

CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) TEMPLATE: A PROJECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES IN CLASSROOM TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract

This study examined the extent to which Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is implemented in secondary schools, the challenges confronting its use, and its effects on students' academic achievement. The need for the study arose from the limitations of traditional teacher-centered instructional methods, which often fail to provide learners with adequate opportunities for active language use and meaningful engagement. CLIL, as an innovative learner-centered approach, integrates subject content with language learning and promotes communication, collaboration, and cognitive development. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of fifty respondents comprising teachers and students from Alvana Model Secondary School. Data were collected using a validated instrument titled Use of CLIL Questionnaire (UOCLILQ), with a reliability coefficient of 0.86, and analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that teachers implement CLIL to a low extent overall, although they moderately engage in aspects such as communication, collaboration, and lesson planning. However, core components of CLIL, particularly the integration of content and subject-specific language, are inadequately practiced. The study further identified major challenges confronting CLIL implementation, including inadequate teacher training, limited knowledge of CLIL principles, poor classroom management, and large class sizes. In terms of students' achievement, the results showed that CLIL has a mixed and generally low impact, with relatively better outcomes in English Language, Mathematics, and Computer Science compared to other subjects. The study concludes that CLIL has not been fully implemented and its potential benefits have not been maximally realized due to prevailing pedagogical and systemic constraints. It was recommended that targeted teacher training, improved classroom conditions, and consistent application of CLIL principles be prioritized to enhance its effectiveness.

Keywords: Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) template, projection of good practices, classroom teaching and learning

Introduction

The primary goal of language pedagogy is to enable learners to communicate effectively in the target language and to handle everyday language-related situations with confidence. In pursuit of this goal, educators over the years have designed, developed, and applied various instructional methods aimed at improving language teaching and learning. However, some of these methods failed to provide learners with adequate opportunities to actively practice language skills and sub-skills, thereby limiting their ability to achieve mastery and apply language meaningfully within socio-cultural contexts. This situation underscores the need for the adoption of more effective and learner-centred teaching approaches. As noted by Emeribe (2018), many earlier instructional methods were largely teacher-centered, which negatively affected learners' performance in English Language as well as in other school subjects. Consequently, there is a growing need to embrace innovative approaches that promote interaction, collaboration, and active learner engagement in the classroom.

One such approach is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which has gained prominence as a modern strategy in language education. CLIL is recognized as an additional module of the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) developed by Cambridge English for teachers who teach various subjects through the medium of English. This approach is particularly relevant in contexts like Nigeria, where English functions as a second language and serves as the primary language of instruction from upper primary through tertiary education. According to Lubelska and Robbins (1999), it is essential to give language a central role across all domains of learning. Teachers who use English as the language of instruction are required to teach diverse curricular subjects such as science, geography, music, biology, and computer science, thereby reinforcing the importance of English as a tool for both communication and knowledge acquisition.

CLIL focuses on teachers' understanding of how to effectively deliver subject content through a non-native language, rather than testing subject-specific knowledge or practical teaching skills alone. It is widely regarded as an umbrella term for bilingual education and represents an evolving approach in which subject matter and language learning are integrated. As explained by Bentley Kay (2010), CLIL combines content learning with language acquisition, enabling learners to develop both simultaneously. In a CLIL classroom, students engage with subject content while also acquiring the language needed to understand and express that content. This dual focus promotes deeper cognitive processing, enhances thinking and learning skills, and allows learners to use language in more complex and meaningful ways. Furthermore, CLIL has been associated with improved comprehension, increased learner motivation, and enhanced speaking abilities, as students are exposed to a wider range of language functions within authentic learning contexts.

CLIL is sometimes referred to as having '4Cs' as components: content, communication, cognition and culture or citizenship or community. The integration of the four Cs is one way to define teaching aims and learning outcomes. Content: The curricular subjects in CLIL include Mathematics, Integrated Science, Economics, Religious Studies, Moral Instruction, Literature, Music, Geography Biology, Computer Science, History, Physical Education, among others. In CLIL context, we need to analyze content for its language demands and to present in an understandable way. The various subjects or disciplines are given cognizance in CLIL with their corresponding language and terms that are unique.

