

Content and Language Integration in the Institute of Teacher Education – Redesigning the EAP Foundation Programme

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Abstract

This study investigated the use of theme-based content and language integration in an English Foundation course at an Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia. The proficiency of the pre-Bachelor of Education in Teaching of English as a Second Language (B.Ed. TESL) students was mixed. Often students enter with low academic reading and writing skills. Due to these constraints, a nine-week research project which integrated Social Studies content with Language Development learning outcomes was designed. The project included six classes of term two Foundation TESL students and six lecturers including the Language Development Component Head. The study used piloted pre and post questionnaires to allow quantitative data to be obtained. The data were triangulated with student interviews and their coursework reflections. The findings revealed an increase in motivation in speaking as well as greater comprehension of content terminology and topics. The process embedded skills such as writing a summary, note taking, creating or designing graphic organizers, listening for details, and critical analysis of arguments, understanding viewpoints, critical listening, responding to rebuttals, and reflection. However, ultimately it was the design of the process which facilitated increase in student overall motivation in English language learning.

KEYWORDS: Content and Language Integration, Curriculum Design, Foundation Programme, Theme-based, Language Development

Introduction

Students doing their foundation studies at the pre-university level in Malaysia generally come straight from high school. Prior to entering the programme their proficiency in the four skills is not tested. All students enter the same year regardless of their English proficiency. Thus, classes may contain a divergent level of language proficiency. The B.Ed. TESL Foundation Programme was designed as a three term language and skill preparatory course. Each semester has set components; Language Description (LDS – grammar), Language Development (LDV), Social Studies (SS) and English Studies (ES – literature). The overall purpose of the programme is to provide the students with a strong foundation in English and academic skills for subsequent undergraduate degree level study. It aims to develop a sound level of English language proficiency in both the spoken and written forms. Moreover, it aims to create a broad awareness of key issues in the modern world and specifically, the ability to deal critically and incisively with them the analytical and critical thinking skills among the students. The programme expects students to study independently. Additionally, the programme hopes to instil appropriate personal attitudes, characteristics, qualities, habits and interpersonal skills, as well as the awareness of the social and cultural norms of an English speaking society that will be applied when teaching primary school students. Thus, the Foundation English programme does not just comprise academic communication courses, but teaches academic skills such as researching, and model pedagogical best practices.

The Language Development Component I, II and III (LDV I, II and III) is one of the four academic components offered throughout the three semesters of the Foundation Programme. The course seeks to equip students with the necessary productive and receptive language skills to cope with the different academic demands of beginning academic study. It prepares students with the four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The three-term foundation course content is progressive. Presently, the coursework content of each component is taught separately without any cross-curricular integration. Therefore, due to the students' low proficiency and the wide variety of abstract language in the other component courses (LDS, LDV, SS and ES), the students lack the motivation to improve their proficiency. It was decided that a new approach was needed to improve foundation students' motivation and proficiency.

Content and language integration (CLI) approach is effective. Based on the evidence from twenty years of research in CLI (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987; Murphy & Stoller, 2001; Stoller, 2004) it was decided that this approach would best suit the redesign of the foundation programme. This was a pilot project and would only involve two components namely LDV and SS. Thus, integrating the concepts and themes from SS into the materials used by the LDV to attain their learning outcomes was implemented. However, it was decided that this implementation would use the framework of a project-based parliamentary debate. The debate format was altered to accommodate language skill development, active listening, critical thinking, peer assessment, student reflection, progressive feedback and learning outcomes. For example, students in the audience had to adjudicate and peer review their classmates. In addition, they were required for their coursework assessment, to take notes of the debate as evidence justifying the mark they awarded the team. This was a slight alteration to the traditional framework of a debate, providing opportunity to incorporate active listening and note taking which are LDV II learning outcomes. In addition, all the learning outcomes from LDV II were embedded in tasks using SS II (see Appendix 1) concepts or themes. Therefore, the process required the students to read more from a variety of sources. Moreover, the students were marked both as a group and individually. Thus, the design of the

project coursework allowed for group collaboration, to increase engagement in language learning, as well as content comprehension. The strategies employed in implementing the course provide ample opportunities for students to have a hands-on experience in carrying out the teaching of the learning activities which included multiple opportunities for practice and constructive feedback.

