

Do teachers learn what they are taught? The impact of a hybrid in-service teacher course on the perceived role of content in an EFL classroom

ICT FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Overview

- Background
- The project
- Research questions
- Method
- Results
- Conclusion and implications

Background

- CLIL – Content and language integrated learning – an approach to language curricula and instruction
 - Language is taught through meaningful, engaging content
 - Programs range from content-driven to language-driven
 - Integrating content and language promotes language development as well as academic achievement and first language development
 - Challenges: high demands on teachers
 - Language competence
 - Lesson preparation

The project

- In-service teacher course at Sør-Trøndelag University College in Trondheim, Norway, in the academic year of 2013/2014
 - 28 English teachers working at 27 different schools in Sør-Trøndelag
 - Recent accreditation changes for English teachers in Norway:
 - Primary school teachers - 30 credits
 - High school teachers - 60 credits
- Language and content: English language curriculum in Norway
 - “English as a school subject is both a tool and a way of gaining knowledge and personal insight”
 - “Working with various types of texts and other cultural expressions is important for developing linguistic skills”

Research question

How do teachers' classroom practices related to integrating content and language and their views on using content to teach language change as a result of participation in an in-service English endorsement course?

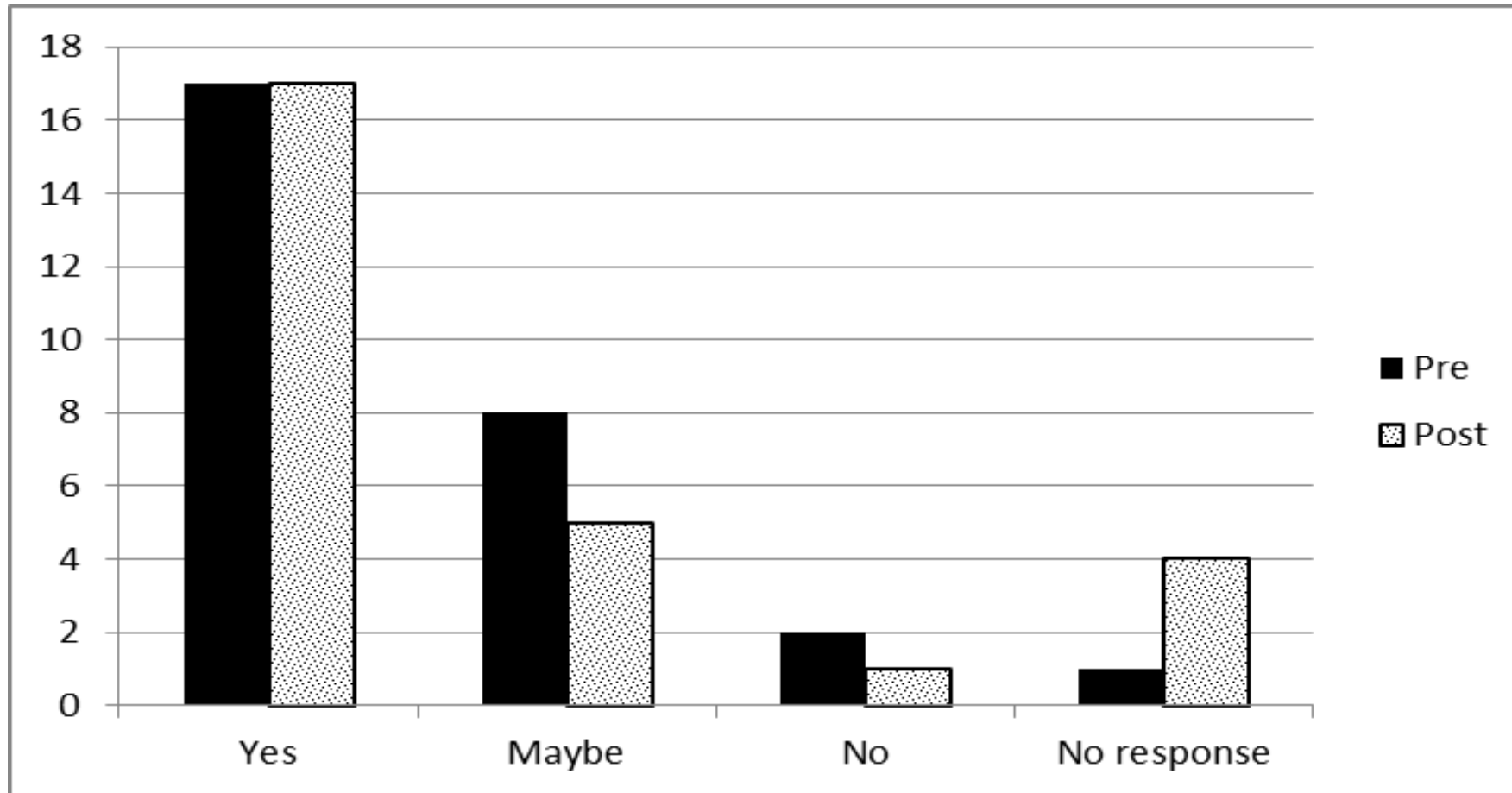
Method: open-ended survey

1. Do you think it is possible to teach English through content areas? For example, could you teach your students about the future of the universe or about photosynthesis using English? Why or why not?
2. In what ways do you use meaningful content and materials in your English classes?
3. Does your English instruction center on content? If content is not what you teach in your English classes, what is the main focus of your instruction?

Examples of activities and tasks during the course

- Assigned readings: CLIL including examples of CLIL lessons
- Guided on-line discussions of readings
- In-class discussions
- Lectures
- Lesson-planning workshop
- Group work presentations

SQ1: Is it possible to teach English through content areas?



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- Additional comments:
 - Difficulties associated with teaching English through non-linguistic content:
 - The lack of time to prepare materials and therefore a preference to rely on textbooks
 - The lack of self-confidence on the part of the teacher
 - Insufficiently developed vocabulary on the part of the students
 - The need to collaborate with other teachers
- Nevertheless, most teachers appeared to be quite enthusiastic about using content to teach EFL and they perceived it as superior compared with more traditional approaches.

