



APPLYING CLIL METHOD FOR A COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT IN READING SKILL

APLICACIÓN DEL MÉTODO CLIL EN LA DESTREZA DE LECTURA COMPRESIVA

AUTHORS: Cecilia Elizabeth Dahik Solis¹
Cecilia Isabel Càneppa Muñoz²
Erika Paola García León³

CONTACT ADDRESS: cdahikth@utb.edu.ec

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ABSTRACT

The lack of students' interest in upgrading Reading skill in a low percentage is perhaps, due to the fact that people are not accustomed to read in their spare time in many countries, even for their schooling duties. For many years, the development of reading activities in class has normally been carried out in a simple way, with simple instructions which have not let the learners be in depth with their contents. It means that it has been performed superficially without providing comprehensible input to the students. This research focus on how well CLIL methodology maximizes reading comprehension and the acquisition of the new language in contrast with the methodology applies in the Direct Method. (Rosenshine, 1985 as cited in Silver, Strong, Perini, 2007) says that "Teachers who spend more time demonstrating and explaining procedures and skills are more effective than teachers who spend less time doing so." The findings of this study show that reading skills developed with the CLIL methodology would be helpful to enhance students' communicative skills and motivation taking into account the time devoted to performing tasks in class, the aim of each activity, the knowledge that the students get and the outcomes that the students could get at the end of the English teaching and learning process.

KEYWORDS: reading comprehensible input, activities, outcomes, CLIL and Direct methods, communicative skills.

¹ Magister. EFL Teacher. Technical University of Babahoyo, Babahoyo, Los Rios, Ecuador.

² EFL Teacher. Technical University of Babahoyo, Babahoyo, Los Rios, Ecuador. E-mail: ccaneppa@utb.edu.ec

³ EFL Teacher. Technical University of Babahoyo. Babahoyo, Los Rios, Ecuador. E-mail: pgarcia@utb.edu.ec

RESUMEN

El poco interés de los estudiantes en desarrollar la destreza de comprensión lectora es debido tal vez a que las personas no han adquirido el hábito de la lectura en su tiempo libre ni tampoco en sus obligaciones escolares. Por muchos años la aplicación de actividades dentro de la lectura ha sido realizada de manera simple con instrucciones simples que no han permitido que los estudiantes tengan una real comprensión del texto que leen basadas en sus opiniones y pensamiento crítico. Esta superficialidad en las actividades denota que no se provee de una comprensión significativa donde no se internaliza el contenido leído. Esta investigación se enfoca en como la metodología CLIL puede maximizar la comprensión lectora y la adquisición del idioma extranjero en contraste con la metodología del Direct method. (Rosenshine, 1985 citado en Silver, Strong, Perini, 2007) dice "Los profesores que pasan más tiempo explicando y demostrando procedimientos y destrezas son más efectivos que los que no lo hacen." Los resultados de este estudio demuestran que la destreza de la lectura desarrollada con la metodología CLIL sería útil para mejorar las destrezas comunicativas y motivación en los estudiantes tomando en consideración el tiempo empleado en clase para realizar las actividades, los objetivos de cada actividad, el contenido transmitido a los estudiantes y los resultados que los estudiantes podrían conseguir al final del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lectura comprensiva; actividades; resultados; métodos CLIL and Direct; destrezas comunicativas.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a skill that students struggle all time, when it is done without orientation about the value of the information and through boring activities. However, this receptive skill provides students the possibility to spread out vocabulary, to get knowledge, to develop subskills useful in the language acquisition and for a comprehensible input. Nowadays, the goal is that the students learn not only the language but also the content. Through this point of view the development of communicative skills is the primary goal of the Foreign Language Learning. Cognition, Culture, Communication and Content are the key elements for the CLIL methodology which join language and content with the integration of the four skills. For CLIL, learning a foreign language allows developing cognitive functions, exercises the mind, the same as enjoy other cultures. Therefore, the use of a variety of activities and tasks make much more comprehensible the content and the acquisition of the language.

This is the reason that boosts this research, to know how the CLIL methodology can maximize the comprehensible input that reading activities enhance much more than other skills in the acquisition of a new language, in contrast with a methodology used by the Direct Method.

