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## From ESP to Soft CLIL: English for Music Business Course

Received : Nov 28, 2021

Revised : Feb 17, 2022

Accepted : Mar 22, 2022

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the synergy of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approaches in an EFL setting. It draws on the similarities and differences of the two approaches and how CLIL has been employed in an ESP program in the English for Music Business course. The paper further presents the key elements of how CLIL approach has been applied in the design of an ESP course, English for Music Business, at an international university in Thailand in response to the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and the demand for more internationalization. CLIL's 4 Cs was employed as the key model in the design of the course, addressing the language and content learning, and the use of authentic materials through collaborative learning and scaffolding. The attempt to shift from a traditional ESP approach to Soft CLIL has also promoted learner autonomy.

**Key words:** CLIL, English, ESP, Music Business course, scaffolding

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the pedagogical practices in the English Medium Program (EMP) in an international university in Thailand. One of the main responsibilities of educational practitioners, especially in an EFL context, is to constantly select an appropriate approach to enhance and develop student's learning. The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach dates back to 1960 and has been employed in teaching and learning in response to students' needs for communication, specifically in professional settings. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) emerged 30 years after the ESP approach in Europe with its focus on a 'dual-approach'- the language learning and the content. The 'dual focus' of the approach can promote novel teaching practices.

### Background of English for Music Business Course

English for Music Business course is offered at an international university in Thailand for students majoring in Music Business, School of Music Business, and in Business English, School of Arts. It also serves as a free elective course for students of other majors. The students enrolled in the course are third- and fourth-year Thai students whose English proficiencies are said to be in the intermediate to advanced level. All of the students have passed three out of the four English foundation courses required by the university. The course was first introduced to the Business

English curriculum in 2009. Initially, it adopted the ESP approach in which the course was heavily focused on the use of English and was devoted to grammar, terminology, and register in the context of the music business. When the course was offered in 2009, the focus was on the English language and the tasks were mostly limited to reading and the development of music terminology. With the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the demand for more internationalization, and the world being more globalized, it is inevitable for educators to adapt a new approach to their teaching and learning.

The objectives of the course are for the students to learn the basic structure of the music business, acquire knowledge about the journey and career paths of well-known artists and music producers, and read and write news stories in the music business context. The materials used in the course are authentic reading and listening materials derived from online music journals and video clips of artists' and music producers' interviews from YouTube. The reason for using online materials is because there are no commercial texts available and most importantly, the main aim of the course is to expose the students with 'real-life' reading and listening contents. The materials chosen were based on the current music business news. The reading texts were adapted to suit the students' language ability as many of the materials found online may be difficult or contain too many technical terms. The listening texts however, were not adapted but the main goal was to provide the students the opportunities to listen to authentic interviews and later group discussions were conducted to check their listening comprehension.

The teacher of the course has some background in the music business as she was a piano teacher for more than 10 years and worked at a music school for approximately 4 years. To acquire more in-depth knowledge about the music industry, the teacher also audited a course in Introduction to the Music Industry at a university during her fellowship in the U.S.A.

Task-based activities are also incorporated with a focus on the four skills which include reading and writing news stories in the journalistic style, writing song parodies, presenting about favorite artists, and listening to video clips of artists and music producer's interviews. A term project is also submitted at the end of the semester in which the students interview a businessperson who works in the music industry, such as an artist, a music producer, a music school owner, or a music teacher.

### **Concept of CLIL**

The concept of CLIL may have been established since 1996 but it has been of interest in teaching and learning in Thailand only since 2006 when lecturers/educators in the Thai educational system started adopting the methodology. According to Coyle (1999), the 4 Cs's main principles are as follows:

- **CONTENT:** the matter of the subject
- **COMMUNICATION:** the language learned and used
- **COGNITION:** the learning and thinking processes
- **CULTURE:** the development of intercultural awareness and global citizenship

In addition, Mehisto et al. (2008) argued that CLIL is the ultimate communicative methodology. Students are to acquire knowledge and skills cognitively by being encouraged and engaged to participate more so that they can develop their capabilities. Moreover, Suwannoppharat and Chinokul (2015) mentioned that more interaction, active participation, and students' collaboration in CLIL modules could enhance students' problem-solving skills, as well as the ability to work with others effectively. Various forms of instructional activities also serve as opportunities for the students to learn language skills. Hence, it is deemed appropriate to adapt the approach to the teaching of the English for Music Business course.

