

A Comparison of CLIL Teaching in China and the United Kingdom—Taking the English Language Teaching Materials of the First Grade 6 of SEPE as an Example

Jinying Zheng*

Zhangdian Experimental Middle School of Zibo, Zibo, China

**Corresponding author: jinying.zheng.13@alumni.ucl.ac.uk*

Keywords: teaching CLIL; English language; education

Abstract: This paper compares the CLIL teaching models in China and the UK, taking the first English textbook of Grade 6 of the Shandong Education Press Edition (SEPE) as an example. CLIL teaching integrates content and language learning, and fosters students' interdisciplinary competence and language proficiency. There is room for improvement in domestic teaching in terms of the degree of subject integration, teachers' roles and learning strategies. British teaching focuses on cultivating students' disciplinary awareness and innovative thinking, with remarkable results. This paper puts forward suggestions to improve the degree of subject integration in domestic CLIL teaching, cultivate teachers' professional development and students' learning strategies, and draw on the successful experience of the UK to promote education reform. Through comparative analyses, it aims to provide inspiration and reference for the reform of domestic CLIL teaching, and to promote students' comprehensive development and cross-cultural communication.

1. Introduction

With the advancement of globalisation, the CLIL teaching model has gradually attracted the attention of the international education community. In CLIL teaching, subject content and language learning are combined to promote the comprehensive improvement of students' subject ability and language level. However, there are certain differences in the implementation of CLIL teaching between China and the UK. This paper takes the first English textbook of Grade 6 of the SEPE edition as an example to compare the CLIL teaching mode in China and the UK, aiming at exploring how to better promote CLIL teaching and enhance students' learning effects.

2. Overview of the CLIL teaching model

The CLIL model stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning. It is an interdisciplinary approach that integrates content and language learning so that students can improve their language skills while learning the subject matter. In CLIL, teachers use the target language to teach subject content, encouraging students to learn the language in context while learning and understanding concepts and skills from different subjects.

The CLIL teaching model emphasises active participation and collaborative learning, provides

authentic contexts and practical opportunities for students to apply what they have learnt in real-life situations, and develops their interdisciplinary skills and critical thinking. The CLIL model is widely used around the world as an effective teaching strategy to promote students' holistic development^[1].

3. Comparison of CLIL teaching in China and the UK

3.1 Degree of subject integration and curriculum design

The degree of subject integration and curriculum design are two important areas of comparison between CLIL teaching in China and the UK. In terms of the degree of subject integration, CLIL teaching in the UK is more in-depth and comprehensive. CLIL teaching in the UK emphasises the close integration of subject content and language learning, so as to improve students' language proficiency through the teaching of subject knowledge. In British CLIL classrooms, students not only learn subject concepts and skills, but also need to communicate and discuss in the target language, so as to cultivate students' ability to use language in the subject area. In China, on the other hand, some CLIL teaching may be more focussed on language learning, with a relatively low level of integration of subject content, resulting in insufficient in-depth understanding of the subject area by students.

In terms of curriculum design, CLIL teaching in the UK places greater emphasis on active participation and practice. The design of CLIL programmes in the UK usually covers rich practical activities, such as field trips, project studies and group work, which encourage students to apply what they have learnt in real-life situations. In China, on the other hand, some CLIL teaching may favour the traditional teaching mode and lack sufficient practical opportunities, making it difficult for students to apply what they have learnt to real-life situations^[2].

3.2 Teacher Roles and Student Engagement

There are some differences between CLIL teaching in China and the UK in terms of teacher role and student engagement. Firstly, in terms of teacher roles, CLIL teaching in the UK emphasises that teachers are guides and partners in learning. Teachers play a guiding role in promoting students' learning in the CLIL classroom, they are not only knowledge transmitters, but also pay more attention to cultivating students' independent learning ability and critical thinking. Teachers encourage students to explore and ask questions on their own initiative, and help them build deep subject understanding by guiding their thinking. In contrast, the role of teachers in CLIL teaching in China may be relatively more traditional. Some teachers are still in the position of transferring knowledge and students passively accept the teacher's explanations. There is a lack of active guidance and stimulation of students' interest in learning. Thus, more active guidance and stimulation of students' interest in learning should be provided.

