

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model in a Methodology Course to Develop EFL Majors' Oral Fluency and Content Vocabulary Learning

Prepared by

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Abstract. A fundamental principle in EFL learning is that students can learn both meaningful content and a new language at the same time through content-based instruction. Unlike traditional teaching approaches that emphasize form over meaning, content-based instruction has emerged as a meaning-focused approach to achieve a counterbalance, where language learning is a means to learn meaningful content. The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using a sustained content and language-integrated learning model in a methodology course to develop EFL majors' oral fluency and content vocabulary learning. The sample consisted of 46 fourth-year EFL majors at the Faculty of Education, Minia University. The study followed a pretest-posttest one-group design to collect quantitative data through two oral fluency and content vocabulary learning tests. The study's findings revealed a positive impact of the sustained content and language-integrated learning model as the participants' oral fluency and content vocabulary learning post-test scores improved. The differences were statistically significant ($p. \leq .05$), favoring the post-administration of the oral fluency test and the content vocabulary learning test. Furthermore, all five sub-skills of oral fluency and the four areas of content vocabulary were also found statistically significant ($p. \leq .05$) in favor of the post-test. The findings were discussed concerning the ongoing debate regarding the role of content-based instruction to support learners to use language meaningfully and purposefully, to learn through language as they develop an understanding of a topic, and to learn about language in the context of learning through language.

Keywords: Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning, Methodology, EFL Majors, Oral Fluency, Content Vocabulary Learning

فاعلية استخدام نموذج التعلم المستدام القائم على التكامل بين المحتوى واللغة في مقرر طرق التدريس لتنمية الطلاقة الشفهية وتعلم مفردات المحتوى لدى متخصصي اللغة الإنجليزية

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المستخلص: أحد المبادئ الأساسية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية هو أنه يمكن للطلاب تعلم كل من المحتوى ذي المعنى ولغة جديدة في نفس الوقت من خلال التعليم القائم على المحتوى. وعلى عكس أساليب التدريس التقليدية التي تركز على الشكل أكثر من المعنى، فقد ظهر التعليم المبني على المحتوى كمدخل يركز على المعنى لتحقيق التوازن، حيث يكون تعلم اللغة وسيلة لتعلم محتوى ذي معنى. وهدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من فاعلية استخدام نموذج التعلم المستدام القائم على التكامل بين المحتوى واللغة في مقرر طرق التدريس لتنمية الطلاقة الشفهية وتعلم مفردات المحتوى لدى متخصصي اللغة الإنجليزية. وتكونت العينة من ٤٦ طالب وطالبة تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بالفرقة الرابعة بكلية التربية جامعة المنيا. واتبعت الدراسة تصميم المجموعة الواحدة للاختبار القبلي والبعدي لجمع البيانات الكمية من خلال اختبارين في الطلاقة الشفهية وتعلم مفردات المحتوى. وكشفت نتائج الدراسة عن تأثير إيجابي لنموذج التعلم المستدام القائم على التكامل بين المحتوى واللغة في تحسين درجات الطلاقة الشفهية وتعلم مفردات المحتوى في التطبيق البعدي لكلا الاختبارين. وكانت الفروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عند مستوى (05). لصالح التطبيق البعدي لاختبار الطلاقة الشفهية واختبار تعلم مفردات المحتوى. علاوة على ذلك، فإن جميع المهارات الفرعية الخمس للطلاقة الشفهية والمجالات الأربعة لمفردات المحتوى وجدت أيضاً ذات دلالة إحصائية عند نفس المستوى لصالح الاختبار البعدي. وتمت مناقشة النتائج فيما يتعلق بالنقاش المستمر حول دور التعليم المبني على المحتوى في دعم المتعلمين لاستخدام اللغة بشكل هادف، والتعلم من خلال اللغة أثناء تنمية مفاهيمهم حول موضوع ما، وتعلم اللغة في سياق التعلم من خلالها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم المستدام القائم على التكامل بين المحتوى واللغة، طرق التدريس، متخصصي اللغة الإنجليزية، الطلاقة الشفهية، تعلم مفردات المحتوى

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

Introduction

While learning EFL, students can learn both meaningful content and a new language at the same time. One way to achieve this is through content-based instruction. Unlike other teaching approaches that emphasize form at the expense of meaning, content-based instruction has emerged as a meaning-focused approach to achieve a counterbalance, where language learning is a means to learn meaningful content. Through Content-based instruction, the foreign language serves as a vehicle for teaching and learning the content.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL henceforth) is a term that is alternatively used to refer to content-based instruction, which is most used in North America (Tedick, 2018). According to Stoller (2008), all instructional approaches that combine language and content can be classified under the umbrella term “content-based instruction.” CLIL aims to support learners to use language meaningfully and purposefully, to learn through language as they develop an understanding of a topic, and to learn about language in the context of learning through language (Gibbons, 2015; Spenader et al., 2020).

The fundamental premise underlying CLIL is that students can learn both meaningful content and a new language at the same time (Lightbown, 2014; May & Van, 2017). Brinton (2003) identified five principles of CLIL as they relate to language learning. These are (1) basing instructional decisions on content rather than language criteria by allowing the choice of content to influence the selection and sequencing of language items, (2) integrating skills just as in the real world, (3) involving students actively in all phases of the learning process and knowledge construction, (4) choosing content that is relevant to the student's lives, interests and academic goals, and (5) selecting authentic texts and tasks.

Met (1999) classified content-based instructional programs as falling on a continuum ranging from content-driven models to language-driven models. In content-driven programs, as is the case in the present study, the content instructors teach content in L2. Content learning is the priority, with language learning being a second priority. Accordingly, the focus is on content that is appropriate to the cognitive and linguistic needs of the students. The prescribed curriculum determines content objectives, and instructors are free to select language objectives that align with the content. Students are evaluated primarily on content mastery and get academic credit for content.

Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL henceforth) has been grounded in several learning and teaching theories, such as communicative language teaching, brain-based learning, and constructivism. CLIL is in line with the learning theory of constructivism, as learning is a process in which learners actively select and process external information based on their own experience and background knowledge (Glynn & Spenader, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). It has its origins in Piaget's (1963) theory of cognitive constructivism, as learners construct meaning by making connections between new and prior knowledge. When the learning material is meaningful and relevant to the learners' prior knowledge, more connections are made. Consequently, learning takes place, and new insights are formed. For instance, learners with a large vocabulary repertoire find it easier to comprehend content and improve their language learning.

Furthermore, CLIL has its origins in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism. Accordingly, language is a mediating tool for learning content. It facilitates social interaction through which learners are scaffolded to reach their zone of proximal development. As pointed out by Ismael (2023), CLIL activities are based on conveying

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

meaningful messages and communicating realistic contexts while using authentic language. As a result, students work with others to connect the language with what they already know.

