geography, arts and science, English is not a secluded, individual subject, so students should not be limited to only memorising grammar rules and performing grammar exercises in their workbook. The key purpose of this analysis is to explore first-year undergraduates' perceptions of the usefulness of the CLIL modules. Using reflective journal writing, this study used qualitative methods to gather students' views on how CLIL modules can boost English learning among undergraduates and to use ICT in CLIL lessons. There were 22 participants who were marked by the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) Bands 1 and 2 as low-intermediate English learners. The results showed positive feedback that the CLIL module is useful in their English lessons through the responses of the students. Most of the students said the lessons help to improve their understanding of English grammar as well as their communication abilities in English. This showed that in encouraging students to learn English with ICT in a modern way, CLIL plays a part.

Keywords: CLIL, ICT, perceptions, usefulness, English

INTRODUCTION

The trend in learning English has now shifted to a more contemporary way. We can see that more attention is given to English as it has emerged as a prominent language, which is widely used in international affairs such as economics, politics, science and technology. When English for Teaching Mathematics and Science (ETeMS) was first implemented in schools in 2003 in the Malaysian education system, it was seen as the correct step in the 21st century, in line with English as the language of science and technology. The *Memartabatkan Bahasa Melayu, Memantapkan Bahasa Inggeris* (MBMMBI) policy, which concentrated on empowering the Malay language and reinforcing the English language, later replaced this policy. This policy istargets at the students in primary and secondary levels and thus there is a gap in the transition period between secondary and tertiary level. Therefore, the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) along with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) would be highly appropriate to fill in the gap as they motivate them and facilitate the learning of English. Instead of being another ordinary English course enforced by the authority, it also provides the undergraduates with realistic and more meaningful language learning. Studies, however, have shown that there would be some drawbacks in teaching content subjects in another language apart from the mother tongue. ETEMS, for example, is no exception. Mohamad Nor, F, A. Aziz, M.&Jusoff, K. (2011, p. 39) carried out a survey in a boarding school in Johor, and found out that “learning Mathematics and Science in English is difficult for learners and their academic performances in these subjects have deteriorated. Although they did feel that their English has improved, there was no indication of this in their English exam results”.

Furthermore, the ability of the students to become proficient in English was not the main concern in ETEMS, as the emphasis more on the mathematics and science subjects. CLIL would also give us the opportunity to teach our students that English is more than a school topic and that it can be used beyond grammar for authentic purposes. Additionally, CLIL will help develop English language skills to a degree that will provide full development of language in and out of the language. In addition, CLIL may help to improve English language skills to a degree that would yield optimal success in and outside the classroom and realistic skills to incorporate English into other subjects. In other words, CLIL is critical and coincides with MBMMBI's new policy. CLIL addresses students at the tertiary level in this report, and it could also be seen as the continuation of the MBMMBI policy focused on students at the primary and secondary levels. From this perspective, within higher education institutions, CLIL could be regarded as an under-researched field.

Therefore, this research also corresponds to another proposal by the Ministry of Education that is to explore the use of ICT in the process of teaching and learning of the English language. As stated in the Malaysia

Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (2012), its usage could cater individual needs and the three models that are to be considered are self-directed online learning, interactive online tutoring and software-based learning guides. However, the proposal does not clearly state the usage of ICT in the English classes and this is another concern that needs to be addressed. In respond to this, CLIL fills in the gap by utilising Web 2.0 tools and online learning in the CLIL modules which would be the most appropriate as they have a lot of educational resources and allow students to be independent learners. As they work individually and in groups, they would be exposed to various ways of learning English such as through situated learning, critical and creative thinking skills and collaborative learning, instead of the traditional rote-learning and writing the answers of reading comprehension questions.

Literature Review

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Luczywek (2009) defined the historical implementation of CLIL in Poland, which has undergone a certain education reform and encouraged "cross curriculum teaching and learning." The new policy stressed the inclusion of several subjects and thus CLIL is carried out through three models, namely mono-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and in three models, according to the needs of the teaching and learning contexts. In order to test the effects of using English in teaching history and literature, the researcher used the mono-disciplinary model and argued that CLIL has successfully enabled students to learn the language along with the subjects of the content. The following figure was also suggested by Luczywek (2009) as a sample of a CLIL lesson based on Grammar (Past Tense) using texts from various fields, including Polish Literature, Physics, Astronomy and the Arts.