Rationale

Content and language integration is the name for an approach to language and content learning. Some researchers refer to content-based instruction (CBI) is defined as “the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills” (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003, p. 2). Overall, it is an approach to facilitating learning for ESL/EFL students. Research in Canada and the United States in the 1990’s, illustrated positive results of content and language integration or as it is termed immersion education (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Snow and Brinton, 1997). Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2003) findings revealed higher scores for immersion non-natives even at a late start than for native speakers. Grabe and Stoller (1997) did extensive primary research as well and analysing other studies. Their seminal 1997 book analyses content and language integration breaking down the populations into ESL K-12, EFL K-12, post-secondary FL and post-secondary ESL. They illustrated how effective content and language integration approach is at the EFL Post-secondary level. European researchers as well, have highlighted the positive results of CLIL (de Zarobe, 2009). The reason for using this approach is that research findings (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989) show that EAP programmes tend to use contextually abstract materials. In addition, most EAP teachers generally focus on rhetorical patterns, vocabulary spheres, and specific grammatical structures. These structures are supposed to be transferred to the content area classroom practices. Content and language integration (CLI) is an approach which has a variety of types of content and language integration associated with it, and one which has been extensively researched over the past thirty years. Therefore, before discussing the approach used by this study an overview of the various types is needed.

There are several types of content and language integration depending on context and approach. The type and approach used for the present study will be discussed after first defining the various types of CLI. There are several types of CLI such as; immersion, partial immersion, sheltered course, adjunct, and theme-based (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Snow & Brinton, 1997). Immersion education is as it sounds. For example, in Canada students attend French immersion schools where all the courses are taught in French while receiving an incremental increase in English. Immersion is usually implemented at the primary and secondary level. The language is not in the students’ first language (L1). Sheltered courses are generally taught at the secondary and post-secondary level. The courses are taught by a content teacher but the students are separated or sheltered from native speakers so that the level of the content is embedded with learning strategies. An example of a sheltered course would be MA TESOL courses with only international students. Adjunct courses are given at the university level and they assist the students’ language. An example is academic communication course taught using the content (Duenas, 2004). The final type is theme-based approach. This was the approach chosen to be used by the research team for the foundation course.

The foundation course was patterned around a theme-based approach. Theme-based courses do not run parallel with the content course as in adjunct scenario. They have explicit language aims which are more important than the content. “The rationale for this thematic approach is to “avoid[s] fragmentation and unconnected skill exercises” and a variety of activities are integrated around meaningful content (Berry & Mindes, 1993, p. 6)”. “Previous research on the effectiveness of theme-based language courses has been surprisingly limited. One recent study that addressed this issue was conducted by Alptekin, Erçetin, and Bayyurt (2007), who in a quasi-experimental study investigated the effectiveness of a theme-based syllabus and a grammatical syllabus for Turkish learners of English in a primary school setting. The results of this study showed that EFL learners using a theme-based syllabus developed better English proficiency than those using a grammatical syllabus in both listening and reading or writing (Alptekin, Erçetin, & Bayyurt, 2007). Thus, the rationale was for applying theme-based approach was based on the fact that students are often taught a language separate from a particular context. For example, teaching grammar or academic skills absent from a purpose or context in which the language is situated. The application of this approach was not based on increasing proficiency as true assessment requires more time than one term. Rather the researchers wanted to increase the students’ motivation to English language learning. Applying a theme-based approach allowed students to use content language repeatedly in two courses.

As Stoller (2002) argues dual commitment to language and content is the most successful method for acquiring the language and enhancing student motivation. Stoller’s (2002) dual language and content model posits that the deeper the understanding of a concept, the more the language is used. The more the language is used, the easier the concepts are to be understood. Therefore, revisiting input for differing purposes becomes a ‘dual commitment to language and content’ (Murphy & Stoller, 2001). However, “success depends on the details of its implementation” (Stoller, 2002, p.3). Within a dual language and content model one must: First, synthesize information from different sources. Thus, the debate format asks the students to understand the various points of views so that they may be prepared to argue against those points. Second, revisiting input for differing purposes allows for the breaking down concepts over time so that students full synthesize of content and language. This leads to an integrated process that is working overall to a greater topic. Consequently, the idea to redesign the course work debate project integrating the topics from SS II (gender and equality) with LDV II learning outcomes was developed.

The Institute of Teacher Education Foundation LDV component used the theme of Gender and Equality from the SS II syllabus as the content in the LDV II class. This provided students with meaningful and practical contexts in which to acquire academic and language skills. The process was designed around the theme-based CLI approach and dual language (Murphy & Stoller, 2001). This process asked the students to comprehend concepts over time based on a series of smaller tasks. The tasks, which were connected to the coursework learning outcomes, were also designed around the debate process including skills such as note taking, understanding points of view, summarizing arguments and researching information. The debate format asks the students to understand various points of views so that they may be prepared to argue against those points. Graphic organizers were created so that students could easily breakdown the information into main points, supporting details, opposing arguments, and counter arguments. For example, the LDV learning outcome of understanding fact versus opinion usually uses exercises from a textbook that does not connect to concepts presently being taught whereas, the research team created activities using information taken from

various sources from academic, newspapers and social studies textbook. These activities prepared the students to research their particular topic. Therefore, these activities were useful and meaningful. Moreover, the project coursework requirements expected students to hand in their research notes as well as their sources for assessment. This spiralling theme-based cross-curricular approach benefitted students in both SS and LDV. The project debate process was designed to incorporate practices which allow for recycling language and concepts.