### Characteristics of ESP vs. CLIL Approach

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is the term that has traditionally referred to English courses that are context-driven and designed for specific disciplines such as Business English, English used in the airline industry, and other professional settings. In the 1960s, ESP meant that students learned or are exposed to technical words or vocabulary in a given profession or context (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). That is, ESP simply centers its approach on the language that is taught in a specific profession or workplace environment and is specifically based on the needs of adult learners.

CLIL, on the other hand, was first introduced 30 years after the introduction of ESP. Both ESP and CLIL share several features, namely the focus on communicative teaching methodology, the development of language learning based on the learners' needs, and the use of communicative language teaching methodology (Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013). CLIL is also viewed as a new and interactive approach to teaching English (Garrido, 2000). Furthermore, Riley (2013) asserted that an ESP program may be transformed to CLIL when discipline teachers and language teachers discuss and collaborate in order to decide on the balance of the amount of content and language to teach the students. Below is a comparison between ESP and CLIL approach drawing specifically on the course design, learning and teaching methodology, language focus, and design purpose.

**Table 1**  
*Comparison of ESP and CLIL Approach*

	<b>ESP Approach (Dudley-Evans &amp; St John, 1998)</b>	<b>CLIL Approach (Coyle et al., 2010; Smit &amp; Dafouz, 2012)</b>
Course Design focus	- Meets specific learners' needs	- Focuses on both the content and language
Learning/Teaching Methodology	- Employs various teaching activities/tasks in various disciplines - Generally, employs basic knowledge of target language	- Employs various teaching methodologies - Develops thinking skills and learner's cognitive ability - Enhances problem-solving skills
Language focus	- Focuses on grammar, lexis, register, skills, discourse, and genres depending on the activities	- Focuses on communication and learning obtained through use of language

Design Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May use authentic situation in specific scientific fields</li> <li>- Program or course designed mainly for adult learners either at tertiary level or other professional environments/contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of authentic situations and environment</li> <li>- Learning of other cultures to enhance international understanding</li> <li>- May use scaffolding in certain activities</li> </ul>
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### ***Hard CLIL vs. Soft CLIL***

Hard CLIL refers exclusively to teaching content through the medium of foreign language with the focus on the content objectives. On the other hand, Soft CLIL refers to language teaching by bringing in the content through the medium of a foreign language but with a focus on language or linguistic objectives (Ball et al., 2015). Hence, this section draws on the differences between Hard CLIL and Soft CLIL in terms of the aim of the course, who teaches the course, the type of feedback given to the students, the kind of knowledge it provides, and the focus of assessment as follows:

**Table 2**

*Soft CLIL versus Hard CLIL (adapted from Ikeda et al., 2022)*

	<b>Soft CLIL</b>	<b>Hard CLIL</b>
Teachers	CLIL language teachers (in language lessons)	CLIL subject teachers (in subject lessons); Work on the language of their subject
Aim of the approach	To teach language (and some content)	To teach content and some language
Feedback	Give feedback mainly on language (and sometimes on content)	Give feedback mainly on content (and sometimes on language)
Type of knowledge	Knowledge of the content of the subject teacher's lessons which is sufficient to be able to work on related ideas and language during lessons	Content knowledge and knowledge about the language of their subject, such as text-types, vocabulary, or speaking activities, language functions
Assessment	Assess and mark language	Assess and mark content (and sometimes language)

### **CLIL Previous Research**

CLIL is viewed as an innovative approach to teaching, and a number of studies revealed that adopting CLIL approach has had a positive impact/has improved of students' language competencies.