CLIL is an umbrella term adopted by the European Network of Administrators, Researchers and Practitioners (EUROCLIC) in the mid-1990s. It encompasses any activity in which a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non-language subject in which both language and subject have a joint role (Marsh 2002). The adoption of a specific term was a move towards defining more clearly the nature of CLIL amidst a plethora of related approaches such as content-based instruction, immersion and bilingual education, among others. Whilst CLIL shares certain aspects of learning and teaching with these, in essence it operates along a continuum of the foreign language and the non-native language content without specifying the importance of one over another.

Communication: Learners need to provide subject language in both oral and written forms. Teachers therefore have to encourage learners to participate in meaningful interaction in the classroom. The use of Content and Language Integrated Learning is to increase Student Talking Time (STT) and reduce Teacher Talking Time (TTT). Peer, self and group evaluations are put into consideration while encouraging feedbacks from such foregoing. When learners produce the target language while studying curricular subjects, they show that subject knowledge and language skills are integrated. By using the language for learning content, communication becomes meaningful because language is a tool for communication. Learners are meant to use freely the basic language of communication in

their curricular subjects. The teacher gives a task and learners in their groups communicate without inhibition to achieve the desired goal within the expected time.

Cognition: CLIL promotes thinking skills known as cognitive skills. We need to devolved learners' cognitive skills so that they can study subjects from the curriculum. The skills include reasoning, creative thinking and evaluating. We also need to analyze thinking processes for the language demands and also to teach learners the language they need to express their thoughts and ideas. The groups formed by the teacher make use their intelligent, communicate, interact and accomplish the task.

Culture or Citizenship or Community: The last C stands for the above meaning, whereby the role of culture in understanding oneself and learners from other cultures become very important part of CLIL. Learners sometimes need to communicate in a nonnative language with new arrival that may have different home language as well as different social and cultural backgrounds. CLIL class gives them the opportunity to have a positive attitude and become aware of the responsibilities of global as well as local citizenship. Inside the classroom, we should value different home languages.

CLIL introduce learners to new concepts through studying the curriculum in a nonnative language thereby improve learners' production of the language of curricular subjects. It further improves learners' performance in both curricular subjects and the target language and Increase learners' confidence in the target language and the LI. It encourages stronger links with values of community and citizenship; make the curricular subject the main focus of classroom material. Coyle (2007) demonstrates that most learners who use CLIL in primary schools become more confident by the time they finish primary education in using the target language as well as their first language. They become more sensitive to vocabulary and ideas presented in the target and the LI. In secondary schools, CLIL usually leads to better language proficiency and positive effects on LI proficiency and they are more cognitively active during the learning process.

Learning outcomes, according to Marsh (2010) focus on the learner rather than the teacher. Learning outcomes are statements of what most learners should be able to showcase based on cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains and classroom interactions. In the CLIL language, the learning outcomes are categorized as follows; language outcomes, learning outcomes and content outcomes. These can be at the end of the lesson, series of lesson and a unit of module as the case may be. The importance of learning outcomes is many and they help to describe courses clearly. They provide continuity, focus on the whole class and individual needs, guide the design of tasks and can be used as a checklist for feedback. They make assessment clear. On the part of learner, they are learner centered. They show what should be achieved, help learners have goals so that they can check progress, enable differentiation and make provisions for less able and more able learners. From the British TKT trainer Training Language (2009), the following table show expected specific Obligatory language in a CLIL classroom across curriculum:

Table 1: Language Structure Across the Curriculum

Verb form	Subject	Example	Meaning
Present	Art	I am using primary colors in the still life painting.	An action is happening now
	Mathematic	A cube has six faces.	A general truth
	Science	Warm air rises	A process

