

A Wonderful Two-Week Study at Cambridge

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I was so lucky to have the opportunity joining this short-term training to Cambridge University in its Homerton College (also named as Bell Teacher Campus), all thanks to the New Taipei City Government and the British Council in Taiwan.



The two-week training course was the most enjoyable experience I have had so far. Of course, the course itself was the part I enjoyed the most. But the whole study would not be so unforgettable without the cultural encounters I had over there. Therefore, my report will talk about the course and my cultural experiences. Then, I am going to briefly introduce what CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is about, one of the topic covered in our training course. Finally, I will look at how we can learn from CLIL and integrate English work with other subjects, coupled with an example from my classroom application.

The course

Our course began with an opening ceremony in the auditorium where all teachers from 37 countries all gathered together in the morning of Aug. 15. In this opening ceremony, the

staff of Bell Education Trust introduced us the school history, its vision, the trainer team, the plenary talks within the two weeks, and things we needed to be aware of using the campus facilities. After that, we met our beautiful trainer, Amanda Bailey, and started our first day course. There were 3 sessions on our first day. Each session was 1 and half an hour. In the first session, Amanda used an activity for us to get to know her, briefly introduced the course syllabus, and then gave us an orientation tour around the campus. It was from the 2nd session, we started our formal lesson. The first topic covered was on “Young Language Learners”. In the afternoon, we had the 3rd session on “Classroom Management”. In the evening, all teachers gathered together again in the auditorium to hear about all the social events and activities we could participate within the two weeks.

For the rest of school days, there were only 2 sessions of formal lessons in the morning for each day. In the afternoon, the school scheduled a lot of workshops, cultural talks, plenary talks, and non-academic activities for us to sign up. For our formal course, Amanda Bailey was our trainer most of the time. The topics she covered included “Listen and Do”, “Listen and Make”, “Speaking with Support”, “Speaking More Freely”, “Reading in English”, “On-Line Resources”, “Reading and Telling Stories”, “Writing in English”, “Giving Clear Instruction”, “Integrating English Work with Other Subjects”, “Dealing with Multi-Level Class”, and “A Balanced Diet in the Classroom”. Those are all familiar topics we have known already, but she provided us many great teaching ideas to use in our classroom.

Besides, we also had Bill Harris to talk the topic on using Cuisenaire rods to teach English stories and grammar. We also had Chaz Pugliese to talk the topic on multiple intelligences in the classroom, Renata Franco Wilmot on more practical ideas of giving clear instruction, and Iwona Rybek on telling stories. All of them provided us with inspiring ideas to think of using in our classroom.

Cultural Experiences

At the same time we received the two-week training at Bell Teacher Campus, there were also teachers from other 36 countries taking different courses on the same campus. However, there was little chance to meet them for the formal lessons, as we, Taiwan teachers, were a closed studying group. The beauty of the training program was that the school not only offered us the formal lessons but also arranged many events or activities for teachers from 37 countries to mingle together. So, we were able to get the chance to meet each other.

Meeting these teachers and talking to them, I had the chance to know more of the world in other countries than the Britain. For example, I know that Denmark is the leading exporter of Wind Turbines. Spain is now suffering high unemployment rate, but her people are still very optimistic. Right now, we have quite a few Taiwanese students studying in Turkey. Italy is now investing a lot to train CLIL teachers for secondary education.

Other than the people I met, the social events I participated gave me more of the taste of what British life is like.

1. Guided Tour of Cambridge

On this tour, the tour guide walked us through the main street where famous colleges are located and introduced us the history and architecture of those colleges, which included the Queen's College, King's College, Trinity College, and so on. Each college has its own library and sports facilities, and beautiful lawns. For the beautiful lawns, only the professors have the privilege to cross on them while the students are not allowed to. The college is also the place where students live, eat and socialize. Almost all students live in college accommodation for the duration of their time at Cambridge.

2. Old School Silly Sports Event

In this event, I got the chance to experience the traditional British races that included Egg and Spoon Race, Sack Race, Three-legged Race, and Treasure Hunt. These are the same school sports we have for our students in primary schools in Taiwan. It was quite fun that I forgot my age and enjoyed playing these sports like my young students.