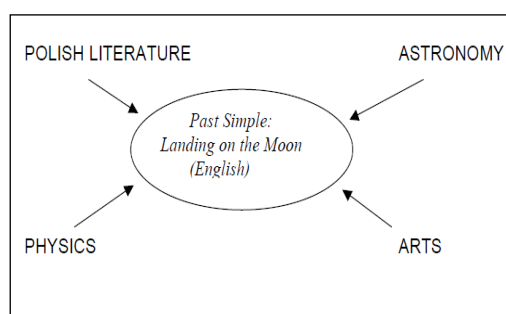


Figure 1: Monodisciplinary model

In addition, Martinez (2009) began a project in Science, History and Geography via CLIL for learners as young as 6-7 years of age. "Although it was a challenge, she reported that the students "... were inspired to contribute to the project" at the end of the project and eventually the students themselves "... became an involved part of their learning process (Martinez, 2009, p.67). Students will then have influence, as stated by

Mellow (2006), over what academic relevant data they want to learn and how long they want to spend performing the exercises.

In the Malaysian context, CLIL is interpreted as teaching school subjects such as science using another language i.e. English) and, similar to ETEMS, the emphasis is on the subject's content rather than the language. Ong, E. T., Alimon, H., Baharom, S., Md Yassin, S. & Lai Y. Y. Y. Y. Y. (2010) referred to ETEMS as 'Malaysian CLIL' and conducted a study examining the cognitive interest of primary school students in the subject of science when they were taught in English. Their results showed that students were mostly interested in the lower cognitive stage and the teacher-centered lessons. At Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, an earlier research was carried out to define the opportunities and challenges of teaching material subjects such as physics and chemistry (Gill, S.K., Tan, K. H., Ibrahim, N. & Nambiar, R., 2008). Apparently, their findings showed that the effectiveness of the two lecturers' lessons depended on their pedagogical techniques. In summary, the research on students' learning using CLIL at the tertiary level is often scarce in comparison to that dealing with the primary and secondary students.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The expansion of information and communication technology (ICT) world-wide has prompted its usage in the education field as well. Liu, Moore, Graham, and Lee (2002) reviewed 70 research studies on ICT in second language learning and some of the findings indicated that students' comprehension on language and participation in the lessons were enhanced, and ICT encouraged teacher-student interaction and collaborative learning. In another review of articles on ICT in classrooms by Kamlun & Nik Mohamed (2018), concluded that there are some factors towards the effectiveness of ICT in education particularly the school readiness that includes the availability of resources, and the skills and motivations of teachers and students. Martinez (2009) also stated that the use of internet in language learning led to learner autonomy even among young learners.

It is a common view that "with the advent of globalization and rapid growth in ICT, the world is 'wired'" (Foo & Richards, 2004, p.237). The term ICT is formerly associated with computers and internet but it has a broader definition nowadays which extends to other hardware like smart phones and tablets in our society. As it is easily accessible, ICT is also widely used in education and language learning (Liu et al., 2002) and it is not a surprise that the medium of communication in this 'wired' world is English (Foo & Richards, 2004). For the purpose of this study, ICT is represented by Web 2.0 tools and online learning. With specific reference to the potential of ICT in CLIL, Vlachos (2009, p.192) stated the following,

The Web offers for authentic input in the English language feedback and thus, CLIL students can use online tools to work on various non-linguistic subjects without resorting solely to course books. Learning can be structured on the basis of instructional resources which are accessible online and frequently revised, enhanced and improved.

Therefore, the integrated use of ICT and CLIL should be most appropriate as English is the main core of CLIL and ICT could facilitate students to learn the language both in and outside of the classroom, and at their own pace. Furthermore, as stated earlier, English was previously used to teach only the science and mathematics subjects in primary and secondary schools which was quite an inadequate effort as the focus was only on the content and the students were not able to explore English at all.

