

A Study on the Innovation of College English Teaching Based on the CLIL Approach

Yu Zhang¹

¹ Xi'an FanYi University, Xi'an 710105, China

¹Corresponding author.

ABSTRACT

Content and Language Integrated Learning (abbreviated as CLIL) is a scientific teaching approach that combines content and language. Its core concept is to cultivate both language skills and subject knowledge simultaneously. Through integrating content and language learning, the CLIL approach achieves the dual improvement of language ability and subject literacy. Compared to the fragmented vocabulary and language expression in traditional college English teaching, the language teaching in the CLIL classroom places more emphasis on application in real contexts. All language materials, vocabulary and grammar teaching, and classroom output activities in the CLIL classroom are centered around the subject theme, allowing students to be in a real context throughout the entire class, which is more conducive to their learning, understanding, and memory. In practical application, the CLIL approach needs to fully consider the training of teachers and the specific circumstances of students to ensure the maximization of teaching effectiveness.

Keywords: *CLIL approach, College English teaching, Language skills, Subject knowledge.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The CLIL approach originated in Europe, and was proposed by David Marsh and Do Coyle in the mid-1990s and has been widely spread and developed across Europe. With the development of globalization, the CLIL approach has been applied and promoted worldwide, becoming an important trend in bilingual education. The CLIL approach is centered around clear subject content and language goals. Teachers need to select appropriate text materials based on students' cognitive levels and their knowledge reserves in the subject, and determine the key points and difficulties in teaching by analyzing the text materials. The CLIL approach is diverse to fully mobilize students' initiative. Common CLIL teaching activities include jigsaw reading, group presentation, and role play, etc.

The CLIL approach emphasizes the organic combination of four aspects: content, cognition, communication, and culture. Specifically:

- Content: it refers to specific subject knowledge points and learning objectives.

- Cognition: it focuses on cultivating high-level thinking skills by combining meaning-oriented language learning goals.
- Communication: it emphasizes learning the foreign language in context, while the foreign language also serves as a tool for learning the subject content.
- Culture: it develops cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills in a cross-cultural context.

The CLIL approach has obvious advantages, such as: stimulating students' interest and motivation in learning; providing real contexts to promote language application; cultivating students' autonomous learning ability and cross-cultural communication skills. The CLIL approach requires high background knowledge and language ability of teachers. The CLIL approach can help students achieve a balance between subject knowledge and vocabulary, support students' language output expression needs in related subject areas, and truly synchronize thinking development and language ability, thereby applying language in real life practice.

2. PROBLEMS EXISTING IN CURRENT COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

The author has analyzed and summarized the current teaching situation of the comprehensive English course. Through interviews with students, feedback, classroom observations, and discussions with relevant course teachers, the problems existing in the comprehensive English teaching that need to be addressed are as follows:

- The disconnection between subject knowledge and language skills. Through conversations with students and feedback, it was learned that in the teaching process of the comprehensive English course, teachers focus more on the teaching of English language knowledge and the cultivation of English language skills. The teaching content not only includes the teaching and learning of multiple levels of language knowledge such as vocabulary, idioms, sentences, discourse, rhetoric, etc., from simple to complex, but also includes cultivating students' independent thinking ability and enabling them to gradually form their own outlook on life, values, and worldviews. However, merely relying on language knowledge learning to achieve the goal of cultivating students' independent thinking ability seems to be far from reality. From the students' mastery situation, the mastery of English knowledge can basically reach the expected goal, but for subject knowledge or topic knowledge, they often do not pay enough attention.
- Excessive focus on language skills in comprehensive English exercises and homework, resulting in poor teaching effects. The teaching of comprehensive English is most prone to misunderstandings, believing that everything should focus on improving students' English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation skills. The post-class exercises and homework are mostly focused on English vocabulary practice, sentence translation, grammar practice, and essays, but often the improvement of students' English skills is slow. At the same time, students' completion of group tasks for after-class tasks to showcase relevant background knowledge. The starting point of this task is to enable students to better, deeper, and more comprehensively understand the meaning of the article, but in fact, students merely grasp the surface of this task, and

for related knowledge, they are limited to the author's introduction and article background, and do not combine cultural knowledge with language knowledge. The after-class tasks and exercises do not focus on combining cultural knowledge with language knowledge.