Chansri and Wasanasomsithi (2016) conducted a study with 27 students majoring in agricultural technology through quasi-experimental research with a one-group pre-test post-test design. They found that after implementing the CLIL approach, the students' writing ability significantly improved. The students were able to: write paragraphs with better organization; provide thorough and detailed content; use effective choice of words; use more grammatically correct sentence structures; and made fewer errors in terms of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. Likewise, Yang and Gosling's (2013) study of undergraduate students revealed that students in the CLIL program significantly improved their linguistic performance compared to the non-CLIL group of students. Chostelidoua and Griva (2014) conducted experimental research with 270 students majoring in accountancy. The aim of the study was to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the CLIL approach in terms of reading skills development. The students were divided into two groups, 139 participants were assigned to the research group and 131 participants to the control group. The experimental group was presented with the CLIL approach while the control group received the non-CLIL teaching and learning approach. The results aligned with the aforementioned research regarding the implementation of CLIL, and the students' performance in both linguistic and content knowledge were significantly higher than that of the control group. In addition, Ikeda (2013) conducted a longitudinal study with upper secondary school students in Japan using the 'weak' CLIL approach. Students' perception about CLIL was derived from the course evaluation questionnaire and measurement of the students' language performance was derived from the pre- and post-writing tests. The result from the questionnaire was that the students appreciated the CLIL teaching style. With regard to writing ability, it was found that vocabulary selection, sentence construction, and discourse structure (fluency) improved, however; in terms of accuracy-grammar, language usage and mechanics did not significantly improve. This is probably the limitation of the CLIL approach which focuses on the 4 Cs and promotes students to learn English 'naturally' and to learn from 'making mistakes' rather than following a structured or systematic teaching style. Hence, this is aligned with the style of teaching and learning of the English for Music Business course.

### **Applying CLIL Methodology in English for Music Business Course**

Drawing on CLIL pedagogy provides learners with a rich and naturalistic environment. In the case of the English for Music Business course, students had to read a number of authentic music business articles. They then discussed the articles in groups with regards to the gist of the article, their understanding, and shared their personal opinions, hence knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. This serves to reinforce language acquisition and learning, hence leading to greater proficiency in learners' abilities (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

When reading, the students also worked in pairs to identify the features of journalistic articles as well as learn and define the terminology used in the text. Students gradually gained knowledge about the journalistic style of article writing, developed an inventory of terminology, and were later asked to write an article in the journalistic style applying the terminology. Hence, the 4 Cs were applied in the learning process as follows: Content: the students were exposed to the content of the music business articles; Communicate: the students discussed the music business features and terminology; Cognitive: the students adopted the thinking process in decoding the meaning of the article; and Culture: the students learned various music genres and culture' as conveyed in the articles. Similar to Tzoannopoulou's (2015) English for Journalist course, at this

point the students had the opportunity to gradually incorporate their new knowledge, integrate their previous work, and accomplish a task independently. In addition, Coyle, et al. (2010) asserted that CLIL is by nature dynamic and student-centered; hence, this could lead students to be more active and gradually become autonomous learners. This further confirms that CLIL pedagogy with a focus on content fosters learners' cognitive development through its constructivist approach, such as employing new or modified knowledge to construct new learning experience. Consequently, this serves as an essential learning tool (Coyle, et al., 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2008). In addition, CLIL is closely connected with the scaffolding method. The ultimate goal of scaffolding is to promote autonomous learning in which students receive support from a teacher or a more capable peer in tackling a task (Tzoannopoulou, 2015).