Secondly, student engagement was also a significant difference between the two. In CLIL teaching in the UK, students are more engaged. They actively speak, co-operate, explore and participate in various practical activities in the classroom. This active student engagement helps to improve their language use and subject understanding. However, student engagement may be relatively low in CLIL teaching in China. Some students lack initiative in learning subject content and lack interest in participating in class discussions and practical activities.

3.3 Learning Strategies and Creative Awareness Development

There are some differences between CLIL teaching in China and the UK in terms of learning

strategies and the cultivation of creative awareness. British CLIL teaching pays more attention to the cultivation of learning strategies and encourages students to master diverse learning skills and methods to improve learning efficiency and learning outcomes. On the other hand, domestic CLIL teaching may be relatively weak in the cultivation of learning strategies, paying more attention to the transmission of knowledge and neglecting the cultivation of students' learning autonomy. For example, in Unit 2 "I'd like some noodles" in the English course of the first book of the seventh grade of the SEPE version, UK CLIL teaching may guide students to adopt different learning strategies to learn new knowledge. Teachers may show pictures, videos or objects to arouse students' interest and stimulate their curiosity about the topic. Teachers may then organise group discussions for students to share with each other different learning methods and techniques, such as memory techniques and note-taking methods. Students can actively participate in such a learning process, learn more practical learning strategies and improve the efficiency and quality of English learning.

On the other hand, CLIL teaching in the UK places more emphasis on the cultivation of a sense of innovation and encourages students to try out new ideas and problem-solving skills. However, the cultivation of innovative awareness may be relatively insufficient in domestic CLIL teaching, and students are less involved in innovative learning tasks and practical activities. For example, in Unit 7 "I'm more outgoing than my sister" in the English course of the first book of the seventh grade of the SEPE version, UK CLIL teaching may lead students to role-playing or group debates, so that students can give free play to their ideas and express their views from different perspectives. Such a learning approach helps develop students' sense of creativity and critical thinking, and stimulates their enthusiasm and motivation for learning.

4. Possible insights and recommendations

4.1 Enhancement of Subject Integration in CLIL Teaching and Learning in the Country

Enhancing the degree of subject integration in CLIL teaching in China is crucial to the development of students' comprehensive literacy and interdisciplinary learning ability. Some insights and suggestions can be drawn on to improve the degree of subject integration in the English language teaching materials of the first grade of the SEPE version of the 7th grade.

Firstly, subject integration can be carried out in the topic "How was your school trip?" in Unit 3. In addition to learning to talk about past experiences and the use of the past tense, teachers can guide students to learn about history, geography and other subjects. For example, when students talk about their school trip, they can integrate the history curriculum to make them understand the historical background and cultural heritage of the place. At the same time, students can also be guided to find relevant geographical information to understand the geographical location and characteristics of this place. Through such subject integration, students can not only improve their English language proficiency, but also expand their interdisciplinary knowledge horizons and enhance their awareness of the connections between different subjects^[3].

Secondly, in the topic of "How often do you exercise?" in Unit 6, technology can be integrated with the English subject. Teachers can guide students to use technological tools to collect and analyse data, for example, using questionnaires to collect students' exercise habits, and then presenting the data through charts and images. In English learning, students can use English to express their interpretation and analysis of data and deepen their understanding of exercise habits. Through the integration with science and technology subjects, students learn English while developing the ability to use science and technology and data processing, further enhancing their comprehensive literacy.

In summary, CLIL teaching in China can improve subject integration by integrating content from

different subjects. The content of the English curriculum in the first book of the seventh grade of the SEPE version provides rich resources for achieving this goal. Through interdisciplinary learning, students can not only comprehensively improve their language skills, but also develop their horizons and comprehensive literacy, laying a solid foundation for future learning and development.

