Content-based English Learning Materials and Iranian Young EFL Learners Demotivation

Mahsa Ahamdian[*]

M.A. student of English Language Teaching, Guilan, Iran

Mohammad Aghajanzadeh Kiasi

Assistant Professor, Payame Noor University of Guilan, Iran

Abstract

The present study attempted to investigate Iranian EFL students and parents' perceptions of the content of the newly developed textbook with respect to motivating potential of the book to re-motivate football players to learn English. Two research questions were posed to determine whether the content used in the textbook re-motivate demotivated football players to learn English. In addition, the study evaluated the parents' viewpoints to determine the suitability of the book and inspected the possible parent-child agreement on the re-motivating potential of the new content integrated language book. Sixteen EFL students and sixteen parents participated in this study. The evaluation was carried out through a questionnaire comprising 6 components that took the form of Likert scale. The findings revealed that the new book could regenerate motivation to learn English. The participants' parents also confirmed this.

Keywords: motivating, EFL, content-based Learning

INTRODUCTION

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a relatively innovative educational approach in European school education which combines learning content with learning a foreign (or additional) language, focusing on learning both at the same time. The foreign language is acquired through subject-related contents provided in such a way to encourage learning. Some other terms namely, immersion, bilingual education and content-based instruction are controversially referred as CLIL method of teaching (Cenoz, 2014).

As Coyle et al (2010) claimed both content and language are presented in such classes applying an educational approach named CLIL. They believed that through this type of education the foreign language learning process can be made easier and also some other far reaching educational roles are fulfilled. There is also a wide consensus on the fact that CLIL classes are cognitively challenging and more engaging both for the teachers and learners (Garton and Copland, 2019). This means that everybody is in need of more

* Correspondence: Mahsa Ahamdian, Email: mahsahmadian@gmail.com

thinking and cognitive analysis while trying to transfer the concept for the teachers and trying to grasp the concept for the learners.

There is a pile of research on the CALP in that some researchers come to the same conclusion stating that "it can't be sometimes helpful as it relates language to the situation, context and purpose of use and also it may be inappropriate for young learners for the understanding of content (Ball et al. 2015, p. 62).

CLIL also has been considered in different countries for example in South America and Colombia as reported by (Coyle, 2006) in which through the formal curriculum a second language was practiced as an additional language to transfer the content. It has also been considered in other countries as in East Asia, (Echevarria et al. 2006) because of the dramatic growing interest across the educational context specially Malaysia as one of the countries where English has been practicing as additional language included in ministry of education initiatives to develop English language proficiency.

Another important variable determining the success of a CLIL course is the availability and nature of the materials used to deliver the course. There is overwhelming agreement in research literature (Ball et al. 2015) that despite the rapid spread of CLIL programmes 'the lack of appropriate teaching materials, both for globalised curricula and for bilingual teaching in general, constitutes one of the great challenges teachers face' (Dafous, Guerrini 2009).

Thus, any teacher in a CLIL programme inevitably needs to engage in the development of materials to suit the needs of the particular learning context. In the CLIL dual-focus context, conducting formative and summative assessment creates additional questions.

THIS STUDY

Two research questions regarding the implications of content-based materials development for remotivating demotivated language learners were formulated.

Does the newly authored book named Hat-trick re-motivate demotivated football players to learn English?

Do parents go along with their children in terms of the re-motivating potential of the new content integrated language book?

METHOD

Participants

Out of 42 players 16 young football players that expressed their reluctance to learn English due to three major reasons, namely difficulty of lessons, boring teaching/learning, and lack of goal were included in this study.

Instruments

The course book named Hat-Trick: Basic English for Football included 48 pages on basic football skills and some ethical issues in this sport. The author, the supervisor of the present thesis, consulted several football coaches to decide on contents and the way they

could present the materials to the learners. Also, a 6-item questionnaire was used to evaluate the learners' motivation as well as their parents.

Procedure

Having attended 12 sessions, young language learners and their parents filled out a 6-item questionnaire using the Likert Scale ranging from 1 to 5. Items were binary as follow:

Interesting/boring

Easy/difficult

Relevant to my knowledge/ Irrelevant

Useful/unuseful

Satisfactory/unsatisfactory

Encouraging/discouraging

It is worthy of note that the final item (the course is encouraging) had been exclusive designed to describe the overall atmosphere of the course.