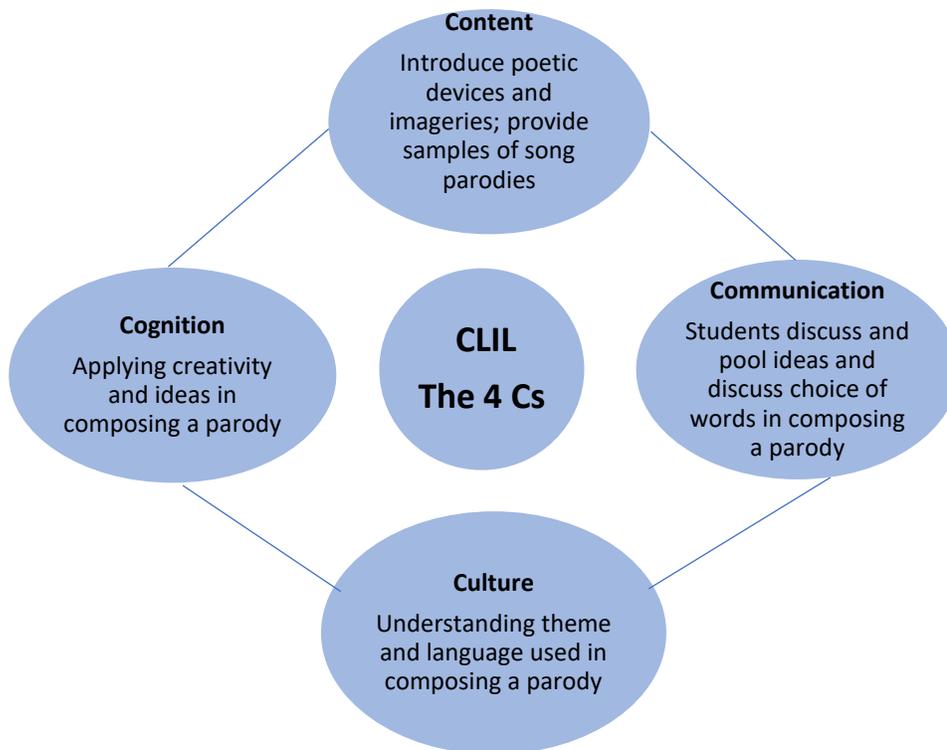
Moreover, one of the tasks incorporated in the course in which Soft CLIL is applied and the principles of 4 Cs are integrated is composing a parody. A parody is a piece of musical work that is created by imitating an existing original work, usually to make fun of or comment on an aspect of the original. The parody composition task is presented in this article as it fits in with the principles of the 4 Cs and it could promote the students' creativity. First, the students were introduced to the authentic content which are poetic devices such as rhyming, metaphor and simile, and theme. This is followed with a short exercise on rhyming words, then having students give examples of metaphors and similes. After the students acquired some basic poetic features, they were then introduced to two songs from the movie *Music and Lyrics*: "Way Back into Love" and "Don't Write Me off Just Yet". The students were asked to identify the theme and other poetic devices in the two songs. Next, the students listened to three to four parodies from YouTube and later discussed the theme and techniques used in each parody. At this point, the students were said to be provided with sufficient scaffolding regarding the steps in composing a parody. Instructions given to the students were for them to pick a melody of any genre, agree on a theme, and compose a parody. The lecturer also guided the students when selecting team members, as it would benefit the group if one or two of the members have some music background. This is because the students with some music background would be able to help the group in terms of the singing and fitting the lyrics in the melody. Students with better English proficiency would work on the choice of words and apply the poetic devices. Hence, it can be seen that scaffolding was provided from the lecturers in introducing the features of poetic terms, and how a parody is composed, and through the collaboration among the students themselves. It was found that the students were able to work autonomously as mentioned by Coyle et al. (2010) that CLIL, with the integration of scaffolding, promotes students to be active and become responsible in their own learning. Hence, the students produced a parody through group interaction and authentic communication. They then applied the poetic devices and their creativity in the parody. Considering that the majority of the students did not have any background in music, the output of the task was satisfying. They explored the various genres of music and had been creative with the choice of words and use of poetic devices. The themes of the parodies that they devised were mostly about life in the university, about a certain subject that they have studied, or how they look forward to graduating soon. Feedback was given to the students in terms of language use and whether the poetic devices were applied correctly and appropriately. The students also provide reflections on the course at the end of each semester. The majority of the students mentioned that the course provided them with the opportunity to be creative and to 'think out of the box' especially when working on the song parody activity even though they found it challenging. Moreover, they also appreciated reading and listening to

authentic materials currently trending in the music business and the journey of the producers' and singers' career paths.

Figure 1 illustrates how CLIL's 4 Cs pedagogical approach was employed in the course.