- The teaching evaluation system of the comprehensive English course is not scientific. Each student has different foundations and abilities. Not every student can simultaneously achieve the teaching goals of each stage of the comprehensive English course. Therefore, when evaluating students' writing practice, it causes mutual comparison among students. Scientific evaluation should be the comparison of each student's writing practice with their previous writing level. The unified evaluation method for the entire class is not conducive to the progress and growth of each student.

3. APPLICATION OF CLIL APPROACH IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

With the continuous acceleration of globalization and the improvement of the internationalization level of higher education, college English teaching is no longer limited to the mere imparting of language knowledge. It places greater emphasis on cultivating students' interdisciplinary application skills, critical thinking, and international communication literacy. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), as a teaching model that integrates subject content with language teaching, breaks down the barriers between language learning and professional knowledge learning, providing a brand-new perspective and path for college English teaching reform. It holds significant application value and practical significance in college English teaching.

Applying the CLIL approach in college English teaching is an inevitable choice to meet the demands of the times and address teaching problems. Currently, traditional college English teaching often has issues such as "emphasizing language but neglecting application" and "emphasizing examinations but neglecting abilities". Students often have a certain vocabulary and grammar foundation, but they struggle to flexibly use English in professional scenarios and cross-cultural communication, resulting in phenomena like "poor English" and "disconnection between reading and writing". The CLIL approach, with

"content as the carrier and language as the tool", integrates English teaching with professional knowledge, real-life situations, and cross-cultural scenarios, allowing students to naturally acquire language while learning subject content and solving practical problems, achieving the unity of "learning language" and "using language".

From the perspective of the educational goals, the core of university education is to cultivate comprehensive and professional talents. English, as an international language, is an important tool for students to acquire cutting-edge professional knowledge and participate in international exchanges and cooperation. The CLIL approach combines English learning with professional content (such as basic content in fields like business, engineering, and liberal arts), which not only helps students consolidate their English language skills but also enables them to get acquainted with professional-related English expressions in advance, laying a foundation for subsequent professional learning and career development. At the same time, the CLIL approach focuses on cultivating students' cross-cultural communication skills. By introducing different cultural backgrounds, ways of thinking, and professional concepts from various countries, it broadens students' international perspectives, aligning with the teaching goal of "cultivating virtue and fostering talents" in university English education.

Furthermore, the CLIL approach can effectively stimulate students' interest in learning and enhance teaching effectiveness. Traditional college English teaching is mostly centered around textbooks, with monotonous content and a single form, which can easily lead students to feel tired of learning. However, the CLIL approach combines students' professional characteristics and interests to design practical teaching content and tasks that are relevant to reality, allowing students to feel the practicality and value of English, and thus actively participating in the teaching activities. For example, for students majoring in business, teaching can be carried out around topics such as "International Business Negotiations" and "Cross-border E-commerce Operations"; for students majoring in engineering, tasks can be designed based on scenarios such as "Engineering Technical Specifications" and "International Academic Exchange", enabling students to actively apply English in the process of completing the tasks and enhancing their learning enthusiasm and initiative.

When applying the CLIL approach in college English teaching, it is necessary to combine the teaching characteristics of university English, the students' professional background and language foundation, and follow the principles of "step-by-step progress, individualized teaching, and equal emphasis on content and language". A systematic design should be carried out in terms of teaching content, teaching methods, and teaching evaluation to ensure the implementation of teaching effects.

