

USING THE CONTENT OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING TALES

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Abstract

This paper aims at studying whether consciousness raising tales from *the Mahabharata* can be used for English language education following CLIL approach. It defines CLIL, describes its features and frameworks and attempts to fit in the consciousness raising tales from the *Mahabharata* as content subject. It looks at the underlining principles of CLIL and examines whether these tales will be suitable to be used. Then it looks at the classroom principles and examines whether they can be applied in the teaching of skills using these tales. The paper also illustrates this by designing two model tasks by using two tales from the *Mahabharata*. At the end the rationale for designing such tasks is also explained.

Content and Language Integrated Learning: The Concept

CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning. It focuses on dual aims: the learning of content and learning of another language. Here, content subjects like science, history and geography are used to teach another language. Well-known experts in the field are Do Coyle, Phillip Hood, Ana Llinares, Tom Morton, Rachel Whittaker, Kay Bentley and the pioneer David Marsh. It has been in practice since long though it was known by various names such as Content Based Language Instruction(CBI), Content Based Language Teaching(CBLT) and English Across the Curriculum. As pointed out by (Coyle, Hood and Marsh): “CLIL is not a new form of language education. It is not a new form of subject education. It is an innovative fusion of both”(1). This is an approach which emerged as an outcome of the “convergence of different subjects in the context of the knowledge age”(1).

Under this, the content of subjects like, science, history and geography are used to teach another language. In our case, we can use the content of a story to teach language skills. The content of a story will be the title, theme or themes, style of narration, characterization, symbols, metaphors and so on. CLIL is based on 4Cs framework as proposed by (Coyle Hood and Marsh 41): “**Content**(subject matter), **Communication** (language, learning and using), **Cognition** (learning and thinking processes), and **Culture** (developing intercultural understanding and global citizen)”.

Consciousness Raising Tales

Now let us know about consciousness raising tales.

According to the *COBUILD English Dictionary*, consciousness-raising is defined as “the process of developing awareness of an unfair situation, with the aim of making people want to

help in changing it.” Human society has encountered many social problems from the beginning till today and many reformers have tried to reform these social issues. Writers, thinkers and activists are usually in the forefront in this matter. In recent years, we have activists working on raising consciousness on climate change, AIDs menace, gender equality and so on. Literature on such issues raises our consciousness. In Indian contexts, *the Ramayana and Mahabharata* have many such tales which help us to reflect on social issues like caste discrimination, gender inequality, sensitivity to the differently-abled and class division. These tales elevate our consciousness and make us empathize with the issues and situations. In this paper, some such tales from *the Mahabharata* will be used to teach English language skills.

Content of the consciousness tales

Now let us look at whether consciousness raising tales can be called Content subject. CLIL deals with content subjects such science, technology, history and geography. For instance, we can come across a lesson on Columbus from World History as a CLIL lesson. The tales we are using are from the *Mahabharata*, which is also termed as history by some scholars (though I would like to call it an interdisciplinary text). Ana Llinares, Tom Morton and Rachel Whittaker talk about genres and point out that:

The discipline of history is frequently chosen as a CLIL subject, gives scope for interpretation, comparing and evaluating sources” (132). These tales are stories but describe the past. Hence they can be included under content subject. Ana Llinares, Tom Morton and Rachel Whittaker also advocate the use of more than one language in CLIL. In this context, such tales have potential to be used in the multilingual classroom.

CLIL is built on the following Principles (Colye, Hood, Marsh 42).

1. Content matter is not only about acquiring knowledge and skill, it is about the learner creating their own knowledge and understanding developing skills (personalizing learning).
2. Content is related to learning and thinking (cognition). To enable the learner to create their own interpretation of content, it must be analysed for linguistic demands.
3. Thinking processes (cognition) need to be analysed for their linguistic demands.
4. Language needs to be learned which is related to the learning context, to learning through that language, to reconstructing the content, and to related cognitive processes. This language needs to be transparent and accessible.
5. Interaction in the learning context is fundamental to learning. This has implications when the learning context operates through the medium of a foreign language.
6. The relationship between cultures and languages is complex. Intercultural awareness is fundamental to CLIL.
7. CLIL is embedded in the wider educational context in which it is developed and therefore must take account of contextual variables in order to be effectively realized.

