

CLIL in Tertiary Education: Does it Have Anything to Offer?

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Abstract. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) as an innovative educational approach reflects EU policies of promoting multilingualism in Europe. It takes language learning beyond traditional topics and curriculum by offering non-linguistic content as the basis for learning and teaching. CLIL builds on the principles of 'good' teaching and learning, namely, active involvement of students, current and authentic materials, active teaching and learning methods, task or project based learning. It views learning as a social process during which knowledge is constructed by being actively involved in 'meaningful' communication, group activities and doing cognitively demanding tasks. CLIL is promoted as means of solving problems of traditional language learning, such as sometimes unsatisfactory student achievement levels, lack of student motivation, overcrowded curriculum. Tertiary education has relied for many years on offering LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) courses for students, where the content for language learning is taken from their field of study, i.e. business, law or sciences or is based on developing academic skills. However, it seems that innovative ideas are needed to adapt this kind of teaching to the challenges of the 21st century and apply interdisciplinary curriculum development approaches to designing integrated courses. The article is based on the literature analysis and a survey conducted at ISM (University of Management and Economics) in order to find out students' attitude to using problem-based tasks in their language classes, i.e. introduction of integrated content and language learning into their studies. The article analyses key dimensions of both LSP and CLIL by looking at main similarities and differences of both approaches and identifies the main aspects that can enrich traditional tertiary level language classes.

Key words: *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), integrated curriculum, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), tertiary education, problem-based learning.*

Introduction

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has been known and applied in the EU for more than a decade, as definitions of the approach that have later become adopted and used first were coined in 1994-1996 by D. Marsh and G. Lange. Although many of the principles that CLIL is build on are not new, they have been adapted to a new political, social and economic situation in Europe.

CLIL as an educational approach expressing EU multilingual and plurilingual educational policies gets a firmer and firmer stand in secondary education both as means of providing more opportunities for language learning and teaching and at the same time developing subject knowledge. CLIL encompasses most of the features that 'good', modern education contains, namely, active learning and teaching methods, use of authentic tasks and materials, student-centeredness, focus on project work and task-based learning (Mehisto, Marsh, Frigols, 2008). It reflects constructivist learning philosophy according to which learning is constructed by learners while working co-operatively in groups and is also manifestation of holistic education philosophy which advocates for integrating the learning process and not breaking or fragmenting it into different subjects and skills (Miller, 2007). It reflects a move towards integrating subjects and skills on different levels. "CLIL is an educational response to the knowledge and skills of increasingly 'integrated' world and is thus increasingly

viewed as a modern form of educational delivery" (Marsh, 2006).

M. Drake (2004) distinguished three levels of curriculum integration. In case of *multidisciplinary* integration, the same topic of the curriculum is presented from a different subject perspective, in *interdisciplinary* integration, integration occurs not only at the topic level, but it integrates interdisciplinary skills, such as literacy, cognition, research. In case of *trans-disciplinary* integration, curriculum is based on the issues raised by the learners and integration occurs in the real life context (negotiated or task-based curriculum).

CLIL, as an approach integrating language and content, is an example of a higher level interdisciplinary integration and often includes elements of transdisciplinary integration. CLIL is based on the integration of four main principles: cognition, community, communication and culture (Coyle, Hood, Marsh, 2010) or content, communication, cognition and culture (Coyle, 1999). It focuses on the message (topic, content), medium (language) and social interaction with others. The change of language according to its promoters, acts as catalyst for cognition.

As education in its all sectors moves towards integration, the **problem** current article addresses is whether higher degree of integration of subject content into language classes can produce the same level of synergy, i.e. enhance student motivation and acquisition of both content and language in

higher education (HE) as it does in primary and secondary sectors.

The purpose of the current article is to examine the relevance of some of the CLIL principles for tertiary education. If CLIL enhances student motivation to learn languages in secondary sector, can it also offer anything for the tertiary sector, although some of the scholars and researchers claim that CLIL is primarily the approach most successfully applicable at the secondary level.

The **aims** of the article are:

1. to analyse the content issue of language teaching in HE
2. to compare the main similarities and differences of LSP and CLIL
3. to describe students' response the project based learning and their self-evaluation of the learning outcomes

The **research methods** used were analysis of literature and a survey.

Literature Overview

In terms of educational sectors, CLIL research has so far focused mainly on secondary and primary education. There is a number of articles in the area of applied linguistics, focusing on CLIL students' literacy skills development and attitudes to language learning (Merisuo-Storm, 2007), quantitative research into language and content acquisition by CLIL and non-CLIL students (Lasagabaster, 2009), development of communicative competences in CLIL and non-CLIL classroom (Dalton-Puffer, 2008), benefits of CLIL for learning, such as boost of risk-taking and creativity, enhanced problem-solving skills, huge effect on receptive skills and vocabulary learning, as well as emotive/affective outcomes (Dalton-Puffer, 2008). Stohler's (2006) research on language and content acquisition showed that there was no difference in the degree of content knowledge among L1 and L2 learners, which raises a question why such a difference does not exist as it is commonly assumed that learning in a foreign language is more difficult.