In terms of the design of teaching content, it is necessary to achieve an organic integration of "language content" and "subject content". On one hand, based on students' major directions, select teaching content that is relevant to the actual situation of the major and has an appropriate level of difficulty, avoiding overly complex content or content that is beyond students' cognitive levels. For example, for non-English major students, select popular science articles, academic summaries, industry reports, etc. as teaching materials, which can not only ensure that students can understand the subject content, but also help them accumulate English vocabulary and expressions related to the major. On the other hand, integrate language knowledge teaching into content learning. For key vocabulary, grammar structures, and discourse features in the teaching materials, provide targeted explanations to guide students to master language application skills while understanding the content. At the same time, combine cross-cultural elements and introduce professional cultures and communication etiquette from different countries to cultivate students' cross-cultural communication abilities.

When it comes to the selection of teaching methods, we should abandon the traditional "teacher-led" teaching approach and adopt diversified teaching methods to highlight the dominant position of students. The task-driven teaching method can be employed, where specific teaching tasks are designed, such as group discussions, role-playing, case analysis, academic presentations, etc. Through completing these tasks, students can practice communicating and exploring collaboratively in English. For instance, when explaining the content related to "international academic exchanges", students can be divided into groups to act as "academic presenters" and "listeners", simulating the scene of an international academic conference, and conducting English presentations and question-and-answer interactions to enhance their oral expression and on-the-spot adaptability. Additionally, multimedia technology

and online teaching platforms can be combined to enrich teaching forms. For example, English professional documentaries can be played, online group cooperation can be carried out, and bilingual teaching resources can be utilized to expand learning content, thereby enhancing the teaching's interest and effectiveness.

In terms of teaching evaluation, a multi-dimensional evaluation system combining "process evaluation and summative evaluation" should be established, breaking away from the single examination-based evaluation model. Process evaluation can focus on students' participation in classroom activities, task completion, English expression ability, group cooperation performance, etc., and record students' learning process through classroom observations, homework feedback, group evaluations, etc.; summative evaluation can be combined with final exams, English application ability tests, etc., with a focus on assessing students' comprehensive language application ability and understanding of subject content. At the same time, the evaluation subjects can be diversified, introducing a combination of self-evaluation by students, mutual evaluation among groups, and teacher evaluation to ensure the fairness and comprehensiveness of the evaluation, and fully exert the diagnostic, motivating and guiding roles of the evaluation.

4. CONCLUSION

Compared to the fragmented vocabulary and language expressions in traditional English teaching, language teaching in CLIL classrooms places greater emphasis on application in real contexts. Each class in a CLIL classroom has a subject theme running through it, integrating the knowledge content of the subject with language teaching. Students learn and master the language from the perspective of subject knowledge and application. All language materials, vocabulary and grammar teaching, and classroom output activities in CLIL classrooms are centered around the subject theme, keeping students in a real context throughout the entire class, which is more conducive to their learning, understanding, and memory. The CLIL approach helps students achieve a balance between subject knowledge and vocabulary, supports students' language output and expression needs in related subject areas, enables the synchronization of thinking development and language ability, and thus truly applies language in real-life situations.

CLIL teaching embodies the instrumental nature of language, using language as a medium to facilitate the learning of other subject knowledge. In the classroom, it provides students with opportunities to apply the language knowledge they have learned in a timely manner. In CLIL teaching, the framework of subject knowledge and language expression are constructed simultaneously. The "learn and apply immediately" model enables students to have a very deep memory of the knowledge points and the corresponding language expressions, truly achieving the mastery of language application.

In conclusion, the CLIL approach aligns with the direction of college English teaching reform and the needs of talent cultivation. It can effectively address the pain points of traditional college English teaching and enhance students' comprehensive language application skills, interdisciplinary literacy, and international competitiveness. When applying the CLIL approach in college English teaching, it is necessary to scientifically design teaching content, innovate teaching methods, and improve teaching evaluation. By considering students' professional characteristics and language foundation, it should be implemented in a step-by-step manner to deeply integrate language learning with professional development and ability enhancement, thereby promoting the continuous improvement of college English teaching quality and providing strong support for the cultivation of versatile and internationalized talents.

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