

# APPLICATION OF CLIL WITH CASE STUDIES TO IMPROVE THE WRITING SKILL OF MILITARY UNDERGRADUATES

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## Abstract

This research discusses on the application of Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) with case studies method in an academic writing program for military undergraduates in the National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM). To achieve the research objective and hypothesis, the ADFELPS pre and post proficiency test was carried to explore the impact of adapted CLIL program to improve the writing skill. The data were from two classes which comprises 25 students form each class. The implementation phase was carried out through workshop method. The collected data was then analyzed using quantitative approaches such as mean analysis, standard deviation index as well as others. Based on the descriptive and inferential statistics the findings were compared and discussed to demonstrate the effectiveness of the adapted CLIL program. The findings revealed a positive outcome for writing skill of the undergraduates in terms of content comprehension, communicative effectiveness and linguistic skills. Besides, the results of the research also revealed the potentialities of case studies as an effective approach towards contextual learning to facilitate language development in the military. Finally, the author emphasized on CLIL with case studies implementation for language education in the Malaysian Armed forces training institutions.

**Keywords:** Contextual Acquisition, Military context and adapted CLIL.

## INTRODUCTION

In the Malaysian Armed forces (MAF), English plays an important role in the life and professional career of every soldier. English Language teaching and learning remains a central focus and goal in the area of education and professional training for military personal. In fact, teaching English is a priority and decisive value across all other disciplines which contributes to achieving quality of higher military education and career achievements. English language teaching and learning is of paramount important in the areas of military education and career development in the MAF. Although researchers in many countries have done studies to explore the

effectiveness of CLIL Education as a multi-perspective approach, not many countries have introduced CLIL into the military context (Monika & Gawik-Kabylińska, 2014).

The research studies of Kuppusamy (1998) and Surjeet (2010) revealed that, the military officers English language proficiency gradually decreases in the MAF, besides they have difficulties to improve the spoken and written language as well. In addition, Surjeet (2010), Salim (2010) and Kuppusamy (1998) stated that it is important to address that military officers' problems in the written skill, and it is necessary to improve the teaching strategies for developing these skills. According to Salim (2010) and Surjeet (2010), although the MAF

has designed and implemented many English language courses, there is yet to be a program specifically designed to improve the productive skills especially the writing skill. The CLIL program with case studies is an adapted language program in this research designed for military undergraduates to improve their writing skill which is crucial for their academic gains and military career. The military undergraduates require good command of the English language for them to communicate effectively during academic courses and for military training in the campus.

By exploring the effectiveness and implementation of the adapted CLIL program in the MAF, this research study attempts to answer the following research question:

1. Does the application of the adapted CLIL program improve the writing skill of military undergraduates?

This research seeks to find a justified answer to the hypothesis: The adapted CLIL program has positive effect on the writing skill of learners.

## Literature Review

### CLIL

According to Marsh (2006), "CLIL is an educational response to the knowledge and skills of increasingly 'integrated' world and is thus increasingly viewed as a modern form of educational delivery." According to Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010:3), CLIL is "an educational approach in which various -supportive methodologies are used which lead to a dual- focused form of instruction where attention is given both to the language and content." Dalton-Puffer (2007) pointed out that CLIL is an approach or method, which combines the teaching of subject matter while teaching the target language. According to Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010), the 4Cs framework of CLIL (Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture) is considered a comprehensive approach that has made it distinct from other educational approaches with which it is often associated.