Moreover, assessment was based not on discrete moment in time but on a progression over time. Lecturers were asked to evaluate how the students improved overtime not just how they performed on the day of the debate. This required the lecturers to provide practice time, so that feedback could be given and the debate performance could improve. Originally, the lecturers were asked to practice and give feedback at least two times. However, as will be discussed later in the results section, time constraints was a factor limiting the amount of feedback given. Most importantly the CLI parliamentary debate framework was a process for the students rather than the debate being a product. With this rationale in mind the research team attempted to redesign materials to integrate language and content.

To maintain the synthesis of language and content, new exercises were created for the learning outcomes such as understanding fact versus opinion, narrative essays and reading for main ideas. An example of this was when the lecturers gave a newspaper article containing the topic of gender equality ruling. The article included a Malaysian gender equality ruling. They were asked to read for main idea and then to discuss. Next, the students were asked to reread the article not for facts or details but rather for specific viewpoints. The article contained British and Spanish gender issues of legal rulings. From this article they could find useful vocabulary for their debate topic. For example, 'discrimination' is a word that can be used in varying contexts such as gender, age and race discrimination. It is the belief of all the six lecturers, after interviewing them, that this approach facilitated greater language learning. Just integrating language and content or just using a debate will not increase language learning. However, allowing for dual commitment to language and content using a theme-based CLI approach enables students to understand the practical application of an abstract concept better facilitates language acquisition.

Research questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

- 1) Does implementing content and language integration improve language learning motivation?
- 2) Will content and language integration facilitate vocabulary comprehension as perceived by the students?

The main purpose of this study is not to assess increase in proficiency but rather whether the approach will increase in students' motivation to learn. There are several reasons for not assessing proficiency. First, there are too many variables to attend to for any meaningful proficiency to occur. Second, the term is only nine weeks and the researchers believe true proficiency in language acquisition develops overtime and cannot be measured in a short period of time. Third, and most importantly, content and language integration is a new approach for most of the lecturers. This is a pilot study assessing shifts in student motivation. Four, the students all enter the foundation programme without an entrance test such as IELTS. Moreover, all students are placed in the programme regardless of their proficiency

level. Thus, there was no meaningful data on the students' English proficiency in the four skills. The only data existing was the term one final exam which indicated 70 per cent of the students fell between a fail and minimal pass. The purpose of the redesign thus was to pilot a new approach which would improve motivation and overtime increase proficiency.

Research design and methods

The design of the research was simple, and follows Razali (2012, p. 9). "The IPGKBA Foundation LDV II cohort used the theme of Gender and Equality from Social Studies as the content in the LDV class. Each class was broken into several groups. Each group contained two teams of either three or four debating members. One team was the pro-motion, while the other team opposed the motion. The students were asked to create their own agreed upon motions" The project lasted nine weeks. The project was approved by the Head of the English Department at IPGKBA.

Population

The study included six classes of term two foundation B.Ed. TESL students and six lecturers including the Component Head. The total number of students was 130. The students had attended one term of the foundation programme. These students age ranged from between 18-21 years old. The students were of mixed proficiency levels. As stated previously there was no English proficiency data as the Ministry of Education does not have an entrance assessment exam. Furthermore, due to the nature of the research all students from the cohort participated. So that assessing results in changes of attitudes and beliefs were to occur there was no control group. None of the students were taught using a different approach.

Research methods

A mixed-method approach was utilized. The research study used qualitative interviews with students and lecturers. The comments were categorised into areas, namely motivation, language learning, CLI process, study skills and speaking skills. These comments were triangulated with the comments from the students' course work reflective writing which was part of their coursework. Within each theme, the comments were categorised. For example, under CLI process the comments were categorised into language, research, reading, listening, speaking, note-taking and critical thinking and these are numbered 1 to 7. A comment was assessed by category and awarded a number. However, long comments were assigned more than one number. These numbers were later quantified. Furthermore, there were quantitative pre- and post-questionnaires which assessed changes in students perception, beliefs and attitude to language learning. The pre-questionnaire analysed the students attitudes to four areas of English language learning; 1) their confidence in own public speaking ability 2) what level they perceived their spoken English ability to be at 3) their perceived listening ability 4) their readiness to participate in the debate. The questionnaire was piloted by one student from each of the six classes then given to the whole cohort. It should be noted that this questionnaire was not assessing their actually ability but rather the students perceived beliefs and attitudes about their English ability. In each class, half the students believed they lacked the ability in one of the four areas.