**Figure 1**

*4 Cs Pedagogical Approach: Composing a Parody*



### From ESP to Soft CLIL in English for Music Business Course

Soft CLIL involves a strong focus on language requirements and less focus on content knowledge, as opposed to the Hard CLIL approach where students are taught mostly content-based information with a small and supportive number of linguistic skills (Boyes & Gallagher, 2019). To ensure effective application of CLIL approach, the language lecturer consulted closely with the lecturers in the music business discipline about the materials and tasks as Riley (2013) asserted that there must be a careful collaboration between discipline teachers and language teachers. The attempt to shift the paradigm from ESP to CLIL was said to be a success for the Music Business course. However, based on the structure of how the course has been adapted, especially in terms of the tasks, the course has been modified to be more 'Soft CLIL' rather than 'Hard CLIL'. This is because the objectives are more language-driven or language-oriented. Table 3 provides an overview of how the structure of the course departed from the ESP approach to Soft CLIL.

**Table 3***Shift from ESP to CLIL approach for English for Music Business Course*

<b>English for Music Business (ESP Approach)</b>	<b>English for Music Business (CLIL Approach)</b>
Language-driven with a focus on terminologies and grammar	Focuses on content and language but with more emphasis on language (explanation of content is explained in almost all lessons)
More emphasis on language use rather than content	Use of 100% authentic materials for reading from online magazines and listening skills from YouTube, such as interviews of music producers and artists
Rare or little scaffolding; only when engaging in reading comprehension	Applies scaffolding strategies both from the lecturer and among students when doing pair or group activities; language usage is authentic
Some integration of international understanding of culture	There is international understanding of the cultures in terms of the music genres from various countries through reading texts
	Challenges students cognitively in the parody writing; application of poetic terms

**Limitation of CLIL**

Every approach to teaching and learning has advantages and disadvantages. The CLIL approach has the advantage of providing interesting topics, engaging activities, and authentic situations for the students to use the language (Coyle et al., 2010; Smit & Dafouz, 2012). However, the main problem and limitation of CLIL is the ‘less systematic and less rigorous’ approach when compared to the purely language-focused classes which tend to be more systematic (Harrop, 2021). Hence, students may not be able to grasp or improve language accuracy (e.g., grammar structure) in a CLIL classroom as seen in the studies reviewed earlier in this paper. The other main challenge is the teachers themselves as they may not have sufficient knowledge of the content; hence, the chosen content or topics may be based on their own interest or limited ability/knowledge of the subject matter. Thus, professional development training in certain subject matters is essential.

In terms of the number of students enrolled in the English for Music Business course which were approximately 20-25 students per class, applying CLIL was beneficial to the students. The small number of students in the class allowed the students to break into small groups and support one another in doing group tasks. The teacher also had sufficient time to provide scaffolding to the students whenever needed. However, if the approach is used with a large classroom, it may pose some constraints as scaffolding among the students as well as from the teacher may not be as effective.

However, as the students are Thai and they have been educated in a ‘rigid’ and systematic educational system and may not be familiar with discussion-type activities, and voicing their personal opinions. As a teacher, it was often challenging to encourage and motivate the students

to interact. One other problem found by the author was the process of choosing the materials and tasks to suit the students' ability and also ensure that they could foster language proficiency, authentic language, and cognitive fluency (Mehisto, 2012).

## Conclusion

The CLIL approach can offer an authentic or real-life learning environment for language development of the students (Suwannoppharat & Chinokul, 2015). With a well-planned course design, it could enhance learners' motivation and language learning. Hence, whichever stance one takes, the one factor that both ESP and CLIL practitioners need to be aware of is to make careful decisions in finding a balance between the target language culture and professional subject matter in their courses or programs (Riley, 2013). It would be fruitful for other practitioners to duplicate this concept in their specific contexts as it appears that the ESP context could benefit from integration of the core elements of CLIL. Further research should also be conducted with a focus on the selection of CLIL materials, particularly to enhance scaffolding in the Thai teaching and learning context.

## Author

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