### CLIL in Tertiary Context

Based on the research studies findings by Chansri and Wasanasomsithin (2016) at the Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, Kovacikova's (2013), Omar and James (2014) CLIL in the Malaysian context, Brown (2015) CLIL in Japan, Atri Hapsari (2016) CLIL in Indonesia, and CLIL in the military context Monika & Gawik-Kabylinska, 2014, highlighted the positive outcomes of CLIL-based education. Their studies reported the effectiveness of CLIL program in the following areas: (1) Language skills development, (2) Lexical development, (3) Content and language learning (4) Cognitive development, (5) Cultural development and (6) Motivation

#### a. Language skills development

Dalton-Puffer (2007) justified that under CLIL pedagogy there are certain aspects of language skills affected and unaffected. According to him, the language skills that are affected by CLIL are the receptive skills and the unaffected skill is writing and syntax. Although there is turnabout in the CLIL methodological approach, the growing interest in many countries suggested for more adapted and feasible process of CLIL that would contribute to the writing skill and language proficiency as a whole. According to Casal (2009) if CLIL teachers could provide an effective input during the content-oriented processing and the form-oriented processing stages, the CLIL pedagogy could create an effective learning context to boost learners' comprehension skills (reading and listening) which will affect the productive skills especially the writing skill. Kovacikova's (2013) research on the effects of CLIL implementation in tertiary education (in ESP classes) found that there is a significant enhancement on both foreign language and content knowledge development. He further stressed that even though they use ESP course materials in the classroom, CLIL approach did increase students' ability to perform well in specific language areas.

#### b. Lexical development

According to Coyle (2007), CLIL pedagogy has obtained recognition because it offers many benefits and establishes a suitable comprehensible input for language learning. One of the benefits is that CLIL promotes bilingualism, which is considered an effective language teaching approach. Bianco (2008) pointed out that to increase the degree of comprehensibility is by adapting strategies and techniques that make content easily comprehensible, thus increase lexical comprehensible input.

Dulton-Puffer's (2011) research on comparing CLIL and non-CLIL undergraduates in the area of lexicon-grammar in Austria found that the CLIL students had significant advantage on the following areas: (1) vocabulary competence (2) discourse abilities and (3) textual organization. Besides, he claimed that students projected higher level of accuracy in inflectional affixation, derivational affixation usage and spelling. Finally, he concluded in his study that CLIL students showed greater pragmatic awareness and are able to accomplish the communicative objective of the writing tasks considerably well.

#### c. Content and Language learning

Jaleniauskiene (2016) states that this dual-focused pedagogical approach provides favorable platform for the students to learn content contextually, critical analysis of both content and language learning. In addition, he claimed that CLIL curriculum involves cross-curricular and integrated studies as well. Another research by DeKeyser (2007) justifies that content and language integration learning approach provides avenues for the transfer of knowledge and skills from content to context. In addition, contextual learning on content facilitates meaningful application of language, and contributes toward learners' linguistic development.

#### d. Cognitive Development

CLIL as a dual-focused approach also offers great opportunities for the development of cognitive skills. According to Dana (2014), the dual-focused strategy of CLIL incorporating subject content with language, facilitates

critical thinking skills when the learners associate language form and function with the content.

#### e. Cultural Development

Meyer (2010) asserted that culture is one of the 4Cs of CLIL, which provides an appropriate tool for CLIL learners to explore more diligently the connection between language and cultural identity, analyzing values, behaviors and attitudes. Moreover, Coyle et al. (2010) stressed that CLIL is generally a potential approach to the development of wider intercultural understanding that would have been incapable of being done in monolingual situation. Therefore, from the point of view of the aforementioned authors, it is possible to claim that CLIL proved to be an effective approach in developing learners' cultural and cross-cultural awareness.

#### f. Motivation

Lagasabaster (2011) in his research on the relationship between English language improvement and learners' motivation in CLIL and EFL classroom found that CLIL students are more motivated than those in the traditional EFL classroom are. Therefore, he claimed, "there is a strong relationship between the CLIL approach and motivation." Another researcher Arribas, (2016) who explored Students' motivation and receptive vocabulary outcomes, found that CLIL students scored higher in receptive vocabulary test because of their high motivation. The results of the study indicated that CLIL instruction could be a driving force for the military in the MAF enhance their motivation in the English language classroom.