The results were collated to identify the poorly motivated students in each class and then the results were sent to each lecturer. These acted as a formative assessment so that lecturers

could focus on students who believed they were ‘weak’ in English language learning, thus, facilitating and scaffolding the process for those students.

Data analysis and tools

The post-questionnaire data was assessed and presented in a table. The post-questionnaire was divided into concept comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, content and language integration process, feedback, lessons learnt by the student, areas for improvement and motivation in language learning. All questions were multiple choice questions with an equal number of answers for easier quantification. For the interview questions, the lecturers and training fellow worked together to ensure that the questions were clear and understood by the students. The questions posed in the interview discussed the following agreed upon areas; language learning motivation, debate process, feedback, skills learnt, and vocabulary retention and comprehension. The results were triangulated against the reflections in the students’ course work which asked them to discuss both “negative and positive aspects of the following areas; language learning motivation, debate process, feedback, skills learnt, and vocabulary retention and comprehension.” The comments were then divided into process, feedback, and curriculum changes (see Appendix 2). To ensure there was no bias during analysis of the reflection papers two controls were implemented. First, the students’ coursework reflection papers were assessed anonymously and by a third non-teaching researcher. Thus, any bias was eliminated. In addition, an external person rechecked the coursework and the answers were compared. The comparison showed little if no variation.

Research findings and discussion

The initial findings from the pre-questionnaire identified three major areas where students felt they lacked proficiency. The first area was whether or not they believed they were prepared for a debate. The second was how proficient they were orally in English. The final area was how proficient, in English, they were as a whole. The results were first tabulated for each class. Then, after that, the class totals were combined for an overall result. Regarding preparedness of the class, over 1/3 or 36% of the students in the six classes felt they were not proficient enough to partake in the debate. In some classes, 50% of the students believed they were not proficient enough in speaking. In addition, 38% of the 130 students did not feel confident to speak in public. Also, one third of the students felt they were not good at English. These are interesting statistics. However, they become more illuminating regarding the effectiveness of the CLI process when the results were compared with the qualitative reflective coursework comments and interviews. These triangulated results reveal the CLI curriculum redesign to have a positive effect.

There were two questions which investigated if the CLI approach facilitated more effective acquisition and comprehension of SS content vocabulary. Regarding whether the CLI debate project facilitated with the comprehension of gender and equality concepts question one asked students: *Does this project aid understanding of social studies concepts?* Question two asked students: *Does this project aid acquisition of vocabulary?* The majority of the students (98%) believed that the process facilitated comprehension of the SS concepts. Secondly, the majority stated the process aided in vocabulary acquisition. Results showed that 83% of the students ‘strongly agreed’ that the debate process helped them to remember the vocabulary whereas 16% ‘agreed’. It is noteworthy that there were 0% of students disagreed (see results in Table 1 below).

Table 1: Question one and two post-questionnaire results

	strongly affirmative	affirmative response	negative response
Question one	81.5% (106/130)	16% (21/130)	0%
Question two	45% (59/130)	83% (108/130)	0%

Next, the results from questions three and four which investigated the effectiveness of the CLI approach for the overall debate process. Question three asked students: *Did the content integration process help with the debate?* The results showed that 65% of the students stated that the process ‘strongly helped’ with their debating skills and 35% of students stated that it helped them with the debate. Question four asked: *What did the students learn the most from the process?* There were several areas that the students identified as helping in the debate. However, the majority of students, 52% felt that the process allowed them to become better speakers (See Table 2).

Table 2: Question three and four post-questionnaire results

	strongly affirmative	affirmative response	negative response
Question three	65% (84/130)	35% (46/130)	0%
	Area		
Question four	52% (68/130) better speaker	Various other answers totalled 48%	

The next area was feedback which was the weakest area for lecturers but due to this being a pilot project it is not surprising.

In the area of feedback there were several questions asked. The students were questioned whether feedback was effective, if it had not been effective what improvements could be made. The question asked; *did the lecturers give 1) enough feedback on language and content 2) only with the team 3) Too general.* It should be noted that this process of continual feedback for practice was new to the lecturers. Therefore, it would not be realistic to expect lecturers to be perfect in this area. However, the post questionnaire did investigate the students’ opinions regarding feedback. One lecturer scored 100% in affirmation of feedback; another lecturer scored 50% in affirmation. During the interviews with the lecturers it was revealed that the lecturer who scored 100% on the feedback question gave three feedback sessions and the other lecturer gave two sessions of feedback, whereas, the other lecturers had only one practice and feedback session. They stated in the interview that time was a factor. It should be noted that the lecturer with the highest positive feedback discussed how their background in theatre provided an understanding of the importance of practice and feedback. Overall, this was an area of weakness for all the lecturers.