Research Objective

The main objective of this study is to explore the first-year undergraduates' perceptions of the usefulness of the CLIL modules based on the three following aspects:

- a. Content
- b. Grammar
- c. ICT

METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative research involving 22 undergraduates of the business faculty who took an English proficiency course in a semester at a public university in Malaysia. These participants were identified as low-intermediate English learners with Malaysian University English Test (MUET) Bands 1 and 2. These students were taught using four CLIL modules with ICT in the semester. The four modules incorporated the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), content subject (Literature, Science and Technology, Modern Literature and Business), and the use of ICT in the lessons. The topics of the modules are *Hans Christian Anderson*, *Cyberstalking*, *Fairy Tales*, and *House for Sale*. Every lesson took three hours and the instructor provided the internet service. They were also required to bring laptops for their learning tasks. Students worked individually and in small groups by extracting information from the Internet through reading online article or watching video, conducting mini survey, presenting group project in class, and etc. For example, in the CLIL module of *Cyberstalking*, students were required to work in small groups to watch a video on *Cyberstalking* on YouTube and identify the main ideas of the video. After that, they were asked to read the comments in respond to the video, to make a general conclusion about cyberstalking, and to present their work in PowerPoint or Prezi presentation. Apart from that, students read an online material on *12 Tips*

to *Protect Yourself from Cyberstalking* and later formed questions based on the text they have read.

At the end of the semester, the students were required to write their reflective journal with guided questions to gather their views on how CLIL modules and the use of ICT in CLIL lessons can improve their learning of English. There were eight questions and one overall comment which students were required to answer. The data from the reflective journal writing were then analysed through the descriptive statistics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Content

From the findings presented in Table 1, majority of the students regarded both *Cyberstalking* and *House for Sale* as the most important topics in the CLIL modules, whereas the less important topic was *Fairy Tales*. *Fairy Tales* was regarded as less important as students may know the tales used in their lessons and found it as less interesting because they know the tales beforehand. As to the topic is a memorable one, most of the students had selected *Fairy Tales* and *House for Sale*. One of the reasons for favouring the *House for Sale* topic is the students were from the business faculty and hence they found it relevant, important and memorable. Students found *Cyberstalking* as one of the most important topics as they found it relevant to them and they were the internet-literate in this 21st century. This is confirmed by a comparable study conducted by Omar and James (2014), which found that the language proficiency of the students had improved as the CLIL modules were used for their lessons. Language and material were also incorporated into the lesson and strengthened the language competence of the students. The participants were aware that it was possible to learn English by integrating other content subjects such as Geography, History or Humanities.

Table 1. Students' reflective feedback on the content aspect of the CLIL modules.

Content	<i>Hans Christian Anderson</i>	<i>Cyberstalking</i>	<i>Fairy Tales</i>	<i>House for Sale</i>
Q1: Which topic do you think is the most important?	S7	S1,S3,S4,S5,S6,S8,S10,S11,S14,S17,S20, S22	-	S2,S9,S12,S13,S15,S16,S18,S19,S21
Q2: Which topic do you think is less important?	S6,S11,S12,S21	S18	S1, S2, S4, S7, S9, S10, S13,S14, S15,S16,S17, S19,S20,S22	S3,S5,S8
Q3: Which do you think is memorable?	-	S2,S13,S16	S3,S5,S7,S8,S9,S11, S12,S15,S18,S	S1,S4,S6,S10, S14, S16,S17,S20,S

			19,S21	22
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ICT

From the data collected, 95.5% of the students said that ICT is easy to use in their English lessons and 86.4% think that the use of ICT is beneficial in their English classroom (see Table 2). This indicated that the students have no problems in applying ICT and they find it helpful in their lessons.

Table 2. Students' reflective feedback on the ICT aspect of the CLIL modules.