3. Great British Pub Quiz

This pub quiz was held in the Buttery Bar of Bell Teacher Campus. In this event, I was in the team with 7 other Spanish teachers. The quizzes are in six categories that include General Knowledge, Dingbats, World, Food, People, and Geography. These quizzes were hard for me. However, the quizmaster must have taken into account of our national backgrounds, there were one or two quizzes in each category that I could answer and make contribution to my team. I like this kind of pub culture and tradition and hope it can be transplanted to the pubs in Taiwan. I like the Spanish fellow teachers as well. When I was shy standing alone in the pub, they were generous to invite me to join their team. And I was quite entertained and touched by their great sense of humors and hospitality.

4. A Trip to Ely

Ely is a historic city in the north of Cambridge. We went there on Friday afternoon of the 1st week. The first stop of our trip was the Ely cathedral which is the main highlight of this historic city. We were only allowed to enter the front hall to see what the cathedral looks like. We need to pay if we want to take further look of the inside. Inside the Ely cathedral, there is a stained glass museum and I paid to visit the stained glass museum and climb onto the rooftop. It was worth paying the money, though, because I had a wonderful view of the whole city on the rooftop and saw many beautiful stained glasses. There aren't many cathedrals in England that will let people climb onto the rooftop. So the chance for me to climb onto rooftop of Ely cathedral was a unique experience not everybody could have.

Pictures from the Social Events



Picture 1: Guided tour of Cambridge



Picture 2: Old School Silly Sports Event



Picture 3: Great British Pub Quiz



Picture 4: A Trip to Ely Cathedral

What is CLIL?

CLIL stands for **C**ontent and **L**anguage **I**ntegrated **L**earning. It is the teaching of a subject such as science, history, math, and geography to students through a foreign language. This can be by the English teacher using cross-curricular content or the subject teacher using English as the language of instruction. Both methods result in the simultaneous learning of content and the language. CLIL is not unlike the EFL classroom. A CLIL lesson will still combine the 4 language skills. What is different is that it looks at language and content in equal measure and aims on promoting thinking skills in the framework of 4C's, which are cognition, culture, communication and content.

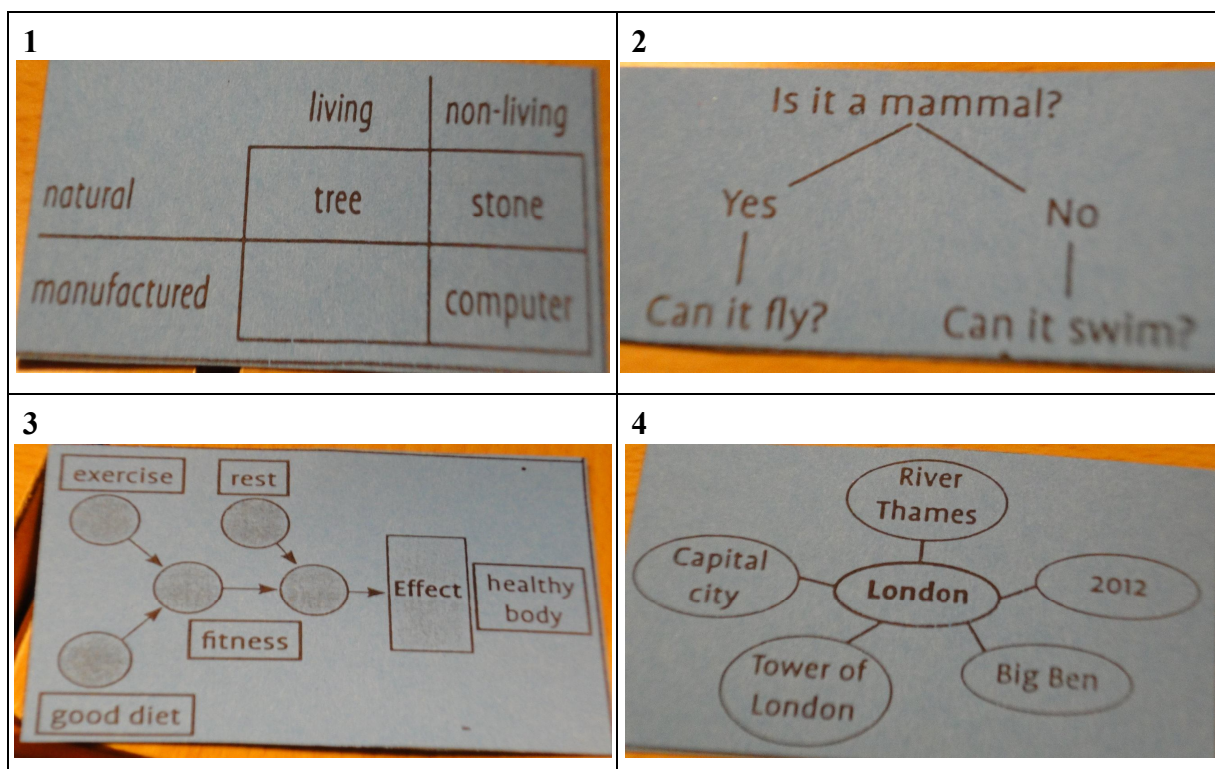
Some positive findings on CLIL are:

1. It helps boys learn language. (Baetens Beardmore, 2009)
2. CLIL does not negatively affect learning of content subject, can enhance it. (Zarobe 2007)
3. CLIL can enhance language proficiency. (Ackerl, 2007; Hutter & Rieder-Beinemann, 2007)
4. CLIL can enhance students' motivation, language retention, confidence, involvement, risk taking. (Coyle, 2006)

Some issues in CLIL:

1. Learning in L1 rather than L2 produces: (Tsui 2005, Wannagat 2007)
 - ✓ better exam results
 - ✓ greater advancement in subject
 - ✓ better self perception and self esteem
 - ✓ greater classroom participation
2. Takes time from L1 learning at primary level, leaving children unsure in their mother tongue (Kirkpatrick, 2009)
3. Teachers have insufficient L2 proficiency (Ibrahim, Gill, Nambiar, Hua, 2009)
4. Weaker learners are disadvantaged (Clegg, 2009)

Examples of CLIL lessons:



How can we integrate English work with other subjects?

In my personal point of view, for our students in primary schools, we are still too far away to use CLIL yet. But there are some easy lessons that we can adapt and use to integrate into our English work with other subjects to make language learning in a meaningful context.

1. Example 1: Food (from www.onestopclil.com)

- ✓ We can review the food vocabulary. Then we can have students to answer what it is, express their likes or dislikes, and then classify food which comes from animals and plants. (Vocabulary: names of food; Sentence: Where is it from?)
- ✓ We can have students identify food which is fruit and vegetables. (Sentence: Is it a fruit? Is it a vegetable?)
- ✓ We can teach the parts of plants and have students identify parts of plants where vegetables and fruits are from. (Is it from the root? Is it from the leaf?)
- ✓ We can teach nutrients and have students classify food into food groups. (use thinking skills)

2. Example 2: Animals (from www.onestopclil.com and *Primary Curriculum Box*, Kay

Bentley, Cambridge University Press)

- ✓ Teach habitats of the animals (e.g. sea, jungle, zoo, farm, and desert) and have students identify and describe where the animals live. (Where do they live?)
- ✓ Teach vocabulary on animal movements (e.g. fly, hop and jump, swim, slither) and have students identify and describe how animals move. (____ can fly / hop / swim.)
- ✓ Teach mammals, birds, fish, insects and reptiles and have students classify the animal groups. (They are mammals / fish / insects...)
- ✓ Have students identify animals that have 2 legs, 5 legs, or no legs. (They have ____ legs.)
- ✓ Teach animal life cycles (e.g. frogs, butterflies)
- ✓ Teach food that animals eat and have students classify animal which eat meat and plants. (____ eat meat. ____ eat plants.)
- ✓ Teach animals characteristics (size, color, number of legs, food, habitats, movement, or sound) and have student describe them. (It is big/small. It has __ legs. It lives in _____. It can _____. Etc.)