In conjunction with feedback, students were also questioned as to what area the CLI debate process could be improved. In question eight the researchers questioned areas for improvement by listing several areas the students could choose from. Question eight asked: *What areas needed to be improved in the process?* There were a variety of answers but the majority of students responded that they wanted more speaking practice. This is shown in the results in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Question eight post-questionnaire results

	strongly affirmative	Various other responses	negative response
Question eight	52% (68/130) more speaking practice	48% More feedback More study skills More practice More listening	0%

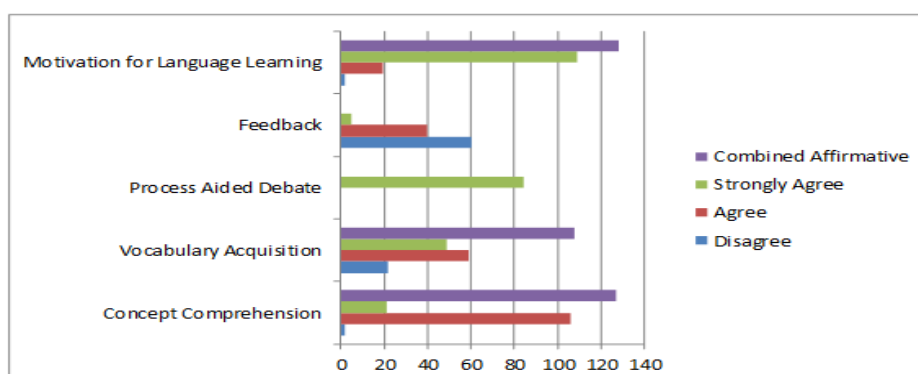
The final area of investigation was in the area of motivation for learning English. Question nine investigated whether the process of CLI project-based approach increased the students’ motivation to learn English. Question nine asked: *Does this process aid in motivating English language learning?* Significant findings from the project reveal that integrating content language from SS II with the learning outcomes in LDV II class has an overall motivating effect on students English language learning. Question nine asked if the content and language debate process motivated their English language learning, 84% stated ‘yes definitely’ with another 15% stating ‘yes a little’. Both answers are affirmative (99%) towards increase in motivation for language learning. These statistics indicate that the process, even as a pilot project, was a complete success. This triangulated with the reflective coursework comments indicate the impact theme-based content and language integration can have on language learning motivation as seen in the results in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Question nine post-questionnaire results

	strongly affirmative	affirmative response	negative response
Question nine	84% (109/130)	15% (19/130)	1%

Only 1% of all the six classes felt that the debate did not motivate them. Others felt that they learnt how to understand viewpoints and construct an argument. These quantitative findings reveal that the overall redesign of the B.Ed. TESL Foundation curriculum using positive complexity in the CLI process benefited students’ language learning. This, in conjunction with the qualitative data from interviews triangulated with coursework reflection is strong evidence of the programme’s success. The results showed that the CLI project-based approach was successful in several areas from; improving language acquisition, motivation and study skills. Figure 1 shows a full picture of the project results.

Figure 1: Overall Content and language findings



Some of the qualitative comments were also examined. The strongest evidence that the redesigning of the B.Ed. TESL Foundation curriculum would be beneficial to the increase of students' proficiency was revealed when the quantitative data was triangulated with the qualitative data. In the pre-questionnaire results, one third or more of the students believed they were not good at speaking. However, as stated previously, the post questionnaire results show that 65% of students felt that the CLI process aided in their debate skills. Moreover, evidence quantified from the coursework reflections showed that 89 of 130 students or roughly 67% of students believed the CLI process aided their language and other skills. Further, 61% felt their speaking improved. This triangulates with the comments in the coursework: stating "it (the process) gave me the chance to build my confidence level and self-esteem" as can be seen in Table 5:

Table 5: Comments from student coursework reflections

Nos.	Comment Category	Number of students	Percentage
1.	Language and other skills	89 out of 130	67%
2.	Research	27 out of 130	20%
3.	Reading	15 out of 130	11%
4.	Listening	18 out of 130	14%
5.	Speaking	80 out of 130	61%
6.	Note taking and summary	10 out of 130	8%
7.	Critical thinking, organization, Collaboration	35 out of 130	27%

The comments were codified in areas and comments were given numbers that highlighted that particular area. Often student comments contained data pertaining to more than one area. Thus, they were assigned more than one number. The following are examples of how the students' comments were codified:

*"**1** Debating needs us to speak confidently and I myself had managed to **5** improve the self-esteem and the confidence when dealing with the audience...I managed to **2** know about what had really happen in today's world." 1/2/5*

