Implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) to develop Reading Skills through Schema Activation

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Abstract

The vast emergence of information technology demands the English Language Teachers to be more innovative in framing new strategies to facilitate the language learners. In India, English is learnt as second language but still it plays a key role in breaking up the communication barriers in the multilingual country. So, the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), one of the recent methodologies of English Language Teaching, can be primarily focused in the classrooms for language teaching. This methodology gives importance for both the content as well as the language. The essence of CLIL demands the cognitive skills from both the teachers and the learners. This methodology is used for the language learning and also for the language teaching to develop the LSRW skills. Various theories have been framed to achieve proficiency in LSRW skills. The schema is one of the reading theories, which has its own role to comprehend the text with the knowledge and experiences acquired previously. It also helps the learners’ mind to accommodate with the new information when an interaction is created between the reader and the text. The objective of this paper is to adapt CLIL to activate the schema of the learners to develop their reading skills and to motivate them to improve their critical thinking, as it is becoming an essential criteria in the working scenario of the present world.

Key words: CLIL, language learning, cognitive skills, schema, reading skills.

Introduction

In India, English is a foreign language and is used in various contexts which are likely to be experienced in improving the competency level than early days. So the growth of English Language Teaching is at high-speed and in this regard linguists are contributing and adapting more number of theories in order to progress in the field of ELT. Such sensitivity towards language learning demands new strategies to improve the language learning skills since English language is learnt as a second language. The Second Language (SL) learners try to improve their competency level in the four skills of language learning – listening, speaking, reading and writing by adapting different methodologies. In this context CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning, the recent strategy in language learning is being adapted through which both content and language are learnt. So it is proposed to experiment the implementation of CLIL to activate the schema of the learners to develop their reading skills and to motivate them to improve their critical thinking, since it is becoming an essential criteria in the working scenario of the present world.
CLIL is one of the methods which makes language learning meaningful at the same time it brings optimal language learning (Wiwczaroski, Zita & Ildiko, 2010). It is a dual focused approach in which both the content and the language is learnt simultaneously. CLIL classrooms are not typical language classrooms due to the fact that language is the medium through which content is transported (Papaja, 2012). Among the four skills, extensive study has been made on reading by the experts and has derived various theories in which schema theory plays its role to understand the textual information processing. The schema theory is closely related to the cognitive theory which represents the innate capacity of mind. Schema theory is based on the belief that every act of comprehension involves one’s knowledge of the world as well (Anderson et al. in Carrell and Eisterhold 1983). Thus, readers develop a coherent interpretation of text through the interactive process of combining text information with the information a reader brings to a text (Widdowson in Grabe 1988).

Implementation of CLIL

The SL learners face difficulty in understanding the meaning of the text. So they fail to develop the reading skills which in the other way get declined in their intellectual quotient. The SL learners need to be helped to identify easy strategies to motivate themselves to enhance reading skills. So an examination has been made to identify ways to help the SL learners with the approach of CLIL. The first paragraph of George Orwell’s Reflections on Gandhi is taken to explore the various aspects of CLIL - content, cognition and culture. In the given reading task, the SL learners can look for its content, cognition and culture which will help them to understand the content of the passage in detail and create schema for the further studies. The CLIL reading task is given below for the study:

Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent, but the tests that have to be applied to them are not, of course, the same in all cases. In Gandhi’s case, the questions on feels inclined to ask are: to what extent was Gandhi moved by vanity – by the consciousness of himself as a humble naked old man, sitting on a praying mat and shaking empires by sheer spiritual power – and to what extent did he compromise his own principles by entering politics, which of their nature are inseparable from coercion and fraud? To give a definite answer one would have to study Gandhi’s acts and writing in immense detail, for his whole life was a sort of pilgrimage in which every act was significant. But this partial autobiography, which ends in the nineteen-twenties, is strong evidence in his favor, all the more because it covers what he would have called the unregenerate part of his life and reminds one that inside the saint, or near-saint, there was a very shrewd, able person who could, if he had chosen, have been a brilliant success as a lawyer, an administrator or perhaps even a businessman. (http://www.orwell.ru/library/reviews/gandhi/english/e_gandhi)

Content of CLIL reading tasks are:

• In the beginning of the paragraph the author starts with a strong suggestion that all the saints judged guilty must prove themselves innocent.
• The author wonders at the behavior of Mahatma Gandhi especially his humbleness, simplicity, tolerance, acceptance, etc.
• The author in the last part of the paragraph suggests the readers to read Gandhi’s book in which he has registered the incidents in detail.
• The author concludes that Gandhi could be a saint or near-saint but it is his shrewdness that would have led him to be a successful lawyer, administrator or a business man if he opted for it.
Cognition of CLIL reading tasks are:

• The author makes the readers to look at Gandhi in different perspective.
• The author wonders how Gandhi could be consciously humble.
• And how Gandhi could shake empires just with the help of spiritual power.
• How far Gandhi compromised himself to enter into politics which he very well knows that the nature of politics is fraud.
• The author tries to understand and wonders at the meaning of saint.
• But finally the author accepts Gandhi’s shrewdness though he could not completely identify the meaning of sainthood.

Culture that can be understood through CLIL reading task:

• The learner can understand the value of humbleness, simplicity, non-violence, spirituality.
• The principles of Gandhi reflect the culture of whole nation which had forsaken the whole world.
• Gandhi represented the remained assertive by following the culture of the country and succeeded in it.

The reading task is given to the SL learners and they are guided to contemplate the meaning to acquire knowledge for learning the cultural background of the text. This would help the SL learners to draw an outline of the text and it can also be reinforced by testing them in the aspects of CLIL. Therefore, the aspects of CLIL can be tested by asking the learners:

• To give a small write-up about his/her understanding of the paragraph
• To identify the topic sentence of the passage
• To describe the author’s perspectives about Gandhi
• To identify the words that supports Gandhi’s principles
• To identify the words that stimulates cognition
• To identify the words that describes Gandhi
• To identify the sentences that reflects the culture of the country
• To frame sentences on their own new vocabulary

Activation of Schema

The answers generated for the above activities will help the learners to comprehend the meaning thoroughly. The answers provided will remain in the mind of the learners and act as schema for the next study. These activities will help the learners to reduce the reading problems. Most of the time problems among SL arise because of lack of schema. So, pre-reading activities like prompts and the brief summary of the reading task, posting of questions, circulating the text in the previous class and introducing the learners for the key words of the reading task will help them to have a ground preparation to understand the text. It will also help to develop analytical skills and to look at the problems or issues faced in different perspectives as the author tends the readers of the essay to look at Gandhi’s principle from the perspective of an English man.

Conclusion

Hence, the most appropriate text must be selected for the learners and they should be guided to integrate content for language learning. This would definitely create background knowledge for the further study i.e. it would activate schema in the minds of the learners. Continuous practice of such activities will definitely reduce the gap between the learners and their reading skills. If provided with sufficient schema of any subject, the learners could gain confidence on any subject that they prefer to deal with.
References

- http://www.orwell.ru/library/reviews/gandhi/english/e_gandhi