RESULTS

One of the main concerns of the questionnaire was to evaluate the relevance of the book to the personal interests of the language learners. So, the first component of the questionnaire asked the respondents to express their perceptions of the book content and rate it in terms of being boring or exciting for the language learners. The rating scales were numerically coded as 1–Boring, 2–Slightly Boring, 3– neither Boring nor Interesting, 4–Slightly Interesting, and 5–Interesting. Frequency counts and percentages were computed for the ratings made by the students and parents to see if the book was presented in an interesting way to attract language learners' attention. The results are in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and percentages for the first component (boring/ interesting)

		Group	Frequency	Percent
Students	Valid	Neither Boring nor Interesting	2	12.5
		Slightly Interesting	8	50.0
		Interesting	6	37.5
		Total	16	100.0
Parents	Valid	Neither Boring nor Interesting	4	25.0
		Slightly Interesting	7	43.8
		Interesting	5	31.3
		Total	16	100.0

As it was shown in Table 1, the book content was consistent with the interests of the learners and held the parents' interest, too. From among sixteen students, most of them admitted that the book was interesting (f= 6; p= 37.5%) or slightly interesting (f= 8; p= 50%). In addition, more than two thirds of the parents expressed that the book was in accordance with the students' learning interest. Some rated that it was interesting (f= 5; p= 31.3%) or slightly interesting (f= 7; p= 43.8%). Furthermore, none of the students and parents expressed that the book lacked stimulation or it was boring. In comparison, a few

number of the students (f= 2; p= 12.5%) and parents (f= 4; p= 25%) expressed that the book was neither boring nor interning to excite the learners' interest. Overall, the ratings made for the first component of the questionnaire revealed that in developing the new book, enough attention had been given to the students' interests and the book had attracted attention and aroused interest in the learners and parents.

The second component of the questionnaire concerned with the students and parents' attitudes towards the difficulty level of the book. The rating scales were numerically coded as 1 – Difficult, 2 – Somewhat Difficult, 3 – Normal, 4 – Somewhat Easy, and 5 – Easy. Frequency counts and percentages were computed for the ratings made by the students and parents to measure the difficulty level of the book. The results are in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency and percentages for the second component (difficult/ easy)

Group			Frequency	Percent
Students	Valid	Normal	4	25.0
		Somewhat Easy	7	43.8
		Easy	5	31.3
		Total	16	100.0
Parents	Valid	Normal	4	25.0
		Somewhat Easy	9	56.3
		Easy	3	18.8
		Total	16	100.0

As it was shown in Table 2, most of the students expressed that the book was either easy (f= 5; p= 31.3%) or somewhat easy (f= 7; p= 43.8%). When it comes to the parents, more than two thirds of the parents expressed that the book was easy (f= 3; p= 18.8%) or somewhat easy (f= 9; p= 56.3%). Furthermore, none of the students and parents perceived the book as difficult or slightly difficult. In comparison, equal number of the students (f= 4; p= 25%) and parents (f= 4; p= 25%) expressed that the difficulty level of the book was normal. Figure 1. depicts students and parents' perceptions of the book in terms of its difficulty level.
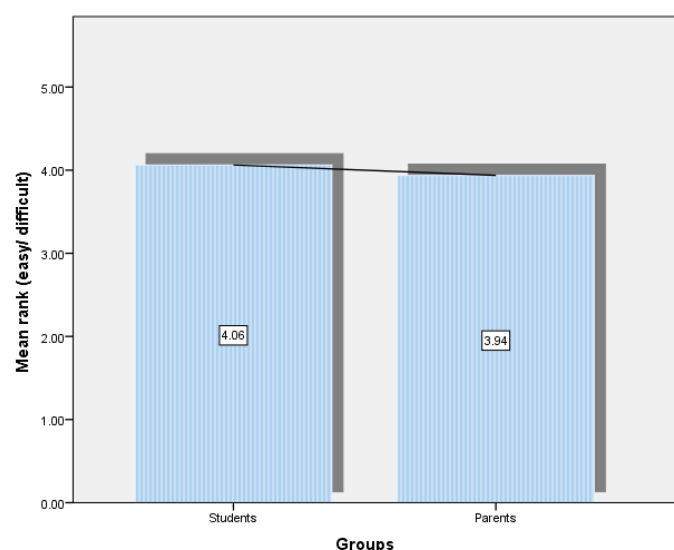

Figure 1. Students' and parents' perceptions of the book in terms of difficulty level

As it was displayed in Figure 4.2, students expressed more positive views towards the easiness of the newly developed book than the parents did. The mean rank for the students' ratings (M= 4.06) for the second component of the questionnaire was higher than the mean rank of the parents' ratings (M= 3.94).

