

## **Exploring an Innovative Model of Teaching English Language through the Content Areas: The TKT-CLIL Approach.**

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### **Abstract**

This study seeks to explore the attributes and the weaknesses of the TKT-CLIL approach to teaching English Language at the upper Basic level. The study analyzed the perceptions of teachers who took part at a TKT-CLIL workshop held at Awka, Anambra state. A survey design was used and the purposive sampling technique was adopted. All the 210 participants for the workshop were used. A 26 item questionnaire was used to collect data. To answer the research questions, analysis was done using Mean(X) and Standard Deviation(SD). It was found out that the TKT-CLIL has some strengths and weaknesses. Some recommendations were made.

### **Introduction**

Innovations are defined as the creative selection, organization and utilization of human and material resources in new and unique ways (Harris, 1975). Innovation should be part of the educational system in order to make the system to continue to grow positively. So in the school system innovations can be seen as the creation, selection, organization, and utilization of educational materials and activities for higher level attainment of the defined educational goals and objectives. Innovations bring changes into a system and changes are spices of life. According to Nwifo (2009) excellent, enduring and good innovations are changes in positive directions as well as signals of advancement of an educational system. It is innovations in the various fields of life that has brought the cataclysmic changes seen in the whole world. Innovations have led to transformations from one generation to another, one administration to another in varied ways. For instance, old systems of transportation to a new ones, old means of communication to another, analogue computing systems to digital ways, etc. Without innovations, the system will collapse. Innovations lead to growth, renewal, revitalization and even re-birth.

Innovations can apply to policy changes, goals and objectives of the educational system. It can lead to curricular changes as need arises. It can touch the method of teacher preparation and production. Innovations are also felt in the teacher techniques and strategies. In fact no part of the system is left out of the wind of innovation. Innovations lead to the renewal of a system, the modification of an existing method with the hope of providing a better quality programme. So ultimately, innovation refers to making changes or introducing new things into an existing system, thereby updating the system to enable it meet the demands of the changing society as well as societal needs and aspirations is one of the fundamental reasons of innovation (Nwifo 2009).

Innovations in the school system are geared towards improving the quality of the educational output. Omeje (2010) maintains that quality education stems from sound teaching, sound teaching stems from sound quality of the teacher and the teacher educator within a milieu of



sound facilities and prioritized funding. In the same way Obioma (2012) believes that in the attempt to build a model of educational effectiveness, the first step is the selection of quality inputs and the ability to manage such inputs well. According to Ene (2012:83) such inputs include education managers, infrastructural facilities, teachers and teaching methods, non-teaching staff, learners, curricular and non-curricular/instructional materials, learning environment, classroom, libraries, laboratories/workshops etc. When and if this is done, school leavers should be able to perform up to expectation. End products of an education system should be able to communicate effectively, manipulate numbers, read and write, be useful to themselves and the society and be able to develop skills for continuous learning (Obioma2012).

Teachers are the bedrock of the education system throughout the world. The importance of teachers and teaching methods in the education system need no flogging. Jean Jack Rousseau as cited in Imogie (2010) states that man believes that education has the power to set him free, but everywhere he is in chains for want of good teachers. Probably that was why Briggs as cited in Imogie (2010) had this to say:

Education should prepare us for a changing society and should itself generate social change... The old problems no longer respond to old solutions. It behoves us therefore to ensure that our children are adequately prepared today so that they may find suitable answers to meet the needs and challenges of tomorrow.

To reinforce this, the Nigerian education planners and operators must change the dynamics of teacher preparation. Emphasis should be focused on the challenges and changes we must courageously face and make in order to improve the prospects for the future. For Nigeria to march comfortably into and spend the rest of 21st century, we need a good number of adequately trained, devoted and committed teachers (Nwagwu,1998). For further emphasis, the National Policy on Education FGN(2004:40) had this to say: 'Teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum. Teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their professions.

This study is interested in methodology, the teaching learning approaches and the capacity or professional development of the teachers. Ene (2012) reiterates that capacity building workshops are a veritable tool for preparing teachers for the onerous task of teaching students effectively thereby assuring quality. In other to achieve the above, the education system organizes learning experiences that will eventually lead to the desired objectives. Many subjects are involved in this process. English is one of the key subjects in the education system. Every learner in Nigeria must study English language as a subject and study other subjects in the educational curriculum through the medium of English. NERDC(2007) as cited in Imogie(2010) calls English language 'the primus inter peres' of all subjects studied in the school system. For that reason, English is a subject that must be handled with a lot of care so that poor linguistic knowledge does not continue to become a hindrance to learners' success in other subjects. To this end the Nigerian government through their organ—the Universal Basic Education Commission and the Federal and state Ministries of Education collaborate with different agencies to mount capacity building workshops for teachers' professional development(PDE) so as to improve the quality of teachers in the profession through workshops and seminars. One of such agencies engaged in these capacity building workshops for English Language teachers is the British Council.