CLIL was influenced by Krashen's theory of second language acquisition (1982) and implicit acquisition of content and language. Accordingly, language skills are developed through use, and language instruction is based primarily on meaningful material. When language skills and language aspects are taught in isolation, they need much more practice and rehearsal before they can be internalized (Xanthou, 2011). CLIL differs from conventional language learning in that language input is contextualized and meaningful to learners. It is characterized by a dual focus on language and content, which implies that language is not the only goal but rather serves as the means of communication in authentic situations (Baten et al., 2020).

Richards and Rodgers (2014) pointed out that CLIL is an application of the principles of communicative language teaching and that classrooms should focus on real communication and the exchange of information. This situation is ideal for L2 learning, where the subject matter of teaching is not grammar or functions but content outside the domain of language. Accordingly, the students learn the language as a byproduct of learning about real-world content.

Villalobos (2014) argues that the principles of CLIL are heavily grounded in the principles of communicative language teaching as they involve the active participation of students in the exchange of content. When learners attempt to comprehend the content while learning the language, they are actively involved in filling an information gap, which is an essential prerequisite for communicative activities. Furthermore, according to Douglas (2017), students learn a foreign language more effectively when they use the language as a means of communication rather than as an end. Brinton & Snow (2017) add that CLIL provides rich opportunities for foreign language

learning to take place by providing the input that students need, creating sufficient opportunities for students to search for information, and pushing them to develop appropriate and accurate output.

CLIL is also linked to brain-based learning, which gives rise to the holistic and interconnected nature of brain activities. It is, therefore, emphasized by Kennedy (2006) that the brain's tendency to appreciate the entire experience and to search for meaning calls for content-based thematic interdisciplinary language instruction at all levels. Amiri & Fatemi (2014) highlight that CLIL promotes contextualized learning as students learn a language that is embedded within contexts rather than as isolated language fragments. Therefore, instead of just isolating English language skills in skill-specific classes, CLIL integrates language components, which simultaneously reflects what happens in the real world (Kittivorawit & Sucaromana, 2022).

Unlike traditional teaching approaches that pay much attention to forms, such as the grammar-translation method and the presentation-practice-production approach, CLIL has emerged as a meaning-focused learning approach, where language learning is not an end but rather a medium of instruction. CLIL programs and curricula have become part of mainstream school education at primary and secondary levels all over the world due to the gains in language abilities and content-area knowledge. By avoiding too much emphasis on drills and language repetitions, CLIL has gained increasing popularity and is now becoming a fast-growing phenomenon in EFL contexts all over the world (Baten et al., 2020). According to Li (2020), content-based instruction has now spread to EFL classrooms around the world as teachers are discovering that students express a preference for CLIL over other ELT methodologies and are excited to learn English in this way.

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning (SCLIL henceforth) has gained popularity as it allows learners to be immersed for an extended period in topics that are of interest to them (Brinton & Snow, 2017). According to Reynolds et al. (2022), if a theme is extended beyond one unit to encompass an entire course delivered using content-based instruction, the benefits for learners can be further increased. Furthermore, the language taught will be recycled throughout the course. Thus, the students are provided with multiple opportunities to use the language they have learned productively.

Murphy and Stoller (2001) posit that SCLIL has an advantage over other more general theme-based language teaching models because (1) there is a connection between all the lessons and thus avoidance of scattered topics or themes, (2) it simulates the content learning demands of subject courses, (3) students are engaged in learning more advanced content, academic vocabulary, and language skills, and (4) learners and teachers focus on both content and language development.

Several guidelines need to be followed while designing a SCLIL course (Shin, 2007). First, curriculum designers should ensure that SCLIL courses incorporate real-life situations, integrate all four language skills communicatively, encourage learner autonomy, and apply project-based learning. Second, CLIL teachers should choose a sustained theme that is meaningful and relevant to students. Accordingly, language learning has the potential for real-life application. Third, as highlighted by Reynolds et al. (2022), language teachers must make sure that the theme is appropriate to achieve the course goals at both content and linguistic levels. Fourth, SCLIL instructors should encourage learner engagement by developing cognitively demanding yet context-embedded language learning tasks requiring the use of both language and content.

Theoretical Framework & Review of Literature

This section elucidates the theoretical background related to the role of the sustained content-integrated language learning model in a methodology course to develop EFL majors' oral fluency and content. First, a discussion of oral fluency and content vocabulary learning is presented. It is followed by a discussion of the sustained content-integrated language learning model as an innovative approach to developing EFL pre-service teachers' oral fluency and content vocabulary learning. A review of the literature is also carried out to support the discussion and to inform the present study.

Oral Fluency

Oral fluency is essential for successful communication as it increases self-confidence and self-esteem. Given that language is primarily speech, people communicate orally most of the time. Therefore, developing oral fluency is essential for communication. It is argued that all learners, regardless of their ability level, aspire to become fluent in the target language (Goh & Burns, 2012).

Oral fluency is of paramount importance to EFL teachers to establish rapport with their students. Abd-Al-Galil (2019) pointed out that the prime role of teaching English as a foreign language in the Egyptian context is for the learners to be able to use it fluently for different communication purposes. She further added that a person's ability to communicate fluently is essential to connect with others and to build good social relationships.

Developing oral fluency is an integral component of successful communication in the target language. However, it is not given sufficient attention in Egyptian educational institutions (Abd-Al-Galil, 2019). Ineffective teaching and learning practices have created this problem. Conventionally, teachers give students the material presented in textbooks with too much attention given to reading and writing and

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

almost no focus on oral skills. This situation is similar to other EFL contexts worldwide. For instance, Segura Alonso (2015) argued that a lack of oral fluency was due to a lack of time allocated to oral skills. Besides, there was a focus on grammar rules and sentence structures at the expense of listening and speaking the language. Susikaran (2015) pointed out that teaching speaking was neglected as English teachers only taught speaking through repetition and memorization. Furthermore, Correia (2016) highlighted that the main focus of ELT textbooks and exams is on grammar instruction with little or no emphasis on oral fluency.

There are several reasons for EFL majors' lack of oral fluency. One reason is the lack of opportunities to practice oral communication in L2 outside the classroom. It is highlighted that the only chance for the learners to practice English was inside their classrooms and that most of the time, they did not have the opportunity to use the target language (Kellem, 2009; Islam et al., 2022). Similarly, in the EFL Egyptian context, Abd-Al-Galil (2019) highlighted that little exposure to lexical, phonological, and grammatical constructions of the English language was among the challenges that faced adult learners developing fluency in the target language. Another challenge was the use of the first language in the English language classroom. Many EFL teachers are accustomed to using the first language to facilitate the target language learning for students. The learners also find it easier and less embarrassing to use L1 to express ideas and thoughts. All these practices hinder their oral fluency. The use of the first language hinders the learners' oral production as they tend to think in L1 (Hanane, 2016).