Past	Economics	Interest rate fell last year	A finished event
	History	He has ruled for thirty years before the evolution began.	Looking back at an earlier past event.
	Music	The organist was playing slowly when the drummer beat the triangle loudly.	An interrupted action
Future	Theater arts	Who are you playing in the film?	A future activity
	Government		Giving definite information.
Modal verbs	Economics	The constitution will change next year.	Possibility
	P/E	Some employees can be shareholders.	
Conditional	Mathematic	We think the result will be draw.	Prediction
		If you add two odd numbers, the answer is an even number.	General rule
	Economics	If interest rates fell, savers would be affected.	Hypothesis
Passive forms	ICT	New software is going to be/will be installed soon.	Formal, impersonal
	Geography	Rocks were formed as a result of volcanic activity.	Formal, impersonal
	Economics	An increase profits has been announced by two global firms.	
Reporting verbs	CRS	God asked /told/advised Moses to remove his shoes off his leg.	To report what someone has said
	Business studies	They promised/agreed to provide more lock-up stores for traders.	

Teaching is part of CLIL although the main focus is on learners' understanding of subject content. As a CLIL teacher, you can aid the teaching of language by: highlighting vocabulary and chunks of vocabulary used in CLIL subject to help learners build the wide range of vocabulary they will need. This would help in modeling sentences such as those in the table above, to help learners see examples of language they need to produce. Thus, the teacher allows learners to be more relaxed about using the target language because the focus is on the meaning of curricular concept. The teacher should equally correct learners by recasting language immediately after they make mistake particularly with subject specific vocabulary. The need for CLIL teachers to plan for the language which is used in their subjects is urgent.

When the above have been properly taken care of, then the expected learning outcomes and skills will be demonstrated by the pupils, they will be able to point out how to encourage communication skills in the CLIL and to be able to identify communication functions used in CLIL. Learners will develop communication skills for curricular subjects. They will be able to express and interpret facts, data, thoughts and feelings both in writing as well as oral. Communication skills are important for expressing ideas about subject contents and to help learners work well together. Interaction as part of learning stimulates the development communicative competence or racy. Learners in CLIL need communicative functions (purposes of speaking and writing) from different subjects. They need examples of these functions to help them communicate their knowledge of the subject

content. In view of the above, learners would be able to enhance their communicative competence and the table two summarizes it all.

Table 2: Examples of communicative skills

Communicative functions	What they express
Giving examples	Women of high profile in Nigeria include/ such as/: The Director General for world trade
Describing process	First, food is chewed in the mouth..... Then, this food moves down the..... Next, it mixes with gastric juice..... Finally, it leaves the stomach and.....
Expressing condition	Their farmers are threatened and killed; there will shortage of food. If there are vibrations, the sound will have a low pitch.
Describing trends in the present	The birth rate is increasing. People are no longer living longer. We are assailed by difficulties but never defeated.
Talking about purpose.	Fish use their fins to swim. Turtles have shell to protect their bodies. Eyes are for seeing.
Defining	Nutrients are substances our bodies need to survive Diet is the food which someone normally eats. Blood vessels are tubes which transport blood.

(Culled from the TKT Course CLII Module, 2010)

Other examples of communicative functions used in teaching curricular subjects include expressing agreement or disagreement, clarifying what has been said; describing cause and effect, explaining an opinion, expressing ideas and opinion, generalizing, giving instructions, resenting solution, interpreting data, suggestion, among others. It is imperative to note that use of the learners' first Language, L2 for communication is a teaching and learning strategy. Use of L1 is not only for translation but part of sense making. Use of L1 and target language by both teachers and learners for specific purposes is described as integrated language or code switching. In some cases, we help learners to understand the curriculum content by using bilingual techniques. Some learners use L1 to explain, to check understanding.

The collaborative teaching and learning are rooted in the Constructivist's theory of learning. This theory is an off shoot of the cognitive theory of learning which focuses on the structure and development of individual's thought, processes and understanding. This concept of learning is traced to Jean Piaget and John Dewey, whose theories of childhood development gave birth to Constructivism. According to Kliebard (2014), John Dewey created an active intellectual learning environment in his laboratory school. This active learning conditionalizes knowledge through experimental learning. Similarly, Smith (2009) writes that John Dewey believed education must engage with and expand experience; those methods used to educate must provide for exploration, thinking and reflection and interaction with the environment is necessary for learning. Also, that democracy should be upheld in the educational system. The cognitive ideas of Piaget were further developed by Vygotsky

(1978). This view illuminates the causal relationship between social interaction and an individual's cognitive development.