The British Council over the years, has been active in propagating the teaching and learning of English Language as their cultural heritage, throughout the world. Today, the place of English as in international affairs has increased the scope of coverage and so the British Council has equally responded by packaging English as a proud global product. (Ene, 2012). This researcher has previously worked on the effectiveness of the TKT Essentials Course for building the capacity of English Language teachers. This study will focus on the TKT-CLIL combination and how far it is building the capacity of English language teachers in Nigeria.

### **The Concept of TKT-CLIL**

TKT Essentials stands for Teaching Knowledge Testing Essentials Course. It is designed to introduce teachers to the basic theory and practice associated with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which is a conventional approach to English Language Teaching (Ene 2012). The teaching Knowledge testing Essentials (TKT) emerged as a corrective measure to the teaching of English while the communicative approach entails Knowledge About Language (KAL) (Ike-Nwafor 2012). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) encourages learners to get fully involved in the learning process through activities, communication, interaction, participation to mention just four. It discourages the memorization of rules and rote learning, dependence on definition instead of discovery, constant usage rather than calculated conversion from  $L_1$  to  $L_2$ . Teachers are trained to focus on meaningful communications, instead of focusing on accuracy and error identification. Ike-Nwafor summarizes the strengths of TKT Essentials thus:

- Rich content
- Useful materials
- Exposing student to a variety of well sequenced activities.
- It is learnercentred
- Learning is made easier with games
- There are greater opportunities for classroom interaction.
- It encourages active learner' participation
- Learner friendly class made possible
- Teacher plans materials before teaching
- Apart from being skill oriented, it is highly rewarding
- The activities unfold the learning potentials in the learners
- It gives the learners freedom to use and experiment with the language
- The role and contributions of the learner are of utmost importance in this teaching/learning process.
- There are sufficient practical and interactive activities among learners and between learners and their teachers.
- Teacher talking time (TTT) is reduced while Student talking time (STT) is increased.
- Exciting warmers and lead-ins are used to reduce boredom.

From a previous study, Ene (2012:86) found out some of the weaknesses of the TKT to include the following:

- Not paying attention to rudiments



- Previous knowledge is assumed
- Being time consuming
- Not being suitable for large classes

CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning. CLIL works with four principles namely-cognition, culture, content and communication. It holds that every lesson is imbued with content located in a cultural context, must be communicated through a language and which must task and excite cognition. CLIL explores the possibility of every teacher focusing on a bit of the target language. Van de Craen (2006) refers to CLIL to be focused learning method. Its aim is learning some subject matter together with learning a language.

In fact, every lesson plan for a CLIL classroom has a language objective among the specific objectives. Learners are made to appreciate the role of the language in the use of lesson delivery. It is expected that this approach might help to break down the high resistance posed by English language to many learners and reduce the failure rate. CLIL is a follow-up on TKT as the principles of both schemes are used in complementarity. CLIL emphasizes the four principles of cognition and culture, content and communication with renewed emphasis on the language aspects. Various innovative techniques for English language teaching such as interactive participation, brainstorming, task approach etc are integrated. CLIL explores other avenues for improving English language teaching through the teaching of other subjects in the curriculum. Marsha (as cited in Bentley 2011) defined CLIL as an approach that may concern language; intercultural knowledge, understanding and skills, preparation for internationalization and improvement of education itself.

The TKT-CLIL is for teachers who teach different curricular subjects through the medium of English and for English language teachers who use curriculum content in their teaching. The use of English language as a medium of instruction in Nigerian schools has been spelt out in the National Policy on Education (FGN2004: 10). Also teachers of English in Nigeria do source their materials in terms of course books, instructional materials and other forms of teaching aids from local content. Therefore there is the need to explore the suitability of CLIL in the Nigerian environment. The principles behind Content and Language Integrated learning – the CLIL concept is based around 4 principles of learning known as the 4Cs-- Cognition, Culture, Content and Communication.

### **Statement of the problem**

Jean Jack Rousseau as cited in Imogie (2010) states that man believes that education has the power to set him free, but everywhere he is in chains for want of good teachers. This calls for an innovative approach. Innovation becomes paramount when a system shows signs of weakness. There is no doubt that our educational system in this country is groaning and showing signs of weaknesses. One major area of weakness is the poor standard of language proficiency among our learners and products at various levels. There are tales of woes of poor performance in English Language at the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations. It is generally argued that if learners have not learnt, then teachers have not taught. Then there is deficiency or gap in the system which may be traced to deficiency in teacher effectiveness. That means there is need to build up the capacity of the teachers in the field while paying proper attention to the preparation of pre-service teachers. The researcher believes that a good language teacher should employ contemporary techniques borne out of research. These approaches may expose the students to more avenues and opportunities to use the target language. One major attraction of the TKT-CLIL is the ability to involve the

learners and in addition make every teacher contribute to language teaching and increase learners exposure to target language use in real and varied life situations. It is the focus of this paper to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the TKT-CLIL approach.

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to sample the views of workshop participants to determine:

1. the strengths of the TKT-CLIL approach to English Language teaching
2. the weaknesses of the TKT-CLIL approach to English Language teaching
- 3.