Hesitations and pauses lead to the misunderstanding of the message and result in dysfluent speech (Srivastava, 2014; Segura Alonso, 2015; De Jong, 2016; Acosta, 2017). Additionally, a lack of knowledge about the topic being discussed results in a lack of

participation in oral production (Ur, 2012). Students may not have something relevant to say. They do not want to take part in the discussion because they are unable to think of what to say. Verbal communication remains one of the common phobias that EFL students encounter, and their minds go blank once they are required to produce the target language. Therefore, most EFL students neglect that skill and feel too shy to speak English fluently.

Learning EFL makes it difficult for learners to develop oral proficiency. Nation (2013) highlighted three reasons for EFL learners' reluctance to develop oral fluency in the target language. First, the only chance for EFL learners to use the English language is inside the classroom. Second, learners study English because of its importance as an international language and not because of their need to use it for communication purposes. Third, the English language is a compulsory subject. Therefore, learners are not highly motivated to achieve progress.

Oral fluency consists of several components. Orally fluent speakers are characterized by several qualities that relate to speech, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and paralinguistic features. As for speech, these characteristics include speaking continuously with ease at a rapid speed to produce comprehensible and coherent input (Pineda, 2017; De Jong, 2016), communicating ideas effectively by expressing them smoothly and organizing them logically (Segura Alonso, 2015, De Jong, 2016), and mastering speech comprehension, rate, automaticity, and expression (Devries, 2017).

Characteristics related to vocabulary include using good vocabulary that matches the context (Rizvi, 2005), constructing meaningful utterances (Segura Alonso, 2015; De Jong, 2016), using semantically correct utterances (Pineda, 2017), and drawing on vocabulary background knowledge (Walpole and McKenna, 2017). Furthermore, fluent speakers use grammatically correct utterances

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

(Segura Alonso, 2015; Pineda, 2017), pronounce words and utterances correctly (Benwell, 2009; Segura Alonso, 2015), and use non-verbal communication and paralinguistic elements effectively (Abd-Al-Galil, 2019).

When nonverbal messages are not delivered appropriately, the meaning is distorted and decoded incorrectly (Young & Travis, 2017). Examples of nonverbal communication are eye contact, smiles, nodding, movements, manners of walking, appearance, style of attire, gestures, posture, proximity, and touch (Shehata & Omer, 2018). Besides, speech contains nonverbal elements classified as paralinguage, including voice quality, rate, pitch, volume, rhythm, intonation, and stress (Sipacio and Garcia, 2016).

During speaking, shy individuals generally present inconvenient non-verbal aspects such as lack of voice projection, reduced voice volume, accelerated speech speed, lack of eye contact, lack of facial expressions, withdrawn gestures, and tense posture (Babapoor et al., 2018). It is, therefore, necessary that teachers create a fun and safe learning environment in which learners can feel motivated and willing to communicate in different oral activities. One way to achieve this goal in the EFL classroom is through content-based instruction. In such a model, the learners find shelter in content to improve their language performance.

Content Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary learning plays an essential role in learning a foreign language as it enables learners to comprehend input and construct knowledge. Therefore, learners need to have enough opportunities to learn and practice the new vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Hayat & Bipasha (2020) highlighted three principles of learning EFL vocabulary. The first principle is to focus on the frequently used vocabulary, as some useful vocabularies are used in a wide variety of

circumstances. These higher-frequency words give learners the best reward for their learning outcomes. The second principle is the focus on the effective ways of learning vocabulary. This principle emphasizes the need to teach and learn vocabulary explicitly.

Effective vocabulary learning strategies include (a) meaning-focused input activities that are context-bound, (b) deliberate learning activities that draw attention to sounds, grammar, spelling, and discourse, (c) repetition and reading aloud that place emphasis on the meaning within, about, and beyond the text, and (d) extensive reading that supports substantial vocabulary learning. The third principle of vocabulary learning is to encourage learners to become autonomous to be able to acquire vocabulary frequently. Teachers can play an essential role in making autonomous learners by providing genuine opportunities for choosing what to learn and how to learn, as well as providing encouragement and feedback.

Rieder-Bünemann et al. (2022) define content vocabulary as subject-specific words, terms, or phrases in a given domain or topic area, rarely being found outside of their particular content area. According to Nation (2016), subject-specific terms are defined as lexical items (including multi-word units) characterizing a subject as they are used only, mainly, or with a specific meaning in this subject. Content vocabulary includes multi-word units and phrases as integral in the category of subject-specific vocabulary. Rieder-Bünemann et al. (2022) pointed out that the inclusion of phrases into the definition is essential as technical terminology frequently exceeds individual word boundaries. It, therefore, is essential to include phrase searches in investigations of content vocabulary learning. In recent years, there has been a strong interest in developing specialist word lists of various knowledge areas (Nation, 2016). Thus, learners studying in those areas can be supported in their vocabulary learning and the development of their specialist knowledge.

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

Content vocabulary learning refers to the process of acquiring and understanding the specific vocabulary or terminology used within a particular subject or academic discipline. It involves learning and memorizing the vocabulary that is essential for comprehending and expressing ideas within a specific context or topic area. Content vocabulary is commonly used by CLIL teachers (Rieder-Bünemann et al., 2022). This type of vocabulary learning is usually focused on academic subjects to help students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. It enhances their ability to successfully read, write, speak, and comprehend the content.

Content vocabulary learning is important as it helps students comprehend and effectively engage with the content of a subject, allowing them to communicate ideas, concepts, and facts accurately and confidently. Content vocabulary is commonly used in educational settings to enhance students' understanding and fluency. Content vocabulary learning involves various strategies and techniques, including concept mapping, graphic organizers, context clues, explicit instruction, repeated exposure, context-based learning, and the use of visuals or technology to reinforce word meanings and connections. These strategies are often used to facilitate content vocabulary learning.

Previous studies have investigated the impact of CLIL on language abilities. A recurring finding in CLIL research was the positive effect on vocabulary knowledge. Xanthou (2011) examined the impact of CLIL on content knowledge and L2 vocabulary development. A vocabulary post-test comparison between the two groups revealed a significant difference favoring the CLIL group, indicating the beneficial effect of CLIL on L2 vocabulary development. Target vocabulary items were encountered in a meaningful context. The meaning-focused processing enabled connections to knowledge, allowing exposure to language to be

effective. It was concluded that the CLIL program provided increased opportunities for exposing learners to L2 vocabulary learning in meaningful situations.