Learning, from the socio-cultural perspective is essentially a social term rather than individual in nature, where interaction constitutes the learning process it carried out. In other words, mental functions are “intertwined with socio-culturally determined factors”. When the individual works collaboratively with more capable peers, the potential level of development will be increased (Warschawer, 2007). The constructivists also assert that strategies used in teaching and learning process should encourage the students to work in groups on a task in order to construct meaning for themselves and by so doing, they take ownership of their learning, while the teacher serves as facilitator of learning, instead of information transmitter. In this way, teachers become guides, helping students to discover knowledge for themselves through multiple perspectives. For developing their own understanding in this way, knowledge occurs as learners construct realities from their own experiences CLIL as this paper projects are totally with the rudiments and other guiding principles of constructive theory. The basic implications are that it advocates collaborative strategies. Learners are meant to work and discuss in their various groups. The collaboration will allow the less bright students to talk and in their groups. This will drastic non-reduce shyness and complaisant attitude among learners.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was examine the extent to which secondary school teachers, particularly those in Alvana Model Secondary School, utilize CLIL templates in delivering their curricular content. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. investigate the extent teachers in Alvana Model Secondary School practice CLIL.
2. evaluate the basic challenges that confront CLIL teachers and students in their teaching and learning activities in Alvana Model Secondary School.
3. find out the effects of CLIL on the students' achievement in their subject areas.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do teachers of secondary school practice CLIL?
2. What are the challenges that confront CLIL teachers and students in their teaching and learning in secondary school?
3. What is the effect of CLIL on the students' performance in their subject areas?

Methods

The population of this paper consists of all senior secondary school students and their corresponding teachers in Alvana Secondary School. The sample size is fifty (50), comprising twenty-five (25) students and twenty-five (25) teachers of Alvana Senior secondary. The instrument for data collection is a structured validated questionnaire known as Use of CLILL Questionnaire (UOCLILQ) with Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. The questionnaire contains sets of questions structured to elicit information from the respondents. The data collected from the respondents was tabulated and the scores recorded. Responses received were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation. Responses equal or greater than 2.5 were taken as accepted while responses less than 2.5 were rejected. The four rating scales of Very High Extent (VHE)=4, High Extent (HE)=3, Low Extent (LE)=2, Very Low Extent (VLE)=1, have been used for rating.

Results

Table 1: Extent to which English Language teachers use CLIL in teaching and learning process

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	To what extent do you practice content and language learning	1.70	0.877	Low Extent
2	How often do you integrate free communication	2.88	0.972	Large Extent
3	How often do you collaborate in your teaching activities	2.76	0.929	Large Extent
4	To what extent do you engage yourself in the use of various subject language	1.70	0.877	Low Extent
5	How often do you plan your lesson with CLIL template	2.76	0.929	Large Extent
Grand Mean		2.36	0.916	Low Extent

Table 1 indicates that English Language teachers use CLIL to a low extent overall (Grand Mean = 2.36). They use CLIL to a low extent in practicing content and language learning and in using subject-specific language (Mean = 1.70 each), but to a large extent in integrating free communication (Mean = 2.88), collaborating in teaching (Mean = 2.76), and planning lessons with CLIL templates (Mean = 2.76).