#### Adapted CLIL 4Cs and Nine Events of Instruction Lesson Plan

Gagne, Wager, Golas and Keller (1983) pointed out that instructional theory relates the nine events of instruction is the central point learning and teaching process. In this research the researcher adapted the CLIL 4Cs and incorporated the nine events of instruction as a guiding principle in the language classroom. Today, Gagne's theory of instruction and

learning principles are given prominent place in military training and education. According to Gagne (1962), total performance is the constituents of the proficiency of the tasks. He proposes the fundamental principle of training design comprises of the following: 1) Identify the components of tasks, which contributes toward achieving the desired performance, 2) Integrating the tasks components in the training components, and 3) sequencing the parts of learning in a most favorable arrangement to bring to total performance. The tasks analysis

of case study-based learning corresponds with the proficiency of tasks by Robert Gagne. The application Gagne theory of instruction in this research would help trainees a greater chance of success in terms of motivation, language development and workplace tasks performance in the military context. In this research study, the teacher applies the CLIL 4Cs the nine events of instruction as guideline in the classroom teaching and learning process (Table 1).

Table 1 *The Adapted CLIL Lesson Plan*

Level: Intermediate. Time: 2 hours

Skills: 1. Identify main points and important details, and writing a connected passage.

2. Taking part in a dialogue or conversation.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Write a description of their first day experience at the new unit

2. Write, revise and edit a paragraph

3. Explain and take part in discussion – dos and don'ts

3. Use transition signals, action verbs,

#### Stage I Presentation with application

Nine Events of Instruction	CLIL 4Cs Principle	Description	Activities/ Tasks
1. Gaining Attention	Content	1. Teacher introduces Case study 4 by highlighting common workplace problems. Related to new trainees 2. Introduce vocabulary and word families. 3. the language Structure: transition signals. Tenses	1. Vocabulary knowledge scale ((Paribakht and Wesche 1997: 180) 2. Dictionary skills 3. Practice with the new language items. 4. multiple choice exercises
2. Informing learners of the objectives	Communication	1. Students take part in a dialogue. asking and answer questions. based on the case study. 2. Identify the cause and effect of	1 Using of analytical tools to gather information. 2. Question and answer

3. Stimulating recall of prior learning		the incident. 3. Gather information.	exercises.
	Cognition	1. Describe and outline information.	1. Uses the information in a dialogue.
	<b>Culture</b>	1. Understanding how people behave in certain situations	

### Stage II practice with application

Nine Events of Instruction	CLIL 4Cs Principle	Description	Activities/ Tasks
4. Presenting the stimulus	Content	1. Identify facts and details 2. vocabulary is enhanced	Vocabulary web exercise
	Communication	1. Take part in a conversation regarding, personal details and workplace situation.	1. Group presentation involving in conversation.
5. Providing Learning guidance	Cognition	1. Analyzing the information gathered and using in different context	1. Answering open ended questions
6. Eliciting performance	Culture	1. Application of soft skills during interaction with senior staff, listening skills.	

### Stage III Production with application

Nine Events of Instruction	CLIL 4Cs Principle	Description	Activities/ Tasks	Workplace task
7. Providing feedback	Content	1. Practice structures and vocabulary.	Vocabulary exercise	Portfolio: Collecting workplace evidence.
8. Assessing performance				1. Workplace materials.
9. Enhancing				2. Engaging in a discussion and conversation to gather information

retention and transfer				(writing a summary of the information gathered)  3. Organization chart  4. Tasks and responsibilities  5. Working styles and ethics.
	Communication	1. Teacher gives them a picture stimulus. Students in groups discuss and generate ideas.	1. Construct a coherent essay (150-200 words).  2. Forum (discussion, conversation, argument.	
	Cognition	1. Drawing conclusion based on an event or experience.		
	Culture	1. Application of soft skills in workplace communication.		