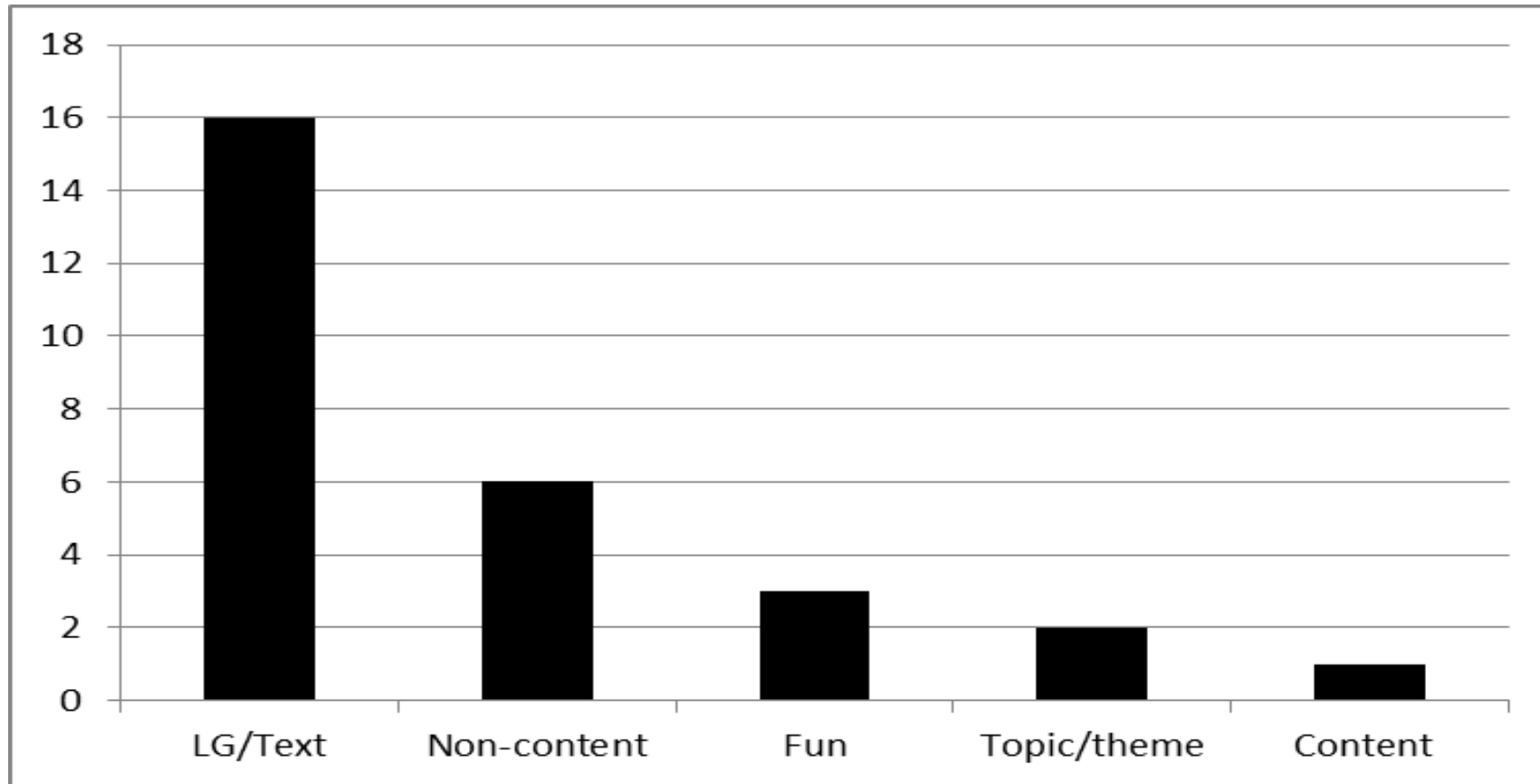
SQ2: Do you use meaningful content and materials in your English classes? (PRE)

- 6 teachers indicated that they use content. Examples:
 - Learning about Australia
 - Integrating authentic texts such as the musical “Annie.”
- 22 teachers believed that they integrate content and language, but the provided explanations are not clear or cast doubt on the self-report. Examples:
 - Watching films
 - Using web-based materials
 - Learning numbers in English
 - Using games and songs to learn new words
- 7 teachers openly admitted they do not use any content at all. Examples:
 - *«Even if I really think it is a good idea, I don't do it a lot»*
 - *«I use the textbook»*