Table 2: Challenges that confront CLIL classroom practice in Alvana Model Secondary School

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	CLIL classroom is very rowdy when learners are not well guided	3.26	0.955	Large Extent
2	Teachers sometimes loose class control in CLIL Lesson	3.46	0.877	Large Extent
3	Large class contributes and space issue contribute to the challenge in the CLIL class	2.54	1.081	Large Extent
4	Lack of proper training of teachers is a big barrier to CLIL	3.62	0.797	Large Extent
5	Some teachers lack rudiments for CLIL	3.64	0.714	Large Extent
Grand Mean		3.30	0.884	Large Extent

Table 2 shows that challenges confronting CLIL classroom practice occur to a large extent overall (Grand Mean = 3.30). All identified challenges are experienced to a large extent, including lack of CLIL rudiments (Mean = 3.64), inadequate teacher training (Mean = 3.62), loss of class control (Mean = 3.46), rowdy classrooms (Mean = 3.26), and issues of large class size and space (Mean = 2.54).

Table 3: Effects of CLIL on students' achievement in their various subject areas

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	English language	3.13	0.939	Large Extent
2	Agric science	2.14	0.980	Low Extent
3	Mathematics	2.54	1.062	Large Extent
4	Economics	1.94	1.008	Low Extent
5	Computer science	2.54	1.062	Large Extent
Grand Mean		2.46	1.010	Low Extent

Table 3 indicates that the effect of CLIL on students' achievement in various subject areas is low overall (Grand Mean = 2.46). CLIL has a large extent effect on achievement in English Language (Mean = 3.13), Mathematics (Mean = 2.54), and Computer Science (Mean = 2.54), but a low extent effect in Agricultural Science (Mean = 2.14) and Economics (Mean = 1.94).

Discussion

The findings revealed that the overall extent to which English Language teachers implement Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the teaching and learning process is relatively low, even though some core practices associated with CLIL are moderately embraced. Specifically, teachers appear to demonstrate stronger engagement in interactive elements such as free communication, collaborative teaching, and structured lesson planning using CLIL templates, while showing weaker commitment to the fundamental principle of integrating content and language learning and the deliberate use of subject-specific language. This pattern is not entirely surprising, as CLIL is a pedagogical approach that requires both conceptual understanding and practical expertise, which many teachers may not have fully developed. Coyle (2000) emphasized that effective CLIL practice involves the integration of content, communication, cognition, and culture, yet the findings suggest that teachers are more comfortable with communicative aspects than with deeper content-language integration. This could be attributed to the traditional emphasis on communicative language teaching in many educational systems, which prioritizes fluency and interaction over content mastery. Similarly, Bentley (2010) noted that teachers often adopt surface-level CLIL strategies, such as encouraging communication, without fully embedding subject-specific language and content objectives into their teaching. The observed low engagement with subject language may also stem from teachers' limited familiarity with interdisciplinary teaching, which requires them to go beyond their specialization. While British Council Teaching English (2010) highlighted the importance of structured planning in CLIL, the findings suggest that although teachers may use templates, they may not effectively translate these plans into integrated classroom practices. This partial implementation aligns with earlier observations by Marsh (2002), who argued that CLIL adoption often begins with fragmented practices before evolving into full integration. Therefore, the findings are largely expected, reflecting a transitional stage in CLIL implementation rather than a fully developed practice.

The findings further revealed that numerous challenges confront CLIL classroom practice to a considerable extent, with issues such as lack of teacher training, inadequate knowledge of CLIL principles, classroom management difficulties, and structural constraints like large class sizes and limited space being particularly prominent. These results are not surprising, as CLIL is widely recognized as a demanding approach that requires specialized training and institutional support. According to Coyle (1999), successful CLIL implementation depends heavily on teacher competence and confidence in integrating both language and content objectives, yet the findings indicate that many teachers lack the foundational skills necessary for this integration. The prominence of inadequate training as a major challenge strongly supports the assertions of Bentley (2010), who emphasized that teachers require targeted professional development to effectively implement CLIL strategies. Without such training, teachers are likely to experience difficulties in managing interactive and student-centred classrooms, which can lead to the reported issues of rowdiness and loss of control. Additionally, the challenge of large class sizes and limited space reflects systemic constraints commonly found in many educational settings, particularly in developing contexts, where resources are often insufficient to support innovative teaching approaches. Warschauer (2007) highlighted that collaborative and communicative learning environments

require careful management and adequate infrastructure, both of which appear to be lacking in this context. The finding that teachers lack the rudiments of CLIL further reinforces the idea that the approach is still relatively new and not yet fully institutionalized. This aligns with Emeribe (2018), who described CLIL as a paradigm shift that demands a reorientation of teaching practices, which naturally comes with initial resistance and challenges. Overall, the high level of challenges identified in the study is consistent with existing literature and can be considered expected, particularly in contexts where CLIL is still emerging and where systemic support is limited.