When it comes to foreign language tuition at tertiary level education, there is numerous research into LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) and LAP (Language for Academic Purposes) approaches on different issues, as this field has a long-lasting tradition in higher education. However, research related to CLIL in tertiary sector is not ample. Firstly, there is no one opinion about what CLIL means with reference to tertiary level on the one hand, or it is defined in different ways on the other. Secondly, there is no clear answer whether LSP approach can be classified as CLIL (Tudor, 2008).

The term CLIL with reference to HE is used to mean two different things: on the one hand it is used as an umbrella term to include LSP, sheltered instruction, adjunct model which share the use of content to teach language or provide language support for courses that run parallel to content courses (Snow, Brinton, 1997, Coyle, Hood, Marsh, 2010). On the other hand, it is used to define teaching subjects in foreign languages where language support is provided

simultaneously (Hellekjaer, 2001) or what D. Marsh calls "language embedded content learning with dual objectives". The third option is the provision of subjects teaching in foreign language without any language support or language sensitive teaching methodologies. This kind of teaching is provided at some universities; however it cannot be classified as CLIL because language sensitive methodologies are not applied and language learning objectives are not consciously pursued (Coyle, Hood, Marsh, 2010). According to Costa (2009), who analysed the state-of-the-art in CLIL in HE and overviewed the situation in Europe, the number of English-taught programmes has tripled since 2002.

Among other advantages of CLIL, motivational value of it for tertiary education was mentioned by Tudor (2008). He sees CLIL as valid and potentially productive language learning strategy. Students of non-linguistic disciplines might not be motivated to learn languages; however ability to study their discipline in L2 can be an important motivational factor. Another potential benefit of CLIL relates to the nature of the communicative interaction to which it gives rise, i.e. creating learning activities which generate genuine need and desire to communicate via L2. Other scholars mention the value of CLIL for motivating students who feel they already "know English" (Groth, 2005) or classrooms of learners with diverse levels of linguistic competence (Marsh, 2006). However, there is little research into gains of CLIL to higher education.

What concerns CLIL in HE in Lithuania, Liubinienė (2010) has stressed the importance of integrating content and language at tertiary level and presented a case study of CLIL at KTU. According to the author, although CLIL in HE does increase motivation and development of all language skills, the main issue is CLIL teachers who should be competent in both content and language knowledge. Liubinienė (2009) has also studied the development of listening skills in CLIL classroom in HE and concluded that the development of listening skills is enhanced by simultaneous development of cognitive skills.

The Issue of Content in Language Teaching in Tertiary Education

The lack of student motivation in learning languages at tertiary level may be explained from the content perspective. First of all, although a number of teachers in Lithuania believe that students at tertiary level should receive general foreign language tuition (GL) (Thomas, 2005), from the content point of view the majority of typical topics, whether linguistic (grammar, functions, etc.) or content-based (e.g. traveling or global warming), have already been taught at secondary level which leads to a lot of content repetition and consequently lack of motivation.

The issue of content is different in LSP, where content from the learners' field of study is used for developing linguistic competences of the learners. However, a key consideration is what the basis for the content selection is as the subject (non-linguistic) curriculum usually includes a number of different, specific topics. Traditionally, in LSP the content is determined by performing needs analysis (Hutchinson, Waters, 1987).

One of the issues here is that the ‘needs’ of pre-experienced learners, i.e. students, are more assumed than really experienced. What teachers and faculty administration think are the needs might not be what the learners themselves think. The content can be determined by the students themselves, but then there will be lack of consistent and thorough, in-depth study of the subject which is offered by CLIL. The choice of topics to be followed in LSP curriculum is often random, determined by the teacher’s own interest. Some of the content in both GL and LSP is used to illustrate certain language points. In LSP the content is often not ‘new’ and already known in the first language, it is cognitively less demanding and consequently less challenging and motivating.

LAP courses, focused on the development of academic skills, also rely on the content from different non-linguistic subjects. The majority of LAP course books include topics from a range of academic/ university subjects, which are of quite a general nature. They might not be motivating enough for the students of one particular subject.

In contrast, CLIL bases its courses on the subject curriculum, so the content is new, relevant and cognitively challenging. No repetition of anything students already know is appropriate.

CLIL vs. LSP

CLIL and LSP share a number of key features, such as the use of content from different non-linguistic subjects, development of academic and communication skills, use of communicative language teaching methodology. However, there are some key differences in these two approaches, and one of them is objectives and learning outcomes. CLIL clearly states that content learning objectives are equally or even more important than language learning objectives whereas LSP is language-led and language learning objectives are of primary importance.

Another key aspect that both approaches share is the language (L2), but