## Case Studies

From the aspects of teaching and learning Bruner (1991), pointed quite a range of benefits from using case study method in language classroom: case study employs active learning, involves self-discovery, builds a critical thinking capacity and is enriched with contextual information. Kerber (2001) highlighted that using case study method in language teaching advocates a systematic development of the following steps:

1. Problem identification
2. Application of analytical tools for accumulating facts,
3. Arriving to a logical conclusion
4. Decision making.

According to Ellet (2007), context is a crucial factor in case studies which entails specific role for the reader providing standardised focus, interpretation and yield valuable insights.

Oxford (1990), claims that contextual strategies in language teaching enable learners to associate new words, phrases or expressions in a meaningful context for them to remember and use them effectively. The content analysis and the critical thinking skills employed in case study-based learning contribute towards learning potential skill that constitute interdisciplinary thinking and learning.

### ADFELPS Pre and Post Test

The ADFELPS was adopted into the MAF as an international English language standard for regulating language programs, teaching materials and language outcomes. The test covers all the four skills of the English language i.e., Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. For each skill, there are 9 levels of language proficiency level descriptors from level 1 to level 9, with level 1 being the minimum and level 9 being the maximum level of proficiency. The writing test takes one-hour and it consists of the two tasks. Task 1 is a

descriptive essay of about 120 words and 20 minutes is given to complete, while task 2 is an essay discussing a topic in about 200 word and it is given 40 for completion. Candidates are given a choice of two topics for each task and they should attempt both tasks 1 and 2 for the writing test to get the average score level on the ADFELPS matrix scale.

### Robert Gagne Theory

Robert Gagne's theory of instruction provides valuable insights for teachers. In this study to analyse learners' language development and their learning context in the CLIL classroom, case study materials are the content teaching materials in the classroom. In this research, Robert Gagne's theory of instruction is pursued to explain the stages of teaching learning in the CLIL classroom. This theory of instruction lays down clearly the areas where teachers should take into consideration which involves the whole set of external and internal factors and the nine events of instruction. In this research, Robert Gagne's theory of instruction is pursued to explain the stages of teaching learning in the CLIL classroom. This theory of instruction lays down clearly the areas where teachers should take into consideration which involves the whole set of external and internal factors and the nine events of instruction. This research study applies the Gagne's nine events of instruction in the CLIL classroom.

### Methodology

The participants were undergraduate cadet officers who had enrolled in an EAP in the National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM). There were 50 cadets from 4 faculties. The CLIL program was for 14 weeks with 3 contact hours per week. There was a pre and post ADFELPS test carried out during the program to analyse the language development of learners.

### Findings and Discussion

The CLIL program proficiency tests were carried out to determine students' language

proficiency achievement. The focus of this achievement test is on the communicative abilities for the written language, as well as the use of the other language criteria related to these skills. The pre and post ADFELPS tests were used to measure the credibility of the adapted CLIL program to improve the writing. A paired- sample t-test was carried out to measure the significant differences in the pre and post ADFELPS writing tests. Table 2 and 3 show the overall students' results in the ADFELPS writing tests.

Table 2 *Pre- and Post-Writing test (Task 1)*

	Mean (n=50)	SD	Mean Differences	t	df	Sig (1-tailed)
Pre-test	4.11	0.257	0.357	12.094	49	.001*
Post-test	4.47	0.363				

Table 3 *Pre- and Post-test of English writing (Task 2)*

	Mean (n=50)	SD	Mean Differences	t	df	Sig (1-tailed)
Pre-test	4.19	0.364	0.020	0.434	49	.001*
Post-test	4.21	0.409				

With reference to Tables 2 and 3 above, there was a significant difference in the post results for Task 1 (M= 4.47, SD=0.363) and pre-results Task 1 (M=4.11, SD=0.257), conditions;  $t(49) = 12.094$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . However, there was less significant differences in the post result Task 2 (M=4.21, SD=0.409) and the pre results task 2 (M=4.19, SD=0.364), conditions;  $t(49) = 0.434$ ,  $p=0.001$ . Generally, in terms of the students' overall achievement in the writing tests, there was an improvement in the mean score for both tasks 1 and 2.