Merikivi and Pietilä (2014) compared vocabulary acquisition in regular mainstream classes and CLIL instruction. They found larger vocabulary sizes in the CLIL group compared to the non-CLIL group. The authors concluded that learning in a CLIL environment had a more favorable effect on L2 skills than the traditional language-focused stream, as the learners were exposed to authentic input and had a multitude of opportunities to communicate and practice in a meaningful learning context.

Vanichvasin (2019) investigated the effects of content-based instruction on English language performance. The research purposes were to develop lesson plans for content-based instruction, evaluate the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of content-based instruction, and investigate the effects of content-based instruction on the English language performance of 19 Thai undergraduate students in a non-English program. The research results revealed that: 1) the content-based lesson plans were perceived effective at a high level by the experts; 2) the participants perceived the content-based instruction as an effective methodology and essential aid in generating opportunities to use English at a high level. They thought that it was interesting and helped them get more practice, have an improved attitude, and gain more confidence to express themselves in English; and 3) the post-course English language performance improved significantly due to the course. In conclusion, content-based instruction produced positive results and could be used as an effective methodology.

Baten et al. (2020) investigated the (productive and receptive) vocabulary learning in L2 English *and* L2 French of the same group *within* a CLIL context. The study included 75 Flemish eighth-grade

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

pupils. They had CLIL lessons in both English and French. The findings indicated vocabulary knowledge developed in both languages. The observed lexical advantage of CLIL learners was attributed to the interaction of explicit and implicit learning conditions. Because of the more frequent exposure to versatile and meaningful input, the students unconsciously learned the form of the words. The authors pointed out that the students had enough opportunities to use the target language in meaningful communicative situations, which led to conscious learning of the meaning of content vocabulary.

Reynolds et al. (2022) investigated the effectiveness of sustained content-based instruction on ESL and EFL learners' meaningful language use. The data included multiple sources collected from a sustained content-based language course taught in an American ESL and a Taiwanese EFL context. The findings revealed that various factors, including themes, environment, and learners, contributed to learners from the two contexts meeting course goals. The findings further indicated that using a sustained content language teaching approach that incorporated theme-based instruction and dynamic units ensured that the learners were provided with opportunities for meaningful and purposeful language use.

Ismael (2023) examined the effect of using Blended Content-Based Instruction (BCBI) to enhance EFL university students' oral communication skills. The instruments of the study included a pre/post-oral communication test, a rubric, and the proposed program. The sample consisted of 30 EFL university students at the Canadian International College in Cairo. The results showed that the BCBI was highly effective in enhancing EFL university students' oral communication skills. The researcher concluded that the use of BCBI helped EFL university students to be more self-confident, which contributed to enhancing their motivation toward learning and willingness to communicate freely and smoothly.

Context of the Problem

The introduction of communicative language teaching methodology in the Egyptian education system in 1999 has given rise to the necessity of developing oral fluency as an integral component of communicative competence in the target language. However, based on the researcher's experience as an EFL teacher educator, it was observed that EFL majors at the Faculty of Education had a low level of oral fluency. This observation is consistent with previous research studies (e.g., Abd-Al-Galil, 2019). They were unable to communicate their ideas, feelings, and intentions using the English language. Besides, they made a lot of mistakes related to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. For instance, they struggled to find the appropriate vocabulary words to express their ideas and talk about educational topics.

The lack of these essential skills for EFL pre-service teachers highlights the need for the present study. To the researcher's knowledge, no study was conducted in the context of the present study to investigate the impact of using CLIL to develop EFL majors' oral fluency and content vocabulary learning. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap.

Statement of the Problem

A mismatch exists between the objectives and methodology of ELT and the actual development of oral fluency. The learners are exam-oriented and consequently focus on written communication and neglect oral fluency. They find no reason to focus on oral fluency as they neither need it in the exam nor practice oral skills in real life. Thus, even though students spend several years learning English, they can not speak it or use it for oral communication purposes. Given that EFL majors at the Faculty of Education, Minia University, have apparent weakness in their oral fluency and content vocabulary, the

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

present study attempts to tackle this problem by using a sustained content and language-integrated learning model to develop their oral fluency skills and content vocabulary learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to develop EFL majors' oral fluency skills and content vocabulary learning through using a sustained content and language-integrated learning model. Ultimately, the study aimed to develop the capacity EFL pre-service teachers to use content-based learning to develop their oral fluency and content vocabulary learning.

Questions of the Study

The present study aimed to answer the following two questions:

- 1- What are the oral fluency skills that are needed by EFL majors?
- 2- What is the effect of using the sustained content-integrated language learning model in a methodology course to develop EFL majors' oral fluency?
- 3- What is the effect of using the sustained content-integrated language learning model in a methodology course to develop EFL majors' Content Vocabulary learning?

Hypotheses of the Study

The following two hypotheses were formulated based on the review of the related literature and previous studies.

- 1- There would be a statistically significant difference at the level of (0.05) between the mean scores obtained by the study group in the pre/post-test of oral fluency in favor of the post-test.
- 2- There would be a statistically significant difference at the level of (0.05) between the mean scores obtained by the study group in the pre/post-test of content vocabulary achievement in favor of the post-test.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the present study are relevant to EFL pre-service and in-service teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum designers. Pre-service teachers benefit from the use of SCLIL to develop their language abilities. In-service teachers could make use of CLIL methodology while focusing on content learning. This trend is currently in place in Egyptian schools with the introduction of the *Connect* and *Connect Plus* series. Teacher educators benefit from the present study by having an instructional model that can be used with their students in initial teacher preparation programs. EFL curriculum designers can make use of the findings of the present study by having useful guidelines on how to design CLIL textbook materials properly. The present study aims to contribute to the discussion regarding the role of CLIL in developing EFL majors' language learning, particularly in the areas of oral fluency and content vocabulary.

Delimitations of the Study

The present study was delimited to five oral fluency skills (i.e., smoothness of utterance, meaning construction, use of non-verbal cues, pronunciation, and accuracy). The choice of these skills was based on a review of related literature regarding oral fluency. This was followed by the preparation of a checklist of oral fluency skills that were recommended by TEFL experts. Similarly, the present study was delimited to the vocabulary items related to the four areas that represented the course syllabus (i.e., Knowledge and principles of teaching English to primary-stage pupils, planning and preparing lessons to primary-stage pupils, teaching to primary-stage pupils, and assessing the learning of primary stage pupils).

The training was given to fourth-year EFL majors at the Faculty of Education, Minia University, during their teacher preparation program to teach English as a foreign language in the primary stage.

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

The training was carried out during the first term of the academic year 2023/2024, and it lasted for 14 weeks, 3 hours for each session, including two sessions for administering the pre/post-tests of oral fluency and content vocabulary learning. The training was given throughout the *EFL Methodology* course.

Definitions of Terms

Three terms that constitute the main constructs in the present study are defined below. These terms are sustained content and language-integrated learning, oral fluency, and content vocabulary learning. After surveying the related definitions for each term, the procedural definitions are presented.

Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning (SCLIL)

CLIL refers to an alternative didactic approach in which content areas are taught in a second or foreign language (Baten et al., 2020). Brinton (2003) defines CLIL as an approach in which teaching is organized around the content of a subject, topic, or discipline. Sustained-Content and Language Integrated Learning (SCLIL) is an innovative model of content-based instruction. It is like theme-based instruction. In theme-based language instruction, content is arranged around themes of topics (Villalobos, 2014). Thus, instruction deals with several topics. However, instead of covering several unrelated topics, SCLIL covers several topics within the same content area or carrier topic. Therefore, the content is “sustained” (Brinton, 2003, p. 205). In the present study, sustained content and language-integrated learning is defined as an instructional approach that is used with EFL majors at the Faculty of Education, Minia University, during the Methodology course in which the participants were trained in learning language while studying the course content through a five-phase model (Described in the procedure section).

Oral Fluency

Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined oral fluency as "the features which give a speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including the native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, the rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions" (p. 204). Bhat et al. (2010) used the term fluency to refer to the "rapid, smooth, accurate, lucid and efficient translation of thought or communicative intention into language" (p.1). De Jong (2016) defined oral fluency as translating thoughts rapidly into intelligible sounds. Handley and Wang (2018, p.5). "Fluency refers to speaking at a good pace without pausing or hesitating." In the present study, oral fluency refers to the Faculty of Education EFL majors' ability to smoothly produce and construct confident, meaningful utterances that are well-pronounced, well-structured, and well-understood related to one of the EFL methodology course topics and concepts.

Content Vocabulary Learning

Rieder-Bünemann et al. (2022) define content vocabulary as subject-specific words, terms, or phrases in a given domain or topic area, rarely being found outside of their particular content area. According to Nation (2016), subject-specific terms are defined as lexical items (including multi-word units) characterizing a subject as they are used only, mainly, or with a specific meaning in this subject. In the present study, content vocabulary learning is defined as the participants' knowledge of vocabulary related to the topics and concepts introduced in the methodology course.

Method

Design

A one-group pretest-posttest design was adopted in the present study to compare the participants' performance in oral fluency and content vocabulary learning before and after the course. The use of one

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

group pretest-posttest design is acknowledged to be a limitation of the current study. This is because the intact group who participated in the study represented all the fourth-year students majoring in English language at the Faculty of Education, Minia University.

Instruments

Two pre/post-tests were used to measure the participants' oral fluency and content knowledge learning. These two tests are described below.

The oral fluency pre/post-test

The oral fluency pre/post-test aimed to assess EFL pre-service teachers' oral fluency skills (See Appendix 1). The test consisted of 28 cards, with two cards devoted to each one of the 14 course topics. Each card contained a question relevant to one of the topics. The questions were prepared by the researcher. All cards were put on a front desk. Learners were examined individually. The examinee was asked to choose three cards that were placed on the front desk. Then, the examinee chose only one topic to talk about for a maximum of four minutes preceded by one minute preparation time.

The examinees were allowed to write notes during the preparation time, but they were not allowed to look at these notes as they started talking. An assessment rubric was used to assess the responses (See Appendix 2). The rubric consisted of four ratings to assess each one of the five oral fluency skills. Each skill was rated according to a rating scale ranging from 1 to 4. "1" indicated poor performance, "2" indicated average performance, "3" indicated good performance, and "4" indicated excellent performance. The examinee's ratings were added to calculate the examinee's score. The minimum test score was 5, and the maximum test score was 20. Srikaew et al. (2015) point out that raters who assess oral fluency are often biased and subjective. Therefore, another examiner assessed the participants

to achieve interrater reliability. The scores given by the two examiners were added and then divided by two to obtain a mean score.

The content vocabulary learning pre/post-test

The content vocabulary learning pre/post-test aimed to assess EFL pre-service teachers' achievement of vocabulary related to the course topics (See Appendix 3). The test consisted of 40 questions that assessed the participants' achievement of vocabulary items relevant to the four-course areas. All the questions were multiple choice, with one mark given to each correct answer. The test was adapted based on the teaching knowledge test of young learners (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019).

Validity and reliability

To check the validity of the two tests, the preliminary versions were submitted to a jury of five TEFL experts to verify the validity of the test content and the relevance of the questions to the sub-skills for each test. Based on the feedback obtained from the jury members, the final versions were prepared. As for reliability, the two tests were found to have a high level of internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values reaching (.878) for the oral fluency pre/post-test and (.784) for the content vocabulary achievement pre/post-test.

The Learning Material

The fourteen-course topics were identified based on the intended learning outcomes of the Methodology course for fourth-year EFL majors who took the course as part of their preparation program to become English language teachers at the primary stage. Four areas were identified as essential components of the course. They were (1) knowledge and principles of teaching English to primary-stage pupils, (2) planning and preparing lessons to primary-stage pupils, (3) teaching to primary-stage pupils, and (4) assessing the learning of primary-stage pupils. Under each topic, a set of sub-topics were

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

identified and constituted the learning material that was given during the course. The course consisted of 14 units that covered the four areas delineated above. Each one of the four areas consisted of 3 to four units (See Appendix 4 For a detailed description of the course units and their contents).

Procedure

SCLIL instructors need support to integrate content and language. One way to achieve this, according to Tedick and Zilmer (2020), is by providing an instructional sequence that helps instructors develop meaningful and relevant experiences and assignments for learners. An instructional model comprised of five phases adapted from Lyster (2007) and Tedick (2018) was used in the present study as a means of integrating language and content. The phases included (1) identification of the language items in the context of meaningful content, (2) a noticing activity, (3) awareness activities, (4) controlled practice, and (5) communicative practice.

In the first phase, content vocabulary items to focus on within the context of the course content were identified. They were highlighted in a lead-in activity, think-pair-share, brainstorming, and an eliciting activity through brainstorming or mind-mapping at the start of the session. In the second phase, a noticing activity was used to draw students' attention to the content vocabulary by highlighting them in some way. For example, by underlining relevant concepts in the students' handed-in written assignments, the students started to construct a coherent picture of the important and relevant ideas related to the topic under discussion. Another example was to make the topic concepts more salient in a text through a dictogloss activity in which the students were asked to listen to a talk about the topic and write a summary of the main points and concepts introduced based on their listening and collaborative construction of the most important and relevant points discussed in the talk.

The third phase included the use of awareness activities designed to engage students in some meta-linguistic reflection to raise their awareness about linguistic patterns or vocabulary items using graphic organizers as a scaffolding strategy. Visual organizers were used to illustrate the new concepts, and then the students were encouraged to produce their own to represent the learned material. The participants were given a group assignment to present an oral report on one of the 14-course topics. The last two course sessions were devoted to the students to give their group oral presentations. All group members had to share in the presentation.