The third component of the questionnaire dealt with the students and parents' attitudes towards the relevance of the book content to the students' knowledge. The rating scales were numerically coded as 1 – irrelevant, 2 – slightly irrelevant, 3 – neither relevant nor irrelevant, 4 – slightly relevant, and 5 – relevant. Frequency counts and percentages were computed for the ratings made by the students and parents to inspect the extent to which the book content was relevant to the students' knowledge and experience. The results are in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency and percentages for the third component (relevant/ irrelevant)

		Group	Frequency	Percent
Students	Valid	Neither relevant nor irrelevant to my knowledge	7	43.8
		slightly relevant	8	50.0
		Relevant to my knowledge	1	6.3
		Total	16	100.0
Parents	Valid	Neither relevant nor irrelevant to my knowledge	1	6.3
		slightly relevant	9	56.3
		Relevant to my knowledge	6	37.5
		Total	16	100.0

The results presented in Table 3 indicated that simply half of the students perceived that the book was slightly relevant to their knowledge (f= 8; p= 50%) and just one of them expressed that it was relevant to his knowledge (f= 1; p= 6.3%). Nevertheless, concerning the parents' views, most of the parents thought that the book was either relevant (f= 6; p= 37.5%) or slightly relevant (f= 9; p= 56.3%) to the students' knowledge. Furthermore, none of the students and parents perceived the book as irrelevant or slightly irrelevant to the students' knowledge. However, the other half of the students (f= 7; p= 43.8%) and simply one of the parents (f= 1; p= 6.3%) felt uncertain about the relevance of the book content to the language leaner's' knowledge and expressed that it was neither relevant nor irrelevant to the students' knowledge. Figure 2 shows students and parents' evaluations of the book in terms of its relevance to the students' knowledge.
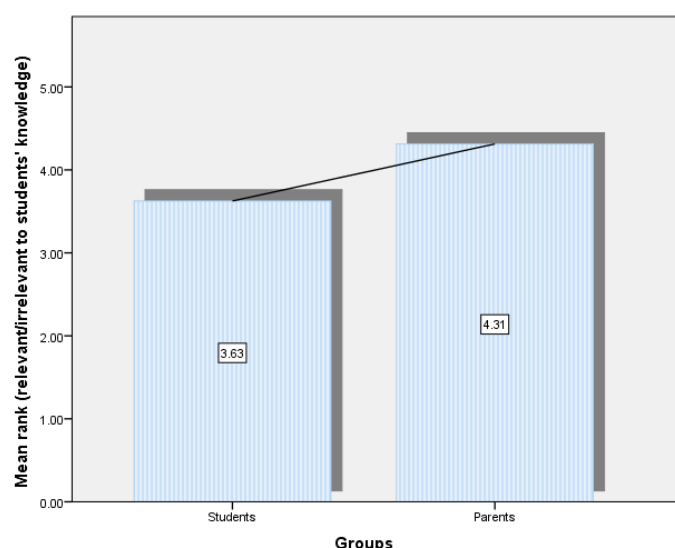
Figure 2. Students' and parents' perceptions of the book in terms of relevance to students' knowledge

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary aim of the current thesis was materials development with a focus on content integrated language learning. Accordingly, Hat-trick: Basic English for Football was authored and consequently it appeared practical to investigate the motivational effect of the book on previously demotivated language learners. Two research questions with respect to the implications of content-based materials development for regenerating motivation in language learners were formulated. 1-Does the newly authored book named Hat-trick re-motivate demotivated football players to learn English? 2-Do parents go along with their children in terms of the re-motivating potential of the new content integrated language book? In sum, none of the students and parents perceived the learning atmosphere as discouraging for the students to pursue their English learning ;and interestingly enough, both groups found the book motivating.

William et al. (2008) named six evidence-based principles, that all can be motivating and engaging. Elevating Self-Efficacy is the first one which in Guthrie et al (1999) words is defined as "the belief and confidence that students have about their capacity to accomplish meaningful tasks and produce a desired result in academic settings" (p.104).It means if the students are engaged they will be more successful than the students less engaged in classroom activity. Similarly, Guthrie and Wigfield, (2004) declared "the engaged students, whether economically privileged or not, outperform their less-engaged peers" (p.104).