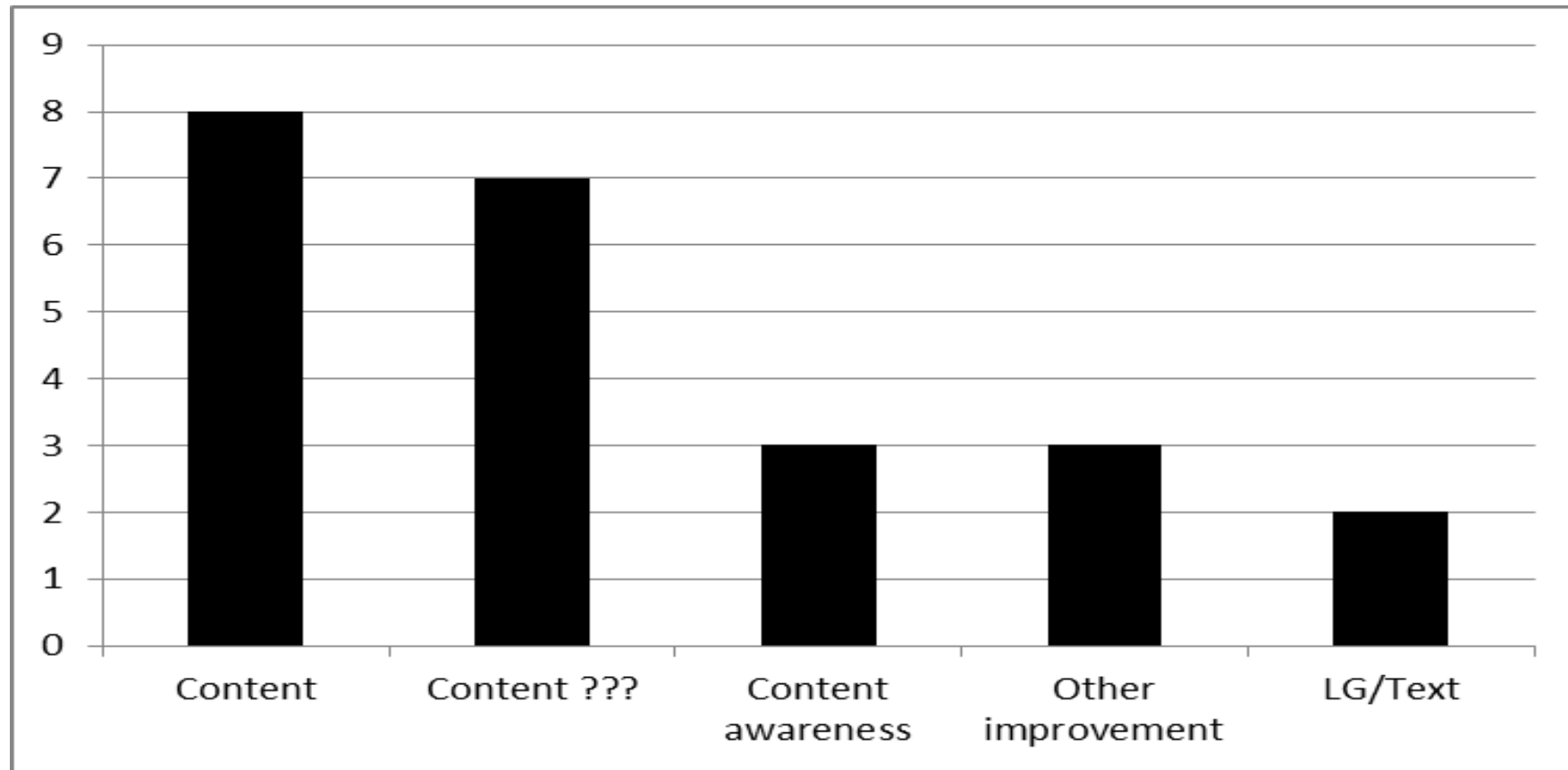
SQ2: Do you use meaningful content and materials in your English classes? (POST)

- 7 teachers indicated that they use content and themes
- 10 teachers stated that they had started using more authentic materials as a result of the course
- Only 1 teacher admitted not using content at all

SQ3: What is the main focus of your EFL instruction? (PRE)



SQ3: What is the main focus of your EFL instruction? (POST)



SQ3: What is the main focus of your EFL instruction?

- Changes over time:
 - Teacher awareness of the importance of integrating content with language has increased
 - Content was mentioned much more often in POST responses
 - Increased monitoring of teachers' own teaching practices, e.g. "I tend to focus more on content than earlier. I realize that both I and the students can talk about and discuss much more complicated topics than the ones covered in our course book."
 - Some increased awareness of the benefits of using content, but this belief was not reflected in classroom practices, e.g. teachers who mentioned content in their answers, but explained that they were mainly concerned with providing opportunities for oral practice or building vocabulary ("Content ???" responses)

Conclusions and implications

■ Conclusions:

- Most teachers have changed their views about using content to teach English
- Most teachers have changed their EFL teaching practices
 - Increased amount of content in EFL instruction
 - Increased awareness of the benefits of CLIL
- Some teachers still seemed to lack an in-depth understanding of what teaching language through content means

■ Implications for the in-service course:

- Devote more time to different models of CLIL and different ways in which non-linguistic content can be used as a medium of language instruction
- Provide more examples of content-driven lesson plans and activities from a range of academic subjects

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