

Task-Based Approaches in CLIL: Enhancing Speaking Skills in Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The approach to teaching known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) combines subject learning with the development of foreign languages. This paper explores task-based approaches in improving speaking skills by CLIL in secondary schools. Task-based language teaching focuses on real-life tasks, encouraging active participation, collaboration, and authentic use of language. The study emphasizes a variety of task types that support speaking confidence and fluency, including role-plays, discussions, problem-solving exercises, information-gap tasks, and project work. To illustrate how teachers can successfully incorporate tasks into CLIL classrooms, the implementation stages pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task language focus are analyzed. The results indicate that task-based techniques are a successful secondary education strategy since they not only enhance speaking abilities but also boost motivation, critical thinking, and topic knowledge.

Keywords: CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), speaking skills, secondary education, language learning, task-based approach, communicative competence, student engagement.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, in order to provide students with more relevant and interesting experiences, education has increasingly concentrated on integrating language learning with content

learning. Content and language integrated learning is a modern approach that helps students to gain subject knowledge while simultaneously developing their foreign language skills. In CLIL, the target language is used as a vehicle for the instruction of school subjects; it is used not only to offer knowledge, but also to convey meaning and share experience [1]. Speaking skills are the most essential part in CLIL because students can express their ideas, participate in discussions and ask questions with the help of them. Most of students struggle with fluency and confidence when they have to speak in foreign language, especially learning subjects through it. Task-based language teaching help to overcome these problems with engaging students with real-life tasks in lessons rather than just memorizing vocabulary or grammar rules. For example, group discussions, problem-solving, role-play and group projects not only improve their language skills, but also develop critical thinking and group collaborations.

The use of CLIL in foreign language education is especially advantageous for non-linguistic students who may not receive adequate traditional language instruction. CLIL exposes students to authentic, subject-specific language and requires them to apply their languages in real-world academic activities, bridging the gap between theoretical language knowledge and practical application. Furthermore, the content-driven aspect of CLIL shifts the emphasis away from language form and towards communication meaning, lowering students' anxiety of making mistakes and encouraging a more positive attitude towards language use [2]. This paper aims to explore how task-based approaches in CLIL can enhance speaking skills of secondary school students. It focuses on the most efficient kinds of assignments, how they are carried out, and how professors can help students to become skilled and confident speakers. Task-based CLIL classrooms can offer an engaging and motivating atmosphere where students can enhance their subject knowledge and acquire critical communication skills by emphasizing both language and topic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted at Urganch State Pedagogical Institute with participants majoring in Uzbek language and literature. Over the course of one semester, students attended two subjects delivered entirely in English: General Pedagogy and Contemporary History of Uzbekistan. The instructional approach emphasized seminar-style classes, which are currently implemented predominantly through a student-centered methodology. In this framework, students assume a central role in the learning process, taking responsibility for organizing and leading discussions, presenting topics, and facilitating peer interactions whenever possible.

As future educators, participants were encouraged to actively structure their own learning experiences. They prepared presentations, designed discussion topics, and applied various interactive teaching techniques. These techniques included group discussions, debates, collaborative problem-solving, and role-playing exercises, all aimed at promoting active engagement, critical thinking, and communication in English. A key emphasis of the study was that students should explain and discuss subject content in English, providing an opportunity to simultaneously assess their language proficiency and subject comprehension.

To evaluate the effectiveness of task-based approaches within the CLIL framework, a mixed-methods research design was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests assessing students' speaking performance. These assessments focused on several dimensions: fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary usage, pronunciation, and overall communicative competence. Students' performances were evaluated according to CEFR criteria, providing standardized and objective measures of their oral skills.

In addition to standardized assessments, qualitative methods were applied to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences and challenges. Classroom observations were conducted throughout the semester to monitor student participation, interaction patterns, and the application of

strategies during task-based activities. Semi-structured interviews with both students and instructors provided insights into attitudes, perceptions, and practical issues encountered during the implementation of CLIL and task-based teaching. Moreover, questionnaires and self-assessment forms were distributed to students to collect feedback on their confidence, engagement, and perceived improvement in English-speaking abilities.

The task-based activities incorporated into the lessons were carefully selected to simulate authentic communication situations. These included role-plays simulating real-life educational scenarios, structured debates on contemporary topics, collaborative problem-solving exercises, and student-led project presentations. During these activities, learners were encouraged to employ compensatory strategies, such as requesting clarification, using synonyms, or rephrasing ideas, to maintain the flow of communication even when vocabulary limitations occurred. Such strategies are vital for building confidence and encouraging risk-taking in oral communication.

A quasi-experimental research design was implemented to measure the effectiveness of task-based CLIL. Participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group, which received CLIL-based instruction with integrated task-based activities, and a control group, which continued with traditional teacher-centered English instruction. Both groups were assessed at the beginning and end of the semester to evaluate changes in speaking proficiency and engagement levels.

Finally, data analysis involved triangulation of multiple sources. Quantitative results from speaking tests were statistically analyzed to identify improvements in fluency, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations, interviews, and questionnaires were thematically coded to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and positive outcomes of the CLIL and task-based approach. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and the anonymity of participants, were carefully maintained throughout the study.