Some other principles of CLIL include the following

a. All teachers are teachers of language

Teachers who will be teaching these consciousness tales are not science or geography teachers, but are teachers of language. So they have an advantage as they are exposed to methods of language teaching.

b. The benefits of CLIL are cultural awareness, internationalization, language competence and increased motivation.

These tales are derived from our great epic which embodies our rich cultural heritage. By making them available to our learners we are giving an opportunity to discover this rich cultural heritage. Not only this, if these are made available to the international learners in our classrooms which do have their presence or on the internet, they will be internationalized. Such stories will enhance language competence in four skills. Such stories are quite motivating. So learners will find them engaging. Thus, the use of consciousness raising tales will not only raise cultural awareness, but also internationalization of our culture and heritage. As these are stories, they are good for motivating students.

Classroom principles

It is also pertinent here to take a look at some classroom principles advocated by the CLIL experts and see whether our tales can qualify them and can be used in the classroom.

Some of the basic principles of CLIL are that in the CLIL classroom:

- a. Language is used to learn as well as to communicate:** These tales have the potential to enhance learning English and communication too. When we prepare tasks and propose methodology too we should keep in mind that learners interact and use target language as much as possible.
- b. It is the subject matter which determines the language needed to learn.** This is something very apt for consciousness raising tales. These tales represent many social conventions and interactions. Hence learners will be able pick them up and use them in their everyday life.

According to the 4Cs curriculum (Coyle 1999), a successful CLIL lesson should combine elements of the following:

- 1. Content - Progression in knowledge, skills and understanding related to specific elements of a defined curriculum.** The tales in question have enriching content. That way they have a lot of potential to disseminate knowledge, skills and understanding on matters related to values, understanding, personality and civilization. They have also ideas that can be debated and train learners for critical thinking.
- 2. Communication - Using language to learn whilst learning to use language.** These tales have rich language with symbols, dialogues, customs and conventions which can promote communication. Using these texts, we can design tasks that will facilitate different forms of communication skills.
- 3. Cognition - Developing thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language.** Since the tales are based on interactions in society, based on real life like characters who were engaged in different situations that are familiar and also strange, there is enough scope for applying one's mind.
- 4. Culture - Exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepen awareness of otherness and self. These stories are vehicle of cultural practices.** They deal with the food habit, dress, manners, rituals and customs of people and society. In a chapter on Making CLIL come alive, Peter Mehisto, David Marsh and Maria Jesus Frigols (2009) talk about connecting classrooms to the community and the world and point out that community (and the world) creates a sense of relevance. This means: first, connecting new learning to the individual by exploring his or her current knowledge and experience base and interests, and by building a capacity for self-analysis. Second, connecting the individual students to the community and then by experiencing the power of working with others and by exploring the student's own impact on the community and community's impact on them, and third connecting the students to the world at large by developing an understanding of how acting locally is linked to global processes and

linked to the local community and by experiencing benefits of international perspective (179-80). In sum they are arguing for cultural awareness and internationalization. The tales in question will foster cultural awareness and internationalization.

CLIL experts also describe the following characteristics of CLIL:

1. Integrates language and skills
2. Lessons are based on reading, listening texts/ passages
3. The language focus in a lesson does not consider structural grading
4. Language is functional and dictated by the context of the subject
5. Language is approached lexically rather than grammatically
6. Learner styles are taken into account in task types.

Consciousness raising tales can be used as the content subject to teach language using the same approach.

In CLIL approach the content and language are viewed in equal terms. CLIL follows these basic classroom approaches.

1. Processing the text

A text is accompanied by illustrations to make the learner visualize the content easily.

2. Identification and organisation of knowledge

Texts are presented logically and in sequence. Diagrams, charts and tabular formats are used as additional inputs for supplement the text and for the reader's understanding.

3. Language identification

Learners are encouraged to use the language they already have. They are also encouraged by teachers to use different variety of usages, using idiom, collocations, discourse markers and so on.

using the above framework of CLIL, let us use the following four tales to teach language to Primary school students.

Lesson 1

Level: Class 8-10

Aim: to teach language skills and literary appreciation

Language focus: reading, speaking, listening, writing

Materials: Worksheet, Pictures, short films

Activity 1

Group/Pair work

What do you know about the following? Tell your pair partner. You can use your L1.