It was a method in contrast to the Grammar-Translation Method that was introduced to make possible the students be prepared to use the language communicatively. It uses realia to make a comprehensible input. The strategies applied in both Methods are different, in the Direct method the key point is communication in specific situations and CLIL methodology refers to the acquisition of language through a content. However, the most important thing is to see how the Direct and the CLIL Method use reading activities for a comprehensible input and how the strategies applied in each one achieves this goal. In this research were applied some different classroom activities to students of third level of the Language Center (CENID) in the University of Babahoyo. The students were adults between 20 to 35 years old.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is known that English is the language use for communication around the world. Thus, during the time, many different approaches have appeared in order to make possible this communication as a foreign language student. Each method has been used according to the needs required in the period of time it was developed, taking into account that meaningful activities are the base for a comprehensible input in the language acquisition. The receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills have also been taught with great interest in the different methodologies in TEFL. But through reading the students acquire more than language, they acquire knowledge. Anderson and Pearson (1984:255), claim that "gaining new content knowledge through reading thematically connected texts activities cognitive structures which help in developing reading comprehension skills." For that reason, it is important that teachers involve intensive reading in classroom and extensive reading at home to generate cultural and factual knowledge and also incidental vocabulary acquisition. Dakowska (2005:206) says that intensive reading could motivate CLIL learners to analyze and study more the content of the texts activating more intensively their language and content. Meanwhile, extensive reading' process can make students to work on formal presentations about the content, such as showing new alternatives.

Since many years ago, the development of activities in class has normally been carried out following the communicative approach. This way of teaching emphasizes the learning of a foreign language through communicative strategies which are focused on cooperative learning, learning for specific purposes, inductive strategies to teach grammar task-based activities, different kind of topics, and so on. The methods applied have been the same in some aspects like the reinforcement of the four skills in meaningful situations, but different in the strategies used in class. These approaches and methods have done the best efforts to make the strategies meaningful for students and to catch the students' motivation. However, something meaningful is something that is got in a comprehensible way, so the key point is a

comprehensible input. Gersten (1998), "Comprehensible input means that students should be able to understand the essence of what is being said or presented to them." (P.72). Methods which provide a creative and dynamic strategies where students communicate in a natural way; similarly, to the communication based on students' needs where the language acquisition is through meaningful interactions instead of an enforced learning. in a simple way, are the best for a comprehensible input.

Comprehensible input requires presentation of background and context, explanation and rewording of unclear content, the use of effective techniques as graphic organizers, besides through context or visual cues, and asking for clarification, students enhance their English knowledge. In the development of a comprehensible input new methods have emerged with very similar tasks, activities and strategies focused on skills, content and language. The content-based instruction is one of these methods in ELT, but nowadays is also known as the CLIL approach. This is a pedagogical approach which is not focus on Foreign Language Learning, but in the joining of content and language, As Coyle (2008, p. 101 as cited in Cross & Gearon (2013, p. 15) 'there is neither one CLIL approach nor one theory of CLIL.' Teachers use principles for the integration of language and content where different settings and teaching environments get good language learning outcomes. These key elements are content, communication, cognition, and culture. The CLIL method provides a positive comprehensive input due to the fact that it focuses on the basic conditions for the acquisition of a new language. In contrast to traditional methods based on elements of language (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation) leaving behind what could be considered difficult, the exposure to challenging content.

CLIL emphasizes the four skills in an integrated form, but reading skill has got an important role in this method because Reading is a communicative skill which puts together knowledge and comprehension about words. According to Harmer (1997) argues "Reading texts also provide opportunities to study language: vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the way we construct sentences, paragraphs and text." Reading implies attention, concentration, engagement and reflection. Since reading involves the use and the development of cognitive skills, the activities to teach it have to be meaningful and funny to keep motivation through active strategies and techniques. Prediction, eliciting, mind maps, dictogloss, dramatization, note-taking, storyboarding and so on, are examples of strategies which could be applied in the CLIL methodology.

The first Method to use language communicatively was The Direct Method in the evolution of the methodologies. In order to do these students needed to associate meaning with the language through pictures, objects or pantomime, so translation was not allowed. The base of the Direct Method was the use of language in different situations like the bank, or going shopping, or topics like Geography. The grammar was taught inductively, it means that

students figure out the rules through examples provided by the teacher and vocabulary is practiced with the building of sentences with the new words. In this method the techniques applied are: reading aloud, questions and answers, getting students to self-correction, conversation practice, dictation and paragraph writing. It is evident that these two types of methodologies are quite different, and although CLIL is beginning to have a great acceptance worldwide, it is also truth that methods like the direct one is part of our classrooms nowadays too.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How could be provided a comprehensible input in Reading skill to the students of Commercial engineering and accountant in the Language Center CENID in the University Technical of Babahoyo?

RESEARCH PLAN

Hillocks (1987) says that “reading texts connected with a particular brand of knowledge provides the learner with a lot of information”. Thus, the following research plan focuses on following procedures to make the content of the texts meaningful and motivating to students. The approach applied was the CLIL because it is the updated approach around the world. In our country some educative institutions have begun to apply it in English classes to integrate skills, as well as teaching a foreign language in a content. It is also an approach to motivate students because it is focused on contents related to students' keens and needs. This approach is in contrast with the Direct Method which was the first to enhance communication among the students.