From Tables 2 and 3 the mean scores for pre-test task 1 and 2 (4.11 and 4.19) and

post-test task 1 and 2 (4.47 and 4.21) - the writing skill shows a slight improvement. The standard deviation showing the lowest, reveals the smallest variability in language abilities among trainees. The results of the research have justified the research hypothesis - the adapted CLIL program has positive effect on the productive skills of the trainees. In addition, results of the of the ADFELPS tests findings showed evidence to answer the research question research as well. These findings are in contrast to Dalton-Puffer (2007) who clarifies that the writing skill is unaffected by the CLIL pedagogy. However, the results of this study

are in line with the results of the study done by Walter (2014) who indicated that intensive teaching of interactive writing improves learners writing ability and writing skill.

Descriptive statistics of ADFELPS Writing criteria

Tables 4 and 5 below show the descriptive statistics of ADFELPS writing criteria for Task 1 and Task 2 in the pre and post-test.

Table 3 *Descriptive Statistics of Writing pre-test Task 1 (T1) and Task 2 (T)*

Writing language criteria	Min score	Max score	Mean (N=50)		SD	
			T1	T2	T1	T2
Coherence & Cohesion	4	6	4.28	4.20	.536	.535
Language	3	5	4.04	4.06	.198	.240
Communicative Effective	4	6	4.02	4.30	.141	.707

Table 4 *Descriptive Statistics of Writing post- test Task1 (T1) and Task2 (T2)*

Writing language criteria	Min score	Max score	Mean (N=50)		SD	
			T1	T2	T1	T2
Coherence & Cohesion	4	6	4.38	4.28	.602	.081
Language	3	5	4.06	4.06	.240	.240
Communicative Effective	4	6	4.96	4.28	.402	.573

a. Coherence and Cohesion Criteria

According to Hasan (1976), “cohesion refers to the relations of meaning.” The students’ post-test, mean score for coherence and cohesion in writing Task 1 which is a descriptive essay (X=4.38) is slightly more than the pre-test Task 1 mean score (X=4.28). In the post-test mean score for the expository writing Task 2 (X=4.28) is also more than the pre-test mean score (X=4.20). The standard deviation (SD) for post-test task 1 was 0.602 and 0.081 for task 2. While SD for pre-test task 1 was 0.536 and

0.535 for task 2. Although there is a slight increase in the mean score for cohesion and coherence, the researcher believes that this is not adequate to support the writing tasks requirements for the learners. Celce-Maurica and Olshtain (2000) claimed that cohesion and coherence are the key features for a well-written text.

b. Language Criteria

The students’ post-test, mean score for the language criteria in writing Task 1 (X=4.06) is



slightly more than the pre-test mean score ( $X=4.04$ ). In the post-test mean score for the expository writing Task 2 language criteria ( $X=4.06$ ) is the same as the pre-test mean score ( $X=4.06$ ). The standard deviation (SD) for post-test task 1 was 0.240 and 0.240 for task 2. While SD for pre-test task 1 was 0.198 and 0.240 for task 2. The findings revealed that the learners' have inadequate linguistic proficiency (including command of lexical, syntax, grammar, spelling verb form and word order). To describe further on the language criteria, Table 4 below displays an analysis of 25 students' randomly selected writing samples who are at level 4 (task 1 and task 2) for the post-test on the ADFELPS scale.

Table 6 *students' writing samples analysis on language criteria.*

Language Areas		Frequency of errors
1	Lexical/choice of words	225
2	Grammar	875
3	Spelling	175
4	Verb form	335
5	Syntax	195

The above table reveals the highest frequency of errors were made in grammar (subject-verb agreement, singular and plural), then followed by verb forms or tenses usage in sentences. Next, the highest number of errors were for the choice of words (vocabulary). Finally, the number of errors for syntax were 195 and spelling 175 for the overall writing sample analysis.