It was necessary to provide the participants with opportunities to collaborate and to reflect on their learning. Importantly, the students spent time studying the content and thinking of different ways of representing the material to the other groups. This experience was necessary for them to revise and refine their understanding of the content topics. It is through such experiences that the participants adopted new identities and learned to embrace their dual roles as content and language learners.

The fourth phase involved controlled or guided practice activities that pushed the students to use the content vocabulary in a meaningful yet controlled context to develop automaticity and accuracy through task-based learning. Oral and written tasks were carried out in all the course sessions. In the fifth and final phase, students were encouraged to use the content in more open-ended ways to develop fluency and confidence through communicative practice activities through free writing and speaking activities. At this last stage, the learners were encouraged to carry out projects that are characteristics of a CLIL course (Shin, 2007). The group assignment explained above served this purpose in the present study.

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

Participants

The participants of the present study consisted of 46 male and female fourth-year English majors at the Faculty of Education, Minia University. All the participants were fourth-year English majors at the Faculty of Education, Minia University, after excluding grade repeaters from the sample. They were all enrolled in the EFL teacher preparation program for primary school teachers, taking the course during the first term of the academic year 2023/2024. The choice of the sample was suitable to the focus of the study on EFL methodology, which is an essential area of interest to the participants as part and parcel of their teacher preparation program.

Instructor

The researcher taught the course to the study group. The experiment was carried out through the methodology course given to fourth-year EFL pre-service primary school teachers at the Faculty of Education, Minia University.

Results

Hypothesis 1

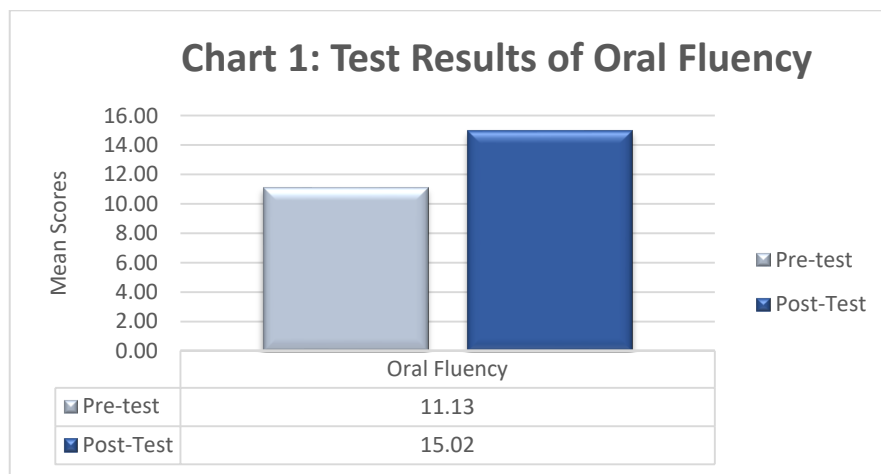
Hypothesis 1 stated that ‘there would be a statistically significant difference at the level of (0.05) between the mean scores obtained by the study group in the pre/post-test of oral fluency in favor of the post-test.’ Data analysis of the results using *t-test*, as shown in Table (1), revealed that *Hypothesis 1* was retained as the results from the oral fluency pre-test ($M = 11.13$, $SD = 1.51$) and the oral fluency post-test ($M = 15.02$, $SD = 1.91$) indicated that using the sustained content and language integrated learning model resulted in an improvement in oral fluency skills, $t(45) = 12.82$, $p = .001$. The effect size, as calculated by Eta squared, was large (*Cohen’s d* = 2.25).

Table (1): *t*-test Results of the Pre/Post-Test of Oral Fluency

Oral Fluency	N	Mean	SD	t-value	D F	p. value	Cohen's <i>d</i> *
Pre-test	46	11.13	1.51	12.82	45	.001	2.25
Post-test	46	15.02	1.91				

**Cohen's d effect size benchmark value points: small (d = 0.2), medium (d = 0.5), and large (d = 0.8)*

Chart (1) illustrates the participants' improvement level in the test of oral fluency skills in favor of the post-test.



Data analysis of the oral fluency sub-skills also revealed that five sub-skills (smoothness of utterance, meaning construction, comprehensibility of speech, pronunciation, and accuracy) mainly contributed to the overall statistically significant difference in favor of the post-test. These skills, as shown in Table (2), were found to be statistically significant as reported below:

- (1) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 0.68$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .97$) indicate an improvement in the smoothness of utterance, $t(45) = 9.37$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.96$).

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

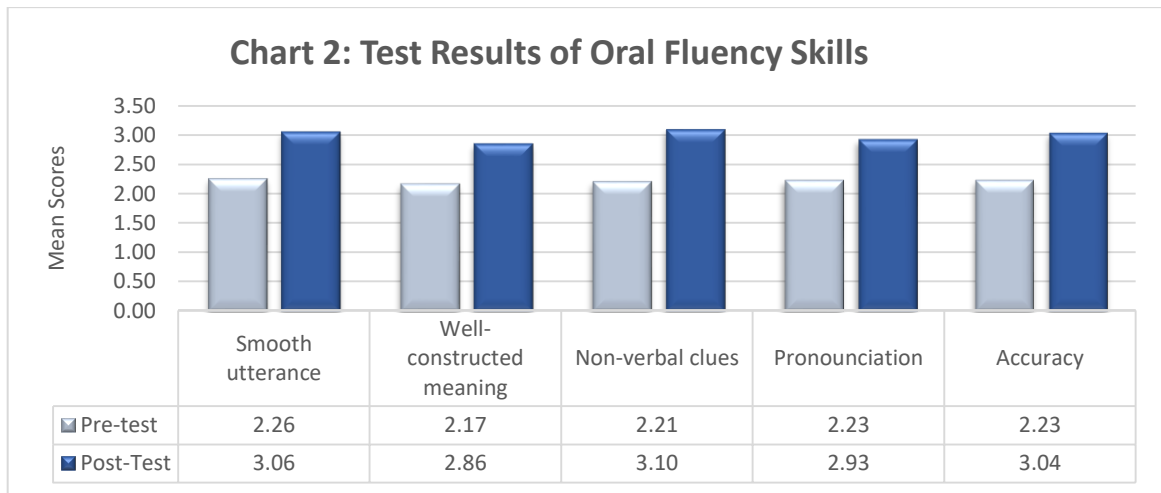
- (2) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 0.56$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.65$) indicate an improvement in meaning construction, $t(45) = 9.23$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.13$).
- (3) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 0.55$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.90$) indicate an improvement in the use of non-verbal cues, $t(45) = 8.55$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.19$).
- (4) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.73$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.90$) indicate an improvement in pronunciation, $t(45) = 9.23$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.85$).
- (5) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.60$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.69$) indicate an improvement in accuracy, $t(45) = 8.34$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.25$).