The pre-reading activities are focused on vocabulary related to the text in order to make the language acquisition more appropriate and meaningful. The strategies were chosen taking into account the students' level proficiency to be understood by them. The participants in this study are two 3rd level groups which belong to the Language Center (CENID) in the University of Babahoyo. Among the pre-reading activities the students' first look at some pictures and try to infer what would be the theme about. Once they have talked in pairs, the teacher shows the words that is represented by each picture and match these words to some sentences. Then the teacher applies the dictagloss activity, where a piece of the text is dictated to the students and they in groups of four have to complete a mind map with the main ideas of the text they listened. The text is repeated three times, after the students create a paragraph close similar to the one they had listened before. The students check their paragraph with the other groups. During the reading the teacher shows the full text to be filled with some missing words. To emphasize some content of the text some sentences which were rewritten are given to the students to be completed. Lastly, the students explain their comprehension of the theme with the help of a dramatization where they express ideas of how to apply the learned theme and

they are also asked some questions by the rest of the class. This Method was applied with a group of 30 students.

The other group was taught with the Direct method where at the beginning the students read aloud some sentences from the text, if the students had some doubts in meaning they could ask the teacher with questions: what does ...mean? And the teacher explains through gestures or images. Then, the teacher begins to make some questions to the students: what is a Financial Future contract?. These questions are done for some minutes and then the students make questions to their partners. Then, the teacher gives a worksheet to the students with the text and some words to complete it. The language structure is presented through sentences that the students have to complete with the simple present or the present perfect and uses as a model to form questions with them to be answered by a classmate. After some practicing with these structures the teacher makes the dictation of a paragraph from the text to practice listening and writing. Finally, the students write a paragraph about the topic having as a model the one they read before.

The following is a chart where it is summarized the principles for both methods.

Chart 1: This information was taken from British Council and University of Jaén

	Direct Method	CLIL Method
CONTENT	Spoken everyday language. Gradual sequences.	Progression in knowledge, skills and understanding related to specific elements of a defined curriculum.
OBJECTIVES	Capacity to ask questions and to answer. Listening and Speaking communicative skills.	Increase students' knowledge of subject content. Develop students' knowledge of content-related lexis. Develop all four language skills within a content-based context. Develop academic skills such as note taking. Provide materials and information for further topic and language based studies.
MATERIALS	Posters, real objects, realia and texts.	Pictures, diagrams, graphs.
PROCEDURES	Direct techniques with no use of L1: immersion. Questions and answers. Small groups and	Use 'diagrams of thinking' to help learners categorize the ideas and information in a text. Visualization through images to make more comprehensible

	native speakers.	the text. Prediction and inferring of the main topic in the text. Useful language is highlighted in the text and categorized according to function. A variety of tasks is provided.
ASSESSMENT	Conversation and interview exams.	Dramatization, explanation, summarizing.

RESULTS EXPECTED

The results were got from the final activities in each Method. In the Direct the students wrote a composition from based on the topic treated. This activity could be done by memory or using the text as a model. In this case the students only produced some sentences very similar to the ones they had read before in the text or similar to what they had answered in the oral practice. So in this case it is shown the use of vocabulary and language structures like the simple present or present perfect, but there is some weak points in the organization of ideas and in the production of their own explanation as result of a comprehensible input through the reading activities. In the other hand, in the CLIL method the students made a dramatization based on the content treated in the reading activities. In this case it was shown a better understanding of the theme, since the students present a work where there was a clear explanation applying what was taught in content and vocabulary with clear ideas and phrases.

At the end of their presentation, the students from other groups make questions to the students about the information transmitted through the dramatization.

The following observation chart clarify the results explained above.

Chart 2. Observation worksheet

	Direct Method	CLIL Method
Ss used clear phrases to present the theme in oral and written form.	Some sentences are very similar to the given model. Some sentences do not have clear ideas.	The sentences and phrases are clearly expressed.
Ss applied enough vocabulary from the theme about Financial Future Contract,	Some vocabulary was applied.	Most of the words were applied.
Ss answered correctly some comprehension questions	Some of the questions were	The questions were answered correctly.

about the theme.	answered	
Ss showed a good reading comprehension through the development of the activities proposed for this skill.	There was only a reading aloud activity	The ss showed reading comprehension through the activities.

This chart was filled by a teacher who was observing the classes.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of this research showed that the students get a better comprehensible input with the activities applied in the CLIL Method.

The Pre-reading activities with the help of pictures make possible the students infer what is going to be done next and make predictions in a communicative way. Therefore, the vocabulary is acquired much more easily than with a translation. The integration of the skills in activities where the focus is on reading through the use of the *dictogloss strategy* promotes a significant learning of the content and the acquisition of the language. The implement of activities where the students can make use of their creativity to summarize a theme, expose their ideas and opinions are essential instruments to stimulate motivation and attention in the acquisition of a foreign language. Even though, the Direct Method was good to enhance communication in specific situation which was the need in the moment it was developed, focus its activities mainly in language structure taught inductively, the same as in the speaking through questions and writing through, in some cases, memorized composition. Nowadays there are other needs to cover and other methods as CLIL which can help teachers to achieve the new goals in a new type of teaching a foreign language.

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