### Research Questions

1. What are the strengths of the TKT-CLIL approach to English Language teaching?
2. What are the weaknesses of the TKT-CLIL approach to English Language teaching?

### Method

Two research questions were developed and answered in consonance with the purpose of the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design that made use of structured questionnaire items. The population consists of 210 teachers involved in a TKT-CLIL workshop mounted by the British council and Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board. Purposive sampling technique was used. A 26 item questionnaire arranged on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree(SA), Agree(A), Disagree(D), and Strongly Disagree(SD) rated 4,3,2and 1 respectively was used. The instrument was face-validated by lecturers from curriculum studies of NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka. The administration of the questionnaire was personally undertaken by the researcher who was able to retrieve all of them. Mean statistics and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer the research questions. The cut-off mean was put at 2.50.

### Results:

**Research Question1.** What are the strengths of the TKT-CLIL approach to English Language teaching?

**Table 1:** Mean scores of workshop participants on the strengths of TKT-CLIL to English Language teaching?

S/No	Items	Mean	SD
1.	Every teacher teaches English language	2.450.40??	
2.	Every lesson plan has language objective(s)	3.660.82	
3.	Teacher guides learner towards self-discovery	3.820.93	
4.	Teacher elicits information from students	3.650.81	
5.	Learners engage in brainstorming& interaction sessions	3.870.97	
6.	Task-based activities /learning is upheld	3.720.83	
7.	All language skills are practiced vigorously	3.670.82	
8.	Teacher Talking Time (TTT) is reduced	3.700.84	
9.	Student Talking Time (TTT) is emphasized	3.880.95	
10.	All learning styles are accommodated	3.580.69	
11.	Motivation is high with a variety of activities	3.360.60	
12.	Pair-work/small whole groups are used for tasks	3.73 0.83	
13.	Exciting warmers/lead-ins are used to reduce boredom	3.380.61	



- 14. TKT-CLIL is learner-centered 3.850.96
- 15. Higher and lower order thinking skills are emphasized 3.660.82
- 16. Different study skills are employed 3.670.82

**Table 1** shows mean responses on the strengths of the TKT-CLIL approach. Most of the items were highly rated with means ranging between X 3.36 (Motivation is high with a lot of activities) to X 3.88 (Student talking time is emphasized). Item 1 which states that every teacher should teach English language has a low mean of X 2.45.

**Research Question 2.** What are the weaknesses of the TKT-CLIL approach to English Language teaching?

**Table 2:** Mean scores of workshop participants on the weaknesses of the TKT-CLIL to English Language teaching.

S/No	Items	Mean	SD
17.	Other teachers may lack proficiency in English Language	3.88	0.82
18.	TKT-CLIL lesson plan is cumbersome	2.75	0.17
19.	TKT-CLIL lesson/activities are time consuming	3.64	0.80
20.	TKT-CLIL pays little attention to rudiments	1.67	0.63
21.	Some activities are complicated	3.26	0.70
22.	Previous knowledge is assumed	3.12	0.67
23.	Not suitable for large classes	2.22	0.69
24.	Suitable only if teachers are motivated	2.40	0.20
25.	Not adaptable to Nigerian schools	1.84	0.60
26.	Gives undue assistance to learners	1.69	0.61

Table 2 shows that participants consider item 17 with a mean of X-3.88, which states that other teachers are to join hands to teach the second language, as the greatest weakness of TKT-CLIL. This is followed by item 19 (with a mean of X 3.60) which states that CLIL lessons and activities being time consuming with a mean score of X 3.36. Participants do not consider item 20, (TKT-CLIL paying little attention to rudiments, item 25 (Not adaptable to Nigerian schools with a mean of X- 1.84 and item 26 (Gives undue assistance to learners with a mean of X- 1.69 respectively as being weaknesses.

### Discussion of findings

This study investigated the strengths and weaknesses of the TKT-CLIL approach on participants at a workshop in Anambra state. The findings of the research show that the participants perceive the TKT-CLIL approach as being effective to English Language teaching despite some short comings. From their responses, it could be seen that TKT-CLIL approach has several encouraging attributes. Every lesson plan having a language objective is very highly rated X- 3.66 and the TKT-CLIL being very interactive (X- 3.87). From the table, it was seen that the participants agree that reducing teacher talking time (TTT) and encouraging student talking time is very nice. This agrees with the view of Igbo (2007) which states that students do not learn better when teachers (lecturers) monopolize the

lessons. TKT-CLIL is seen as interactive and Igbo (2007) confirms that little learning takes place if learners are passive. The TKT-CLIL is a strategy that ensures that students continue to practice language structures with meaningful situations.

Priority is given to pair and small group work. This also ensures that as many students as possible are able to practice communicatively. The class continues to be warm and active and boredom is reduced to the barest minimum. All the four major language skills are promoted and practiced.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that there is need for innovation is very welcome in the education system. One way of bringing in innovation is through workshops because they open up new avenues to help stimulate learning and even improve the capacity of or teacher

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