*"If possible, we try our **2** best to avoid general points... **6** we have to work together as a team and create the ability to analyse a problem and manage to propose an effective solutions... practice makes per"*

As evidenced, from these comments, it is evident that the CLI process had a strong effect on the students. This is especially true, when compared with the pre-questionnaire statistics asking students how confident they felt in their speaking, listening and ability to participate in the debate. Furthermore, the CLI process enabled students to understand how to apply theories practically. This is evidenced in not only the 80 out of 130 students who stated this but from the coursework comments such as the following:

Furthermore, this project [debate] plays quite a significant role in producing a future teacher to learn about the techniques because we can use this knowledge to educate our students on how to engage themselves in the four skills.

The triangulated coursework reflections and post-questionnaire results indicated students almost unanimously agreed the process enhanced their language learning. This is a strong indicator that these large CLI project while time consuming, produce stronger results in the

end. In addition, there were several other positive findings emerging from the post-questionnaire. The process was a resounding success as 98% of students 'agreed' that the process better enabled comprehension of the SS concepts. Deeper examination reveals 82% of students stated they 'strongly agreed' that it enabled comprehension. Moreover, none of the students stated it did not help. While the post-questionnaire is strong evidence of the success of CLI project-based approach, assessing students' comments provided further evidence of its success. The comments highlight the degree to which the students believed the process facilitated their language learning as seen in this comment where the student discusses how the CLI project-based approach enabled her to master language as well as enabled content acquisition:

Overall, the debate process was quite okay as it gave me a lot of useful inputs on the topic of gender and equality. This can also be considered as killing two birds with one stone as I was able to master a topic in Social Studies and master all the four main skills of Language Development.

Educators must remember that only implementing content language with content will not be completely successful. As prior research and this present study indicate, without applying it to a context, there will not be success. Thus, vocabulary from SS that is integrated within a practical, meaningful task that is applicable is imperative. Furthermore, as Stoller (2002) states, the CLI approach uses positive complexity synthesizes information from different sources. The debate format asks the students to understand the various points of views so that they may be prepared to argue against those points, as evidenced in this student's comment:

I learned how to think critically. I learned how to write summaries from main points. I learned how to argue my points originally...A deeper exposure to the issue.

An example of how this project implemented this, the team gave students a series of activities taken from a newspaper article that discussed a gender equality ruling. They were asked to read for main idea and then to discuss. Then they reread for specific viewpoints. In the article there were a variety of viewpoints on the issue from British and Spanish court rulings. As well, a Malaysian gender and equality issue was supplied to provide a meaningful practical example. The other tasks asked students to discuss in small groups the various viewpoints. These activities facilitated the students reviewing language and content as well as revisiting the issues from alternative points of view.

This type of process asks students to not only use textbooks but research websites, news, newspapers and other sources, thus again they revisit the concepts from various sources. This is shown not only in the quantitative statistics from the post-questionnaire but in addition with the interviews of the students who stated:

The debate helped me by giving me the confidence to talk in public. Although I do not like to debate and I do not like to do research but without a doubt I do think that this debate should be repeated because it helped us a lot in terms of speaking, taking notes, listening, etc.

Others felt they understood the concepts because as one student stated "The debate is better than any written task because it is done practically, rather than theory form. It improves our spoken language, at the same time enhances our intrapersonal skills." Thus, using the CLI practices allow for review, reporting and repeating the language. As one student stated "I would suggest that this debate be carried out every year because it can help enhance our language. In fact, my speaking and listening skills are also improving tremendously." Thus,

students believed this process greatly helped not only their debating skills but speaking skills as well.

This process was effective because lecturers scaffold students to become independent, critical thinkers using a meaningful process that integrates content concepts to language in a practical manner. Moreover, students become masters of these processes in both a collaborative and individual fashion, thus allowing for more than one kind of learning (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Leaver & Willis, 2004; Mohan & Beckett, 2003; Stoller, 2004; Stryker & Leaver, 1997). This is evidenced not only in the majority of students who felt it improved their vocabulary and speaking but in the comments from some of the students, one who stated that "this debate made me overcome my fear of speaking, in my opinion more of this type of things should be done in the future." Furthermore, interviews with all the six lecturers revealed a common opinion of the process. All the lecturers believed that this type of CLI project enabled the students to have meaningful, practically applicable learning opportunities. They agreed that most students' participation and engagement increased in comparison to other types of tasks and activities. This is evidenced in statements such as the following:

The whole process had helped me a lot in improving my confidence level, thinking skills, and increasing my knowledge. I learned how to look at an issue, and think analytically in depth about it. Therefore, I hope, in the future, a debate like this will take place so that I can improve myself.