4.2 Fostering Teacher Professional Development and Student Learning Strategies

In the first English textbook of the seventh grade of the SEPE version, the CLIL teaching method can be borrowed to cultivate teachers' professional development and students' learning strategies, and to promote the improvement of teaching quality and the cultivation of students' comprehensive literacy.

Firstly, for teachers' professional development, schools can organise special CLIL teaching training and invite professional educationalists and linguists to give lectures and seminars. Teachers can learn how to integrate subject content with English language teaching and how to improve students' overall competence through instructional design.

Secondly, for the cultivation of students' learning strategies, teachers can encourage students to take the initiative to participate in classroom discussions and group cooperative learning. Through cooperative learning, students can stimulate each other's interest in learning and explore problem-solving methods together. Teachers can design a variety of teaching activities, such as group projects, role-playing and field trips, so that students can master knowledge and skills in practice. For example, when learning geography in English, teachers can organise groups of students to have geography competitions or design English oral speeches, so that students can improve their language skills and understanding of subject knowledge in competitions and cooperation. At the same time, teachers can encourage students to make use of Internet resources for independent learning and exploration to cultivate their independent thinking and problem-solving skills^[4].

4.3 Drawing on the successful experience of CLIL in the UK to promote educational reforms

In the English textbook of the first seven grades of the SEPE edition, the successful experience of CLIL in the UK can be learnt to promote educational reform. For example, while learning English, some topics related to the content of the subject, such as environmental protection, history and culture, can be introduced.

Firstly, subject integration can be carried out in the topic "How was your school trip?" in Unit 3. In addition to learning to talk about past experiences and the use of the past tense, teachers can guide students to learn about history, geography and other subjects. For example, when students talk about their school trip, they can integrate the history curriculum to make them understand the historical background and cultural heritage of the place. At the same time, students can also be guided to find relevant geographical information to understand the geographical location and characteristics of this place. Through such disciplinary integration, students can not only improve their English language proficiency, but also expand their interdisciplinary knowledge horizons and enhance their understanding of the connections between different disciplines.

Secondly, in the topic "How often do you exercise?" in Unit 6, technology can be integrated with the English subject. Teachers can guide students to use technological tools to collect and analyse data, for example, using questionnaires to collect students' exercise habits, and then presenting the data through charts and images. In English learning, students can use English to express their interpretation and analysis of data and deepen their understanding of exercise habits. Through the integration with science and technology subjects, students learn English while developing the ability to use science and technology and data processing, further enhancing their comprehensive

literacy^[5].

5. Conclusion

Based on the successful experience of CLIL in the UK, promoting education reform is an important direction for the development of education. By integrating English teaching with subject content and cultivating students' subject literacy and language proficiency, we can better meet students' learning needs and improve teaching effectiveness. At the same time, attaching importance to teachers' professional development and students' learning strategies is also the key to achieving educational innovation. We should keep exploring and practicing, constantly improve the education system, and endeavour to give students access to better quality education resources and broader space for development, so as to make greater contributions to the development of education in China.

References

- [1] Zhu T, Xu Lusan. A study of the effect of CLIL teaching concept on college students' English reading anxiety[J]. *English Square*, 2023(12):86-88.
- [2] WANG Yansu, WANG Dan, WU Lihao. A practical investigation of the CLIL model of critical thinking strategy empowerment in blended foreign language teaching[J]. *Foreign Language e-Learning*, 2022(03):71-76.
- [3] LIU GENGYU, YAO KANG. Research on the teaching mode of research ability cultivation under the perspective of CLIL [J]. *Journal of Heilongjiang Teacher Development Institute*, 2023,42(02):64-67.
- [4] Li Yusheng. The Cultivation of Students' Discursive Ability in College English Teaching under the CLIL Perspective [J]. *Education Observation*, 2022,11(25):5-8.
- [5] Chen Lidan. Corpus-assisted task design for teaching business English under the CLIL concept[J]. *Overseas English*, 2022(24):99-100.