The findings also revealed that the effect of CLIL on students' achievement across different subject areas is generally low, although it shows relatively stronger influence in subjects like English Language, Mathematics, and Computer Science compared to others such as Agricultural Science and Economics. This outcome presents a mixed picture that is partly expected and partly revealing. The relatively stronger impact on English Language achievement is not surprising, as CLIL inherently integrates language learning into content instruction, thereby providing students with more opportunities to develop their linguistic competence. Coyle (2000) noted that CLIL enhances language acquisition by situating learning in meaningful contexts, which likely explains the observed improvement in English Language performance. Similarly, the moderate influence on Mathematics and Computer Science may be attributed to the structured and logical nature of these subjects, which can benefit from the cognitive and communicative strategies promoted by CLIL. However, the limited effect on subjects like Agricultural Science and Economics may be due to several factors, including the abstract nature of these subjects, the need for specialized vocabulary, and the possible lack of teacher expertise in integrating language with subject content. Marsh (2002) argued that the effectiveness of CLIL varies depending on how well teachers align language objectives with subject-specific demands, suggesting that the weaker outcomes in certain subjects may reflect gaps in instructional alignment. Additionally, Bentley (2010) emphasized that CLIL requires careful scaffolding to support learners in understanding complex content through a second language, which may not have been adequately implemented in these subjects. The overall low impact on students' achievement may also be linked to the previously identified challenges, particularly the lack of teacher training and classroom management issues, which can hinder effective instruction. Therefore, while the findings confirm the potential of CLIL to enhance learning in certain areas, they also highlight the limitations of its current implementation, making the results both expected and indicative of areas needing improvement.

Taken together, the findings suggest that CLIL implementation in the studied context is characterized by partial adoption, significant challenges, and uneven outcomes across subject areas. This pattern reflects a developmental stage in which teachers are beginning to incorporate elements of CLIL but have not yet achieved full integration. The coexistence of moderate strengths in communication and collaboration with weaknesses in content language integration indicates that teachers may be selectively adopting aspects of CLIL that align with their existing practices while struggling with more complex components. This aligns with the observations of Labelska and Robinson (1999), who noted that transitioning from traditional teaching to more integrated approaches involves a gradual process of adaptation and skill acquisition. The challenges identified in the study further reinforce the need for systemic support, including professional development, resource provision, and institutional commitment, to enable effective CLIL implementation. The variation in student achievement across subjects also underscores the importance of subject-specific strategies in CLIL, as a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. Overall, the findings are largely consistent with previous studies, which highlight both the potential and the difficulties of CLIL as an instructional approach. While the results may not be entirely surprising, they provide valuable

insights into the current state of CLIL practice and point to the need for targeted interventions to enhance its effectiveness.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that CLIL is implemented to a low extent overall, with teachers mainly adopting its communicative and collaborative aspects while neglecting the core integration of content and subject-specific language. The study also concludes that significant challenges, particularly inadequate teacher training, limited CLIL knowledge, poor classroom control, and large class sizes, hinder effective implementation. Consequently, although CLIL shows some positive influence on students' achievement in a few subjects, its overall impact remains low and inconsistent, indicating that its full potential has not yet been realized in the studied context.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and school authorities should organize regular, targeted training programmes to equip teachers with practical CLIL skills, especially in integrating content with subject-specific language.
2. Schools should reduce class size and improve classroom infrastructure to enhance effective management of interactive CLIL-based lessons.
3. Teachers should consistently apply full CLIL principles in lesson delivery, particularly the integration of content and language objectives across all subject areas.

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