Further, some lecturers felt the extra practice in using the conceptual language from their other course facilitated an increased confidence in language usage. This is evidenced not only in the quantified results from the pre- and post- questionnaire but also from reflections of the students such as the following.

The process of debating itself had given me lots of opportunities as it acted as a platform for me to enhance my skills in English....show my talent which I have not realised before.

The results of the post-questionnaire, interview data and coursework qualitative reflections reveal consistent triangulation of the research findings. Thus, next the article discusses how to implement this further into the present curriculum.

Conclusion

After examining the data and qualitative evidence from the project findings, it is apparent that the theme-based CLI approach was successful. However, it is essential that educators keep in mind when redesigning curriculum to not only integrate content and language but apply curriculum cohesively and embeds learning and study strategies. Most importantly, practice which includes specific feedback is an essential component in the design of the success of the programme. This leads to an integrated process that is working overall to a greater topic. Methods must promote the acquisition of content. To increase motivation and ultimately over time proficiency, curriculum must integrate language and content embedding learning outcomes, integrated skills and study skills and feedback. Theme-based CLI approach is a good method for motivating students and exposing them to practical application of skills, concepts, themes and language opportunities.

As stated previously, the aims of the foundation programme are to increase English proficiency, develop critical thinking and expose the teacher trainees to global issues. The theme-based CLI approach uses language integrated with higher order thinking skills and most importantly allowing students an opportunity to practically apply what they have learnt (Grant, 2002). As Stoller (2002) states for success in these types of projects, a tapestry of all skills and outcomes are threaded together to create a greater picture not just practised and discarded. Lecturers scaffold students to become independent, critical thinkers using a meaningful process that integrates content concepts to language in a practical manner. Moreover, students become masters of these processes in both a collaborative and individual fashion, thus allowing for more than one kind of learning.

In addition, class presentation is only a one way process whereas parliamentary style debate incorporates points of inquiry from the audience, points of clarification and rebuttals from opposing team. The process is more dynamic, integrating skills such as summary, note taking, graphic organizers, listening for details, critical analysis of the arguments, responding to rebuttals, adjudicating facts presented, peer review and reflection of the process. Moreover, the process expected students to understand different points of views to gather information and be prepared for what the other side will argue. Most debates are one time and do not incorporate practice, recycling of concepts and language, giving feedback, asking the students to listen for details of the arguments and peer reviewing which group had the stronger argument. The debate process was structured so that the audience members must participate or they lose marks. Moreover, students wrote guided reflections, handed in their notes taken during the debates, and their references for the sources used. Over the nine weeks, students began to be more critical and less accepting that any argument is a good one.

Limitations

However, there were some limitations to the study, which requires further research. There were two areas for improvement in the project. First, student felt they needed more speaking practice. If a more concerted effort was made to include practice opportunities for the debate, than confidence in speaking would have increased in the students. Second, an interesting finding emerged for lecturers. In the section on feedback, the majority of students stated that the feedback on language and content was either too general or only given to the team rather than individual feedback. Four of the six lecturers received similar reviews in their feedback. After interviewing the lecturers they revealed if they were given the opportunity to do this again they felt they would have more time on practice and feedback. While, this is a significant area of weakness generally for all the lecturers, it should be noted that, this was the first attempt at such a project. Therefore, these are lessons learnt by all involved. The researchers could provide better syllabus design to allow lecturers the time to attend to individual feedback. What this indicates is that there is an area that might need professional development. Moreover, the design of the questionnaire needs modification. Students were told to circle more than one answer. This is seen in the results of Table 6 for question five, six and seven below.

Table 6: Question five, six and seven post-questionnaire results

	strongly affirmative	affirmative response	negative response
Question five	40% (52/130)	60% (78/130)	0%
	Area		
Question six			31% (40/130) Too general
Question seven			35% (46/130) Only team feedback

However, while there were limitations with the study overall, the CLI framework not only models best learning and teaching practices, but illustrates best curriculum design practices. Often teachers are so focused on the transmission of information that they forget that designing the framework for the process of language learning is crucial to motivating, facilitating and ultimately engaging the students in language learning (Grant, 2002; Perkins, 1991).

Significant future implications

Due to the success of the project, the research team recommends the following curriculum redesign of the B. Ed. TESL Foundation Programme to occur. First, integrate text from SS and ES to better facilitate teaching of the various grammar (LDS) learning outcomes. Grammar taught in isolation is less effective than when taught in context (Azar, 2007). Moreover, materials, activities and tasks could be created from the themes of SS and texts in ES. Using the themes from SS that are highlighted in the ES novels and short stories should be assessed. These themes connect across the curriculum and give the students contexts and recycling of topics, themes and concepts. This would strengthen not only the learning but better facilitate language learning as the research has shown.