Table (2): *t*-test Results of the Pre/Post-Test of Oral Fluency Skills

Oral Fluency Skills	Test	N	Mean	SD	t-value	DF	Sig.	Cohen's d^*
Smooth Utterance	Pre-test	46	2.26	0.68	9.37	45	.000	0.96
	Post-test	46	3.06	0.97				
Meaning construction	Pre-test	46	2.17	0.56	9.23	45	.000	1.13
	Post-test	46	2.86	0.65				
Non-verbal cues	Pre-test	46	2.21	0.55	8.55	45	.000	1.19
	Post-test	46	3.10	0.90				
Pronunciation	Pre-test	46	2.23	0.73	9.23	45	.000	0.85
	Post-test	46	2.93	0.90				
Accuracy	Pre-test	46	2.23	0.60	8.34	45	.000	1.25
	Post-test	46	3.04	0.69				

*Cohen's *d* effect size benchmark value points: small ($d = 0.2$), medium ($d = 0.5$), and large ($d = 0.8$)

Chart (2) illustrates the participants' improvement level in the post-test of oral fluency skills in favor of the post-test.



Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that ‘there would be a statistically significant difference at the level of (0.05) between the mean scores obtained by the study group in the pre/post-test of content vocabulary achievement in favor of the post-test.’ Data analysis of the results using *t-test*, as shown in Table (3), revealed that *Hypothesis 2* was retained as the results from the content vocabulary learning pre-test ($M = 14.86$, $SD = 4.04$) and the content vocabulary learning post-test ($M = 24.60$, $SD = 7.55$) indicated that using the sustained content and language integrated learning model resulted in an improvement in content vocabulary learning, $t(45) = 7.37$, $p = .001$. The effect size, as calculated by Eta squared, was large (*Cohen's d* = 1.60).

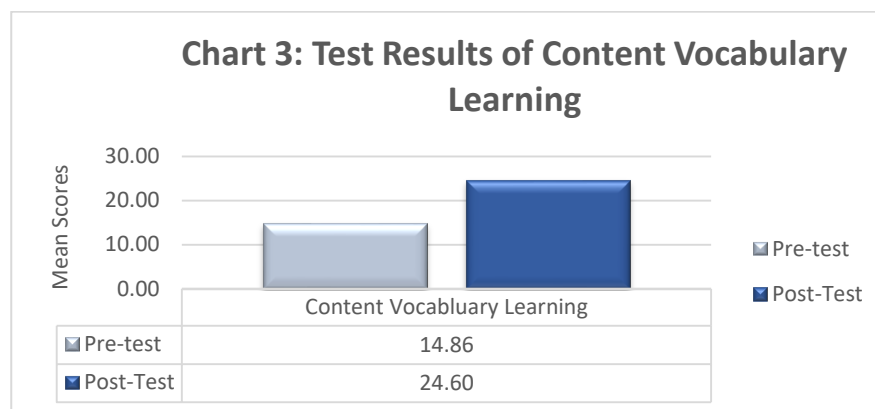
The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

Table (3): *t*-test Results of the Pre/Post-Test of Content Vocabulary Learning

Content Vocab.	N	Mean	SD	t-value	D F	p. value	Cohen's d
Pre-test	46	14.86	4.04	7.37	45	.000	1.60
Post-test	46	24.60	7.55				

*Cohen's *d* effect size benchmark value points: small ($d = 0.2$), medium ($d = 0.5$), and large ($d = 0.8$)

Chart (3) illustrates the participants' improvement level in the pre/post-test of content vocabulary learning in favor of the post-test.



Data analysis of content vocabulary learning also revealed that four areas (knowledge of children's characteristics, planning lessons, teaching and learning, and assessment) mainly contributed to the overall statistically significant difference in favor of the post-test. These areas, as shown in Table (4), were found to be statistically significant as reported below:

- (1) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 1.38$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.69$) indicate an improvement in knowledge and principles of teaching to primary-stage pupils $t(45) = 9.07$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.66$).

- (2) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 1.47$, $SD = 1.04$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 2.58$) indicate an improvement in planning and preparing lessons for primary stage pupils $t(45) = 3.69$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.80$).
- (3) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 7.30$, $SD = 2.52$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 11.52$, $SD = 4.06$) indicate an improvement in implementing learning and teaching activities to primary-stage pupils, $t(45) = 5.53$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.24$).
- (4) The result from the participants' scores in the pre-test ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.76$) and the participants' scores in the post-test ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.57$) indicate an improvement in assessing primary stage pupils' learning, $t(45) = 4.22$, $p = .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.83$).

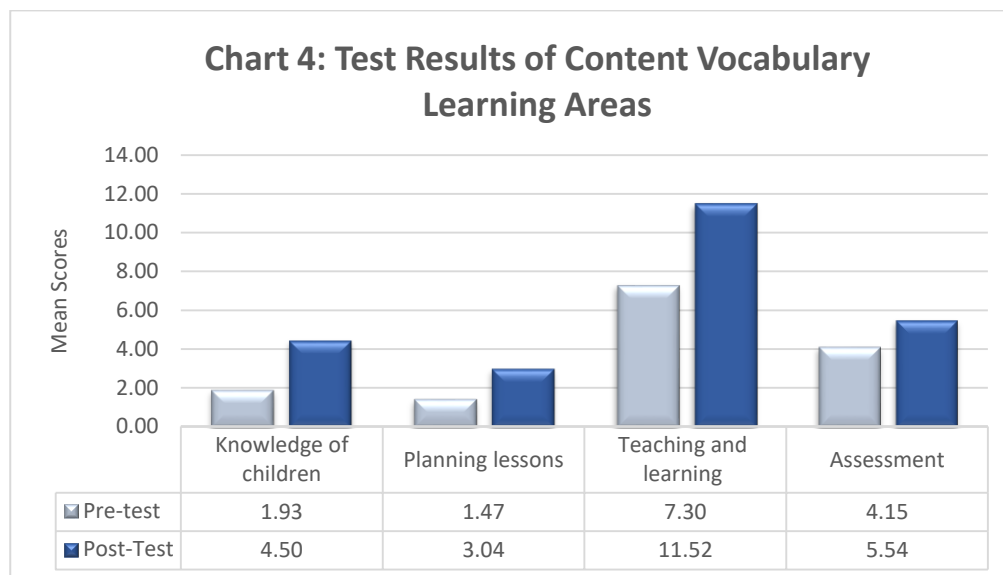
Table (4): *t*-test Results of the Pre/Post-Test of Content Vocabulary Achievement Areas

Content Vocab. Areas	Test	N	Mean	SD	t-value	D F	Sig.	Cohen's d^*
Principles of teaching	Pre-test	46	1.93	1.38	9.07	45	.000	1.66
	Post-test	46	4.50	1.69				
Lesson planning	Pre-test	46	4.66	0.63	11.32	45	.000	0.80
	Post-test	46	2.28	1.25				
Teaching the lesson	Pre-test	46	7.30	2.52	5.53	45	.000	1.24
	Post-test	46	11.52	4.06				
Lesson assessment	Pre-test	46	4.15	1.76	4.22	45	.000	0.83
	Post-test	46	5.54	1.57				

*Cohen's d effect size benchmark value points: small ($d = 0.2$), medium ($d = 0.5$), and large ($d = 0.8$)

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

Chart (4) illustrates the participants' improvement level in the post-test of oral fluency skills in favor of the post-test.