The second item stated by William et al. (2008) is Engendering Interest in New Learning in which is a way to enhance self-efficacy in the classroom through generating interest in the new content. As Guthrie and Davis (2003) expressed the more the students are interested in the classroom material the more they will be engaged and put forth the effort y to read and learn. Therefore, it is fair to say that teachers can encourage them to bring their own interesting materials to classroom as a self-selected reading topic so that

they would be more engaged and interested to learn and consequently it would enhance the motivation.

The third item referred by William et al (2008) is the "Connecting Outside with Inside School Literacies" in a way that as Alvermann (2003) argued some students can be highly mastered in reading and using media even though they are weak and less able to cope with school materials. Hinchman and Alvermann (2003) stated that some students may not find any reason to read a textbook while they are more interested in reading novels at home , so motivating the students to read and learn in the content class room may get easier when they are helped to find and make connections between lesson topics and their everyday, multiliteracy practices.

Making an Abundance of Interesting Texts Available is the forth item mentioned by William et al (2008) which plays an important role in motivating the students. They alleged that school-based reading restricts motivation for reading in general. In the same vein, Moliner (2013) stated that Regardless of the exact reason, students need to have easy access to interesting print materials if we expect them to become engaged readers. It is noticeable that presenting different sources and students everyday world can interest them.

Expanding Choices and Option is the fifth one stated by William et al (2008) as an alternative to the other aforementioned ways in enhancing motivation to learn and make much more efforts. Allowing students, more input into the texts they read, the response options they use to demonstrate content acquisition, and even the kinds of learning experiences they might participate in, will increase autonomy and agency (Freeman, McPhail, & Berndt, 2002).

The last but not the least item posed by William et al (2008) is the collaboration for motivation between the teacher and students. As Guthrie (2008) stated, "Student motivation increases when teachers are their allies in the reading and learning process '(p.78). It means that teachers can create the chance to work and cooperate with the students and motivate them to try more in learning process. Similarly, Anderman (1999) believed that Collaborative engagement in the classroom makes the students feel more engaged in learning and brings them a feeling of belonging so that they are more intrinsically motivated readers in the classroom.

REFERENCES

Alvermann, D. (2003). *Seeing themselves as capable and engaged readers: Adolescents and re/mediated instruction.* Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates.

Anderman, L. H. (1999). Classroom goal orientation, school belonging, and social goals as predictors of students' positive and negative affect following the transition to middle school. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 32*(2), 89-103.

Ball. S., & Phil. D, Kelly. (2015). *Putting CLIL into Practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cenoz, J., Genesse, F., Gorter, D. (2014). Critical Analysis of CLIL: Taking stock and looking forward. *Applied Linguistics, 35*(3), 243–262.

Coyle, D. (2006). Content and language integrated learning: Motivating learners and teachers. *Scottish Languages Review*, 13, 1–18.

Coyle, D., & Hood, P., and Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: Content and language integrated learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dafouz, E.,& Guerrini, M. (2009). CLIL across Educational Levels. Richmond Publishing.

Echevarria, J., & Vogt, M.E.,& Short, D. (2006). *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners. The SIOP Model*. Boston: Pearson. Education

Freeman, J.G., &McPhail, J.C.,& Berndt, J.A. (2002). Sixth graders' views of activities that do and do not help them to learn. *The Elementary School Journal, 102*(A), 335-347.

Garton,S., & Copland, F.(2019).*The Routledge Handbook of Teaching English to Young Learners.* Routledge.

Guthrie, J. (2008). *Engaging adolescents in reading*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Guthrie, J., & Davis, M. (2003). Motivating struggling readers in middle school through an engagement model of class room practice. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 19*(1), 59-85.

Guthrie, J.T., Wigfield, A. (2004). *Motivating reading comprehension: Concept-oriented reading instruction.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Guthrie, J.T., Wigfield, A., & Metsala, J., & Cox, K. (1999). Motivational and cognitive predictors of text comprehension and reading amount. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 3*(3), 231-256.

Hinchman, K.A., Alvermann, D.E., Boyd, F.B., Brozo, W.G., & Vacca, R.T. (2003/2004). Supporting older students' in- and out-of-school literacies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 47*(4), 304-310.

Moliner, M. (2013). The effects of CLIL from the perspective of in-service teachers in Salamanca (Castilla y Leön, Spain). *Educaçao y Formaçao*, *8,* 200-217.

William, G. Brozo, E., & Sutton ,F. (2008). Motivating Students to Read in the Content Classroom: Six Evidence-Based Principles. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(2) 172-174