Q4: Is it difficult or easy to use the ICT in your English lessons?		Q5: Do you think the use of ICT in English classroom is beneficial?	
Easy	Difficult	Yes	No
S1,S2,S3,S4,S5,S6,S7,S8,S9,S10,S11,S12,S13,S14,S16,S17,S18,S19,S20,S21,S22 (95.5%)	S15 (4.5%)	S1,S2,S4,S6,S7,S8,S9,S10,S11,S12,S13,S14,S16,S17,S18,S19,S20,S21,S22 (86.4%)	S3,S5,S15 (13.6%)

Grammar

In Table 3, majority of the students preferred group presentation in their English lessons. This finding is supported by Kamlun& Shak (2014) studies where students themselves are actively participating in their lessons and in this scenario it was the group presentation activity. Meanwhile, more students stated that there were no grammar activities which they dislike because the lessons are acceptable and fun (see Table 4).

Table 3. Grammar activities students preferred in their English lessons.

Q6. Which grammar activity(s) do you like in your English lessons?	Student
Group Presentation	S3, S5, S6, S9, S10, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19, S20, S22
Past tense, Present tense, Progressive tense	S4, S7
All activities	S1, S13
Like doing exercises	S8
Audio-visual (show picture and describe it)	S11
Reading activities	S12
WH-question exercises	S21
“Open Learning”	S2

Table 4. Grammar activities students disliked in their English lessons.

Q7. Which grammar activity(s) do you dislike in your English lessons?	Student
Everything is okay or fun / No comment	S17, S16, S15, S13, S11, S4, S1
Reading <i>Hans Christian Anderson</i>	S6, S12, S22
Presentation	S2, S10, S20
Sending assignment online	S3, S5, S8
Past tense, Present tense, Progressive tense	S7, S21
Individual work	S9, S19
Post status on social media (Facebook)	S18, S14

In terms of ICT, Table 5 showed what students like about using ICT to learn grammar. The comments pointed out that ICT could help them to learn grammar in many ways.

Table 5. What students like about using ICT to learn grammar?

Q8. What do you like about using ICT to learn grammar?	Student
Can learn grammar	S8, S10, S12, S14, S17, S18, S21, S22
Presentation	S1, S7, S11, S13, S17
Access to information anytime and anywhere	S2, S20, S21
Using Schoology (Web 2.0 tool) is fun	S9, S19, S21
No need to bring or use any books	S3, S5
Fun and easy to understand	S4, S6
Can edit, send assignment through email without having to look for the printers	S15, S16
Can use many references from the internet	S5
Mistakes, punctuation and spelling errors can be detected and corrected	S14
Can keep data in an orderly manner	S20
ICT is very attractive	S22

Students' Overall Comments

The results in Table 6 showed positive feedback of students towards the CLIL modules because they are useful in their English lessons. Of the total of 22 students in the study, more than half of the students commented that the CLIL with ICT class is interesting and conducive and about half of them mentioned that it could improve their understanding of grammar. Besides that, eight students remarked that CLIL with ICT provides a variety of activities in class and six students said that they like the lessons because of the instructor's characteristic. Meanwhile, a few of them noted

that the modules could enhance their communication skills in English. However, there were two students who viewed that the lessons were less interesting and uncomfortable. Thus, it can be inferred that CLIL plays a role in inspiring students to learn English in a modern way with ICT.

Table 6. Students' overall comments of their English classes using the CLIL modules.

No.	Overall Comments	Student
1	Class is interesting and conducive	S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S11, S12, S13, S15, S17, S18, S19, S20, S22(68.2%)
2	Improve understanding of grammar	S2, S3, S6, S8, S9, S10, S12, S14, S19, S20 (45.5%)
3	Variety of classroom activities	S3, S4, S5, S10, S14, S16, S19, S22 (36.4%)
4	Characteristics of Instructor	S7, S14, S16, S20, S21 (22.7%)
5	Improve communication skills in English	S3, S9, S10 (13.6%)
6	Class is less interesting and uncomfortable	S8, S11 (9.1%)

CONCLUSION

The main idea of this research is to apply CLIL modules and to use ICT in CLIL lessons as the platform to improve the learning of English among the undergraduates. We are extending the reach of this study to explore the use of Web 2.0 resources and mobile learning among tertiary students (i.e. undergraduates who are in their first year) who are enrolled at a public university in Malaysia for general English language skills courses. The incorporation of ICT into CLIL may also provide a basis for a new form of educational technology that promotes language learning and content at the same time.

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