My classroom application: Human Body and the Five Senses

I applied this lesson to my students of the 3rd grade. My purpose is to have them learn the language in a meaningful context that is related to their content knowledge on the human body. After they learned the concepts, I expect them to apply their content knowledge to identify what are the senses we use in various occasions.

Teaching Procedures:

- Part 1: Learning about the names of the parts of body
 1. Use the song “Head and Shoulders” as a warm-up activities.
 2. Teach the vocabulary from the song.
 3. Use 2 more songs “If you are happy” and “Where is thumb-kin?” to introduce more new words, such as hands and fingers.
 4. Have my students brainstorm what other parts of the body they know in English or in

Chinese.

5. Give students a worksheet of a human body and provide word bank on the worksheet. On the worksheet, I want them to label the names of the parts of the body.
 6. Have them read a mini-book “My Body”, adapted from the website (www.dltk-kids.com). I teach them the key sentence “This is my ____.” They quickly can read the rest of the mini-book regarding body parts.
 7. Ask them “How many ____ do you have?” and elicit them to use “I have ____.” to answer the question.
 8. Have them read the mini-book again and have them write and add sentence “I have ____.” to each page.
- Part 2: Learning about the five senses
 1. Review vocabulary (nose, tongue, hands, fingers, ears, eyes).
 2. Have the students brainstorm what we can do with these body parts. They can either answer it in English or in Chinese.
 3. Based on student’s answer, give students English names for the words, e.g. see, hear, smell, touch, taste.
 4. Draw a mind map of five senses on the board and have students identify what are the words related to five senses.
 5. Teach the vocabulary of 5 senses (see, hear, smell, touch / feel, and taste).
 6. Give out a worksheet of the mind map and have students write the five senses in English and draw pictures of the body parts.
 7. Ask students to draw one thing they can see, they can hear, they can smell, they can touch, and they can taste. From this activity, I found my students enjoyed drawing a lot and I even got some interesting answers such as “I can touch poo poo. I can taste poo poo.” Especially the slower learners, they were very engaged in thinking of the things they can use with the senses and kept asking me a lot of words they thought of drawing.
 - Part 3: Identify 5 senses
 1. Use pictures and elicit students to identify what senses are used in the pictures, e.g.

pictures of an egg, a plant, an alarm clock, etc. For example, if it is an alarm clock, the senses used could be seeing, hearing, and touching.

2. Give out a worksheet with lots of pictures and have students identify what senses are used and what parts of the body are used. (It is a writing practice of the vocabulary words as well.)
3. Discuss with students regarding the answers to the worksheet. Students can provide any explanation to justify their answers.

- **Part 4: Predict and Listen**

1. Use the scrip of the story from the book “What’s Going on?” and have students fill in the blanks with the five senses words (hear, see, smell, taste, feel / touch). The worksheet is like the following:

I _____ a cake. I _____ ice cream. I _____ presents.

I _____ a hug. I _____... “Surprise!” It’s my _____!

2. Students listen to the audio and check their answers.
3. Read the story and teach.

- **Part 5: Read the story “My Five Senses”**

1. Teach the story in PPT.
2. Q and A in a Jeopardy game, i.e. “What can we do with our eyes? What can we do with our ears? When we bounce a ball, how many senses do we use?” etc.
3. Give out the books to students (2 students share 1 book) to read and have them write on the reading passport.
4. Give out a worksheet to students and have them name one example that will use at least 3 senses, draw it, and put it in writing.

My reflection

First of all, I want to clarify what I taught is not CLIL at all because I was not teaching the content knowledge. I was only using one topic of the content knowledge and explore how I could use it to teach the language. My focus is entirely on language.

When I taught this lesson, I was very delighted that my students were engaged in thinking and learning the language. The topic makes sense and evokes them to think. It's the thinking part I like the most because it makes learning meaningful. However, I did spend a lot of time in organizing my lesson, collecting materials, making worksheets, and spend money in copying the worksheets. On websites, indeed, we can find some CLIL lessons to be adapted into our English work in primary levels. But, it takes time to develop them further into applicable EFL teaching materials. It also takes a lot of class hours to implement. Therefore, to integrate our English work with other subjects, we may need extra class hours and appropriate textbooks.

References:

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