Discussion

The findings of the present study revealed the effectiveness of using the sustained content and language-integrated learning model in improving the participants' scores in favor of the post-test. Therefore, the first hypothesis is retained. The findings revealed that the use of the sustained content and language-integrated model developed the participants' oral fluency skills. This result is consistent with previous studies. For instance, Brunfaut and Green (2017) found that speaking English was easier when students spoke about familiar topics. The participants in the present study were immersed in the methodology topics and became familiar with background knowledge about the topic, which is a prerequisite for fluent speech. Similarly, several authors highlighted the role of vocabulary background knowledge in enhancing the learners' oral fluency (e.g., Segura Alonso, 2015; De Jong, 2016; Pineda, 2017; Walpole and McKenna, 2017).

The participants' improvement in oral fluency can also be attributed to the nature of CLIL focusing on a "counterbalanced

instructional approach" (Tedick, 2018). Accordingly, students mainly focus on meaning-focused learning to master content and simultaneously benefit from a focus on language (a counterbalance) to improve their L2 proficiency. In counterbalanced instruction, teachers alternate the instructional focus between content and language. According to Reynolds et al. (2022), teachers should make informed decisions with regard to balancing language and content or emphasizing one over the other depending on students' needs.

Moreover, the students exerted more effort to shift attention between language and content. This effort expanded by the learners increases the depth of processing and strengthens metalinguistic awareness. Studying disciplinary content while also figuring out the language that encodes it is an effective way for students to engage with increasingly complex language that has the potential to develop their language ability.

It is worth highlighting here that implementing a counterbalance approach requires careful planning due to the daunting task of integrating content and language. Therefore, instructors who attempt to use CLIL need to consider effective ways of balancing the integration between content and language. Teacher educators should develop ways to help SCLIL teachers counterbalance instruction and achieve language and content integration. Tedick (2018) pointed out that such balance could be achieved through reactive and proactive approaches.

Reactive approaches involve teacher reactions to student language production through special questioning techniques and follow-up strategies during classroom interaction. Additionally, teachers could provide corrective feedback to draw students' attention to linguistic errors. Teachers also need to be aware of the use of language and ways of interaction with students to ensure that communication is clear and serves the dual purpose of supporting both content and language learning. Proactive approaches involve teacher

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

planning with a focus on both content and language in curriculum planning, implementation, and assessment. Examples of proactive instructional strategies include learning objectives that are formulated to address language and content, teaching activities that scaffold content mastery and language learning, instructional sequences that bring students' attention to language, and assessments that target both language and content.

The findings of the present study also revealed the effectiveness of using the sustained content and language-integrated learning model in improving the participants' scores in content vocabulary in favor of the post-test. Therefore, the second hypothesis is retained. This finding agrees with previous literature and studies. One explanation that was provided to explain this improvement relates to the "contextual language learning theory" (Elgort et al., 2018). Accordingly, content vocabulary learning is the result of the CLIL activities in meaningful contexts, where students get more opportunities to use the target words in meaningful communicative situations in a way that leads to conscious learning of the meaning of these words. Another explanation is found in the "involvement load hypothesis" (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). Accordingly, the higher the degree of learners' involvement, the better it is for acquisition. The hypothesis consists of three components: knowledge required to complete a task (e.g., learning a new word or concept), an attempt to acquire this knowledge (e.g., deciphering the meaning of an unknown word), and the evaluation of one's performance (e.g., appropriate use of a word). Compared to more traditional L2 classes, CLIL incorporates a greater involvement load, which positively affects vocabulary learning.

CLIL enhances vocabulary learning because students learn it best in contexts where there is an emphasis on relevant, meaningful content rather than on the vocabulary items separated from context (Lightbown & Spada 2013; Pang). The course showed that the SCLIL

theme took care of both the language needs and content knowledge needs of learners by arousing their interest and engagement in the course topics. The present study aligns with previous research findings, including contextualization for language learning (Pang, 2019). Like the findings of the present study, Reynolds et al. (2022) found that in sustained content-based instruction, the sustained theme raised learners' interest and level of engagement and made important connections between language and content.

Recommendations

SCLIL is a worthwhile undertaking. The findings of the present study revealed the effectiveness of content-based instruction in developing EFL pre-service teachers' language proficiency and content literacy. The benefits from this study could be expanded to include in-service teachers through designing professional development activities to promote the use of the CLIL model. Accordingly, the following recommendations are made.

- 1- It is necessary to admit that teachers who adopt the CLIL methodology need specific professional development opportunities to help them learn to integrate content and language into their instruction. Learning to integrate language and content takes time and effort, guided practice, and customized feedback.
- 2- Professional development experiences should be meaningful and relevant and involve practice opportunities, collaboration with other teachers, and ongoing feedback from instructors and peers.
- 3- Teacher training programs should support reflection on current curricula and involve self-awareness and growth. Thus, CLIL teachers start to see themselves as both content and language teachers with emerging new identities.

The Effectiveness of Using the Sustained Content and Language Integrated Learning Model...

- 4- The success of running a SCLIL course should take into consideration the learners' context, the learning environment, and the needs of learners.
- 5- The SCLIL instructors should be trained in ways of adapting materials and designing emotionally intriguing and cognitively challenging tasks.
- 6- Per-service teachers and in-service teachers should be trained in ways of balancing content and language in a SCLIL course or professional development program.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of the present study and discussion of the findings, the following topics are suggested for further research:

- 1- The effectiveness of the CLIL approach in an ESP course to develop university students' language proficiency and content achievement.
- 2- The effectiveness of a training program for developing EFL in-service teachers' content-based instructional skills and attitudes.
- 3- Evaluating EFL school curriculum materials in light of the CLIL approach.
- 4- Using a CLIL approach to develop secondary school students' linguistic competence and content literacy.
- 5- The effect of scaffolding strategies in a CLIL curriculum to develop EFL learners' content vocabulary learning and retention.

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