According to Yang (2014) acknowledged that if students are given maximum instruction in the receptive skills at the beginning of a language program, there is indication that the language form will improve. Based on the acknowledgement of Yang (2014), and according to the results of the analysis of language criteria from the sample writings, the researcher believes that that teacher can improve learners' linguistic skills by practicing more on the language forms and vocabulary development during the reading and comprehension phase.

### c. Communicative Effectiveness Criteria

The students' post-test mean score for communicative effectiveness criteria in writing Task 1 ( $X=4.96$ ) is higher than the pre-test mean score ( $X=4.02$ ). In the post-test mean score for the expository writing Task 2 communicative effective criteria ( $X=4.28$ ) is slightly less than the pre-test mean score ( $X=4.30$ ). With regard to the decrease in the mean score for task 2, the researcher found that it was apparent task 2 was more difficult than task 1. In Task 2, the trainees are required to explain and discuss the main ideas and supporting details more explicitly. In addition, the total time allocation for the writing tasks is 60 minutes, where proper time management is required to complete both tasks within the given timeframe. Therefore, owing to the difficulty of task 2 and poor time management and below average language proficiency are the reasons many students did not attain significant improvement in task 2. In addition, the findings of students' writings they had difficulties in the writing sub-skills such as organising main ideas, word choice and expanding of the main ideas. As a result, many students fall short of producing grammatically correct simple and complex constructions.

The standard deviation (SD) for post-test task 1 was 0.402 and 0.573 for task 2. While SD for pre-test task 1 was 0.141 and 0.707 for task 2. This indicates that the CLIL program supported by the case studies have given substantial input for the communicative effectiveness. The application of analytical tool to gather information and the scaffolding methods have enhanced comprehension and gave guidelines for the learners to use relevant ideas in logical order during writing, hence uplifting communicative effectiveness.

Krashen (1985) states that in order to maximize opportunities for expansion and development of comprehensibility, the input hypothesis is an effective tool. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted that meaningful interaction with the context influences language learning and development. The case study materials provide meaningful context for the learners to interact and develop their language

competence. Besides, the introduction of more favourable and interesting contexts through case studies has built up the students' motivation to participate actively in the writing process. Thus the contextual learning through case studies helped and supported the learners to be more proficient in the communicative effectiveness criteria.

The broad goal of this study is to discern the effectiveness of the adapted CLIL program on the writing skill. The results of the study provide educators with the idea of CLIL and case studies is an effective approach toward improving the writing skill. The results of this study are in line with the results of other studies such as Kerber (2001), Oxford (1990), Coyle (2007), Casal (2009) and Yang (2014) which concerning the use of intensive teaching and innovative methods in improving the writing skill and language learning.

In addition, the results also revealed that the adapted CLIL program can be an effective strategy in language education in the MAF. The adapted CLIL program enables language instructors in the MAF to "new ways of teaching and develop abilities to learn languages. The findings in this study showed that the added value concept is a feasible approach that can be applied for the implementation of the adapted CLIL program in the MAF. In addition, it can be said that course designers, can incorporated the adapted CLIL program into the mainstream military skill training courses to support learners' language proficiency.

## Conclusion

This study suggests that significant outcome with measurable results can be achieved through incorporating case study-based learning and CLIL pedagogy. Implementing the adapted CLIL program in the military tertiary institutions can facilitate undergraduates with adequate language proficiency to develop their military knowledge and academic skills. The ability to integrate knowledge, skills and modes of thinking in two or more disciplines would contribute towards

cognitive advancement—such as explaining a phenomenon, solving a problem, or creating a product—in ways that would credit for interdisciplinary teaching-learning. The outcomes of this research study confirmed the effectiveness of the adapted CLIL program to improve the writing skill. In addition, case studies showed greater motivation, interest and participation of the learners to better their language proficiency. In light of these advantages and considering the better results in the writing skill, the adapted CLIL program is an effective and innovative approach in the military context for language education and military training.

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