Karna, Arjuna, Kripacharya, Drona, Bhima, Duryodhana

Activity 2

Read the following story and answer the questions that follow

The Story of Karna

After the Kauravas and Pandavs completed their learning in their Guru's ashram, Guru Kripacharya and Dronacharya decided to take the test of the disciples. The disciples had to display their learning in a test in public. All were invited to witness the display. Arjuna demonstrated his skills with great expertise and effectiveness. The audience was amazed and happy with his skills in all subjects. But Duryodhana was jealous and upset. He was looking

for an opportunity to prove Arjuna wrong. He thought Arjuna would be declared the best warrior. In the meanwhile, there entered a young man to the scene. He looked handsome and full of valour. He was Karna. He declared that he could repeat the same skills displayed by Arjuna. Duryodhan welcomed him and encouraged his move. Guru Drona permitted Karna to repeat the skills demonstrated by Arjuna and Karna could do it with much ease and comfort. Then Karna also suggested that he was ready for one to one combat with Arjuna. Then Kripacharya intervened and said, “ Arjuna is the son of Preetha and Pandu , a scion of the Pandava clan. You need to introduce yourself. You have to be a prince to fight with a prince. Now tell about your lineage.” Karna just bowed down in silence before the Guru. Then Karna’s foster father Adiratha came there and requested with folded hands to stop the fight. Karna bowed him down and addressed him as father. It was known to the public that Karna was son of a charioteer and not of a king. Then Kripacharya said, “ Young man you are not eligible to fight with Prince Arjuna. “ Bheema commented whimsically, “You can take a whip, ride your chariot and go back.” Duryodhana replied “ If that is the condition, I shall make him the king of Anga and then he can fight Arjuna. But the sun set soon after that. So the fight could not take place that day.

Activity 3

Reading Skills

- a. What was the occasion for the test?
- b. Who entered the scene when Arjuna finished demonstrating his skills?
- c. What did Karna claim?
- d. What was the obstacle?
- e. What was the remedy offered by Duryodhana?
- f. Why did the battle stop?
 - a. Arjun was taught by _____ and _____
 - b. Duryodhana was part of the _____ .
 - c. Arjuna belonged to the _____.
 - d. Duryodhana was jealous of _____.
 - e. Karna came to challenge _____.

(Arjuna, Arjuna, Pandavas, Kauravas, Dronacharya, Kripacharya)

Activity 4

Speaking Skills

- a. What social issue do you find in the story?
- b. Does class exist in our contemporary society?
- c. What it right to obstruct Karna?
- d. What would have been your response if you were Karna?
- e. Give an example of a person who has crossed the economic hurdle and become an achiever?

Activity 5

Listening Skills

a. Play this episode from the Mahabharata and answer the questions

- i. What is the theme of the story?
- ii. Describe the story to the class.
- iii. Which character of the story you like most?
- iv. Write two r favourite dialogues from the story.

Activity 6**Writing Skills**

- a. Write the story in a drama form
- b. Summarize the story in your own words.

Activity 7**Literary Appreciation.**

- a. What is the theme of the story?
- b. Who is your favourite character?
- c. Did the teacher do a right thing by asking Karna his lineage? Give reasons.
- d. What do you learn from the story?
- e. Write the plot of the story in about ten sentences.

Lesson 2**Level:** Class 8-10**Aim:** to teach language skills and literary appreciation**Language focus:** reading, speaking, listening, writing**Materials:** Worksheet, Pictures, short films**Activity 1****Group/Pair work**

What do you know about the following? Tell your pair partner. You can use your L1.

Lord Krishna, Uttanga, Untouchability, favour, Amrit

Read the following story and answer the questions that follow.

The Story of Uttanga

After the battle of Mahabharata was over, Lord Srikrishna was coming back to Dwaraka. On his way, he met his childhood friend Uttanga. Uttanga was a recluse Brahmin. He wandered from village to village to beg and earn his living. Uttanga was happy to meet Srikrishna and asked him, “ We are meeting after a long time. How are your cousins-the Pandavas and the Kauravas doing? Are they doing well?” Lord Krishna replied, “ No, things are not like as you think. They had to fight a battle just because of their arrogance. I tried to negotiate with them but without any good result.