Furthermore, to counter ES lecturers who argue that they must analyse the texts, a counter argument is that students are not tested on the content of the books, but rather the critical thinking skills. Analysing texts not just for literary devices but to critically assess themes as they relate to a global world is one of the learning outcomes stated by the Malaysian Ministry of Education for the foundation department. In addition, using the English studies texts in LDS (grammar) classes teaches grammar in context. This allows the students to have greater opportunity to increase their language proficiency. An area in the curriculum that could integrate the course content with the language was the LDS (grammar) and ES (literature) courses that did not partake in the project. The six lecturers all stated that they needed time in LDVII to help with students' grammar. However, the foundation curriculum could utilise grammar materials created from the SS and/or ES texts. This would recycle the language and content concepts as well as showing students grammar in context.

An example of how it could occur is the play King Lear which was being studied in ES. One of the themes in the play is gender and equality. This could be highlighted to the students thus increasing the effectiveness of their learning. Furthermore, grammar would be taught within a concept and context, such as using grammar from SS texts and/or the plays studied in ES. Integrating the components (LDV, LDS, SS and ES) allows for language and learning skills

to be practically applied. Thus, this research project shows that redesigning curriculum to fully utilise and apply the students content and language knowledge provides a more meaningful and effective learning experience. Thus, while this study proves that content and language integration using a project-based framework is effective in increasing language motivation, vocabulary acquisition and study skills, there are further areas to investigate. As one of the students stated “the debate had a big impact on me. After the debate, I am more confident in speaking. I wish that lecturers can give comments to those debaters one by one as feedback.” The Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia (IPGM) should implement a redesign of the foundation curriculum. This could be accomplished in a coordinated collaborative manner with all the twenty-seven campuses of the Institute of Teacher Education (IPGK). Further investigation and training is required to create the most effective possible learning opportunity for future Malaysian TESL teachers

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APPENDIX 1

Table A1. Content and language learning outcomes

Learning Outcomes	CL1 Process
Critical Reading	Same using content
Fact vs. Opinion	Same using content
Viewpoint	Smaller integrated tasks more practical
Genre	Recycling of language and concepts
Listening and Speaking	Group collaboration
Critical Writing	Scaffolding
Cohesion and Coherence	Structuring viewpoints and notes

APPENDIX 2: The coursework marking guide

PROCESS

1= language and other skills including team work, confidence 2=research 3= reading 4=listening 5=speaking 6=note taking and summary 7=critical thinking, organization and collaboration

language and other skills	research	reading	listening	speaking	note taking and summary	critical thinking, organization
89 out of 132 67%	27 out of 132 20%	15 out of 132 11%	18 out of 132 14%	80 out of 132 61%	10 out of 132 8%	35 out of 132 27%

Examples:

Marker 1 *“Debating needs us to speak confidently and I myself had managed to **5** improve the self-esteem and the confidence when dealing with the audience...I managed to **2** know about what had really happen in todays world.” 1/2/5*

Marker 2 *“Debating needs us to speak confidently and I myself had managed to **5** improve the self-esteem and the confidence when dealing with the audience...I managed to **2** know about what had really happen in todays world.” 1/2/5*

FEEDBACK

Good guidance=1 No Individual feedback=2 Too general=3 good guidance skills=4

Good guidance=1	No individual feedback=2	Too general=3	good guidance skills=4
44 out of 49 89%	6,17,11=34 of 65 52%	22,10,11,7=39 of 65 60%	29 out of 49 59%

Examples:

Mark 1 “...from their articles, I also make a graphic organizer that can make me more clearer about the motion. In addition, I also ask some help from my LDV lecturer, ...he also gives some advices about how to summarize correctly and how to rebut the opposition’s points.” **4/1**

Mark 2 “...from their articles, I also make a graphic organizer that can make me more clearer about the motion. In addition, I also ask some help from my LDV lecturer, ...he also gives some advices about how to summarize correctly and how to rebut the opposition’s points.” **4 (noted difference)**

CURRICULUM

Daily life -1 Future teacher-2 overall skills-3 general knowledge-4 gained experience-5

Daily life	Future teacher	Overall skills	General knowledge	Gained experience
10 of 55 18%	18 of 55 32%	28 of 55 51%	21 of 55 38%	7 of 55 13%

Examples:

Marker 2 “I also learned how to be well-prepared and tried to deliver my speech well. All the values and knowledge that I gained from this assignment will be applied in my daily life.” **1/4/3**

Marker 1 “I also learned how to be well-prepared and tried to deliver my speech well. All the values and knowledge that I gained from this assignment will be applied in my daily life.” **1/3/4**