Overall, this methodological framework allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of how task-based approaches within

CLIL affect speaking skills in secondary school students, integrating both measurable performance outcomes and personal experiences to provide a holistic understanding of their learning process.

RESULTS

The use of task-based learning in CLIL classes resulted in a number of noteworthy improvements in the speaking abilities of the students. The experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in terms of vocabulary usage, fluency, and fundamental communicative ability, according to an analysis of the pre- and post-test data. After taking part in CLIL-based sessions, students showed increased confidence in their ability to communicate in English, participate in conversations, and present material. They responded with greater accuracy, coherence, and organization, demonstrating both improved language skills and a better comprehension of the topic.

Classroom observations provided further evidence of the positive impact of task-based activities. During group discussions, debates, and collaborative problem-solving exercises, students in the experimental group actively participated, interacted frequently with peers, and took the initiative to lead parts of the lesson. Observers noted that students demonstrated increased willingness to take risks in speaking, employing strategies such as paraphrasing, using synonyms, or asking for clarification when encountering unknown vocabulary. In contrast, the control group showed less initiative and relied more heavily on teacher guidance, often hesitating to speak when uncertain.

Feedback from semi-structured interviews and questionnaires revealed that students felt more motivated and engaged in lessons where they had the opportunity to actively contribute and collaborate. Many participants reported that preparing and delivering presentations, as well as participating in debates and role-plays, boosted their self-confidence and created a sense of accomplishment. The immersive nature of the CLIL lessons encouraged learners to think critically, communicate effectively,

and reflect on their own language development. These qualitative insights confirmed that the integration of content learning and language practice facilitated a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment.

Another key finding was the reduction of classroom anxiety among students in the experimental group. By engaging in authentic communicative tasks rather than traditional rote exercises, learners felt more comfortable using English to convey their ideas. The combination of supportive peer interactions, scaffolded guidance from instructors, and task-based activities created a safe and encouraging environment that promoted consistent oral participation.

In addition to linguistic and cognitive gains, students demonstrated improved attitudes toward learning English. Many reported that seeing language as a tool for understanding interesting topics made the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable. This positive shift in perception was reflected in higher engagement levels and increased willingness to participate in subsequent tasks, suggesting that the task-based CLIL approach not only enhanced speaking skills but also fostered intrinsic motivation for language learning.

Despite the overall positive outcomes, some challenges were observed. A small number of students struggled with limited vocabulary, particularly when dealing with complex or unfamiliar content topics. Others needed additional time to adjust to the student-centered, task-based approach, especially if they were accustomed to traditional, teacher-led instruction. These observations indicate that gradual scaffolding, consistent exposure to authentic language, and targeted vocabulary support are essential for maximizing the effectiveness of task-based CLIL instruction.

Overall, the results suggest that integrating task-based learning within CLIL classrooms significantly enhances students' speaking abilities, while simultaneously promoting motivation, confidence, and active engagement. The combination of interactive tasks, peer collaboration, and content-focused instruction creates an environment in which learners can practice

authentic communication and develop both linguistic and cognitive skills in a meaningful context.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that incorporating task-based activities within CLIL classrooms significantly enhances students' speaking abilities. Participants in the experimental group showed noticeable improvements in vocabulary use, fluency, and overall communicative effectiveness, suggesting that combining language practice with content learning encourages more active and confident participation.

These results highlight that meaningful, real-life tasks provide a context in which students are motivated to use English spontaneously, rather than relying solely on teacher instruction or memorization of phrases. Observations also revealed that learners frequently employed strategies such as paraphrasing, using synonyms, and asking for clarification to maintain communication, which not only supported their oral proficiency but also enhanced problem-solving and collaborative skills.

Moreover, students reported feeling more comfortable and engaged when participating in interactive tasks, indicating that task-based CLIL lessons can reduce language anxiety and foster a positive attitude toward learning. Overall, these findings demonstrate that integrating task-based approaches into content-focused instruction enables learners to develop both linguistic competence and a deeper understanding of the subject matter, creating a richer and more effective learning experience.

One of the most notable outcomes was the increase in student confidence. By regularly participating in group discussions, debates, and presentations, students became more willing to take risks in speaking. They learned to use compensatory strategies, such as paraphrasing or asking for clarification, which helped them maintain communication even when vocabulary was limited. This not only enhanced their speaking abilities but also fostered self-reliance and problem-solving skills within an academic context. The student-centered nature of the lessons further encouraged learners to take responsibility for their own

learning, leading to higher engagement and intrinsic motivation [3].

Another important observation is that task-based CLIL lessons helped reduce classroom anxiety. Many students reported feeling less pressured when using English to discuss familiar and interesting topics. The immersive and interactive tasks created a supportive environment, which encouraged risk-taking and allowed students to practice English in a safe setting. This aligns with research showing that CLIL can lower foreign language anxiety by offering meaningful communicative contexts and increasing confidence [4].

Pedagogical theories also support this, suggesting that when language learning is embedded within meaningful academic tasks, learners experience lower affective barriers and more positive emotional responses, thereby improving oral performance [5].

The study also revealed that students developed better attitudes toward both language learning and subject content. Exposure to a variety of tasks, topics, and communicative situations not only improved their English but also strengthened their understanding of general pedagogy and the history of Uzbekistan. The integration of language and content made the learning process more relevant and engaging, enhancing both cognitive and linguistic development simultaneously [6].

Despite the overall positive effects, certain challenges were noted. Some students initially struggled with limited vocabulary or difficulty adjusting to a student-led, interactive learning environment. Others required additional guidance to effectively manage time during task completion. These challenges highlight the importance of gradual scaffolding, clear instructions, and structured support, especially when introducing task-based CLIL methods to learners accustomed to traditional, teacher-centered classrooms [7].

The purpose of this study was to investigate how well task-based learning within a CLIL framework may improve students' motivation, speaking abilities, and classroom participation. The results offer solid evidence that combining communicative exercises with subject matter produces an effective learning

environment where students are inspired to use English with confidence and meaning. Students were able to simultaneously develop oral proficiency and disciplinary knowledge by integrating language practice into academic subjects like General Pedagogy and the History of Uzbekistan. This demonstrated the pedagogical value of CLIL when paired with student-centered and interactive methodologies.

Students who engaged in task-based CLIL education showed considerable improvements in their general communicative competence, vocabulary usage, fluency, and grammatical accuracy over the course of the semester. Students in the experimental group were more eager to start conversations, maintain conversations, and use tactical tools like paraphrasing, clarifying, and rephrasing concepts than students in conventional teacher-centered classrooms. These findings suggest that task-based CLIL training develops critical communication skills necessary for academic and professional settings in the real world in addition to improving language proficiency.

The study emphasizes significant emotive and motivational consequences in addition to quantifiable linguistic increases. When speaking English, students reported feeling less nervous, especially when the tasks included collaborative formats and well-known material. Students were able to experiment with language without worrying about receiving a poor grade because of the encouraging, participatory environment that was established in the classroom through debates, presentations, role-plays, and problem-solving exercises. The notion that psychological elements are essential to successful language learning in integrated instructional models is supported by the apparent critical role that this emotional safety plays in promoting risk-taking and sustained engagement.

Positive results were also significantly influenced by the seminars' student-centered emphasis. Participants were urged to plan courses, create presentations, and facilitate conversations as aspiring teachers, which promoted a sense of accountability for their own education. Students' views of English changed from being a distinct academic topic to a useful tool for examining difficult concepts as a result of this autonomy, which encouraged

deeper engagement and intrinsic drive. In teacher-education settings, where students are expected to acquire not only language proficiency but also pedagogical awareness and reflective teaching techniques, such a shift is especially beneficial.

The study also found a number of issues that need to be taken into account when using task-based CLIL techniques. At first, some students had trouble with their limited vocabulary, particularly when they came across specialized or unfamiliar material. After years of being exposed to teacher-led education, some needed some time to get used to the active, learner-driven model. These challenges highlight the value of thorough scaffolding, methodical vocabulary assistance, and unambiguous task instructions, especially in the early phases of CLIL adoption. By establishing collaborative work structures, modeling skills, and progressively increasing task complexity as students develop confidence, teachers play a critical role in mediating learning.

The study was strengthened from a methodological standpoint by the mixed-methods design, which provided both qualitative and quantitative insight into the progress of the pupils. A comprehensive knowledge of how task-based CLIL affects linguistic ability, learner attitudes, and classroom dynamics was made possible by the triangulation of speaking exams, classroom observations, interviews, and surveys. This all-encompassing strategy adds to the expanding corpus of studies in favor of integrated language and topic instruction paradigms in postsecondary education and teacher preparation programs.

This study's results go beyond the particular institutional setting in which it was carried out. The findings imply that adding task-based activities to CLIL courses can be a useful tactic for teachers and curriculum designers looking to promote motivation, learner autonomy, and communicative competence. Lessons in the seminar style that emphasize interaction, teamwork, and practical communication seem especially well-suited to preparing students for future careers that call for critical thinking and flexible language use. Adopting such strategies may be advantageous for teacher-education programs in particular, as

they foster students' teaching repertoires while modeling creative pedagogy.

In order to investigate the sustainability and adaptability of task-based CLIL effects, future research could build on the current study by incorporating bigger participant groups, longer teaching sessions, or more academic disciplines. Research on how speaking skill gains change over time would also be beneficial, as would studies on how task-based CLIL training might be further improved by digital technologies and mixed learning settings. Furthermore, studies that compare different educational levels – for example, secondary and tertiary contexts – may shed more light on the ways in which integrated teaching methods interact with learner age, competency level, and academic specialization.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes by showing that task-based training in a CLIL framework provides a very successful way to improve speaking abilities while also boosting student confidence, subject comprehension, and classroom engagement. With the help of interactive pedagogical design, learner autonomy, and careful scaffolding, CLIL classrooms can develop into vibrant environments where students actively create knowledge through dialogue. These results support the increasing awareness that integrated, task-oriented techniques have promise for contemporary language instruction and teacher preparation in academic settings with multiple languages.

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