They fought a great war. “ Uttanga got astonished and angry to hear this. He said, “ What is this Kesava? Things went to such extent and you could not help! you could do nothing. I will not forgive you for this. I must curse you.” Then Krishna said, “ Keep your calm , my friend. I take births to perform different duties in different forms. As I told you, I did try to stop the way but could not stop it. I need not be blamed for it. You need not get angry and curse me without understanding the entire thing.” The Uttanga realized his mistake and apologized Lord Krishna. Lord Srikrishna smiled and said, “ O, You need not worry. I am happy that you did not curse me! I am pleased with and can give you a favour. Ask me what do you want?” Uttanga said, “ I don’t want anything, If you are so kind. I shall ask for an ordinary favour. Usually, I wander from village to village travelling through the forest. I feel thirsty. When I am thirsty, I should get some water. “ Krishna said. “ That will be done!” Then Lord Krishna and Uttanga walked in their own directions. One day, Uttanga was walking along the forest and he felt thirsty. Then he remembered Lord Krishna and his favour. Then as he was walking along, he came across a Nishada, a hunter who was looking untidy. But he had water in a leather bag around his waist. He offered water to Uttanga. Uttanga saw the man

and didn't feel like accepting water from him and walked ahead. After a few distance, he saw Lord Srikrishna. Then he realized his mistake. He said, " Lord , did you test me few minutes back in the form of a Nishada? I am sorry about it." Lord Krishna replied you are right. It was I in that form. I would have given you amrit, but because of your discrimination, you missed it."

Activity 2

I. Reading Skills

a. Discuss in Pairs

- i. What is the story about?
- ii. Who was Uttanga?
- iii. What did Uttanga want to know from Lord Srikrishna?
- iv. Why did Uttanga want to curse Srikrishna?
- v. What favour did he get from Srikrishna?
- vi. Why did he miss Amrit?
- vii. What is the moral of the story?

b. Complete the following passage by filling in the words from the brackets.

Lord Krishna met _____ when he was heading towards_____. Uttanga asked about the wellbeing of the _____ and _____ cousins. Uttanga was not happy with Krishna's answer and wanted to _____ him. Lord Krishna _____ him and offered Uttanga to give a _____.Uttanga said that he should get ____ when he was thirsty. Uttanga was wandering in the forest one day and felt _____. He remembered Lord Srikrishna. The Lord appeared before him in _____ and offered water but Uttanga refused to _____ water. He was deprived of _____ which would have been offered by Lord Srikrishna in disguise .

Pacified, favour, water, thirsty, Uttanga, Dwaraka, Kaurava, Pandava, curse, disguise, accept, Amrit

Activity 3

II.

Speaking

Skills

Discuss in pairs

- a. What do you know about caste system? What is untouchability?
- b. Do people practice it now in India?
- c. how do you treat sweeping person?
- d. What are the solutions to caste related problem?

Activity 4

III. Listening Skills

- a. Play the film on Uttanga and answer the questions after witnessing it.
 - i. Who are the two main characters in the story?
 - ii. What is the curse pronounced by Rishi Uttanga? Say the exact words.
 - ii. What is your personal response o the story?

Activity 5

IV. Writing Skills

- a. Write an essay on the caste system in India and remedies to eradicate it?
- b. Write a summary of the story.

Activity 6

Literary Appreciation

- a. What is the theme of the story?
- b. Contrast the character of Uttanga and the Nishada?
- c. What is the moral of the story?
- d. What is the point of view of the writer?

Conclusion

It has been observed that The principles and approaches CLIL can be applied in the teaching of consciousness raising stories from *the Mahabharata*. We can adopt the approach and methods to use these tales. These tales have potentials for enhancing language skills and literary appreciation. Another aspect to the stories are that they can offer value education to our learners. They also elevate our lower consciousness to higher level of consciousness which and be termed as self realization. Using such tales also will help us to popularize our culture and tradition at the international level which is termed as internationalization. Since CLIL approach encourages the use of more than one language, it will be more relevant to Indian multilingual contexts. About use of many languages, Kay Bentley says: “ It is increasingly important in our global, technological society, where knowledge of another language helps learners to develop skills in their first or home language and also helps them develop skills to communicate ideas about science, arts and technology to people around the world” (5). It can be observed that in the above tasks, we have added traditional tasks to CLIL model of tasks. While the CLIL model tasks here are based on factual information tasks, traditional tasks are helpful for literary appreciation, interpretation and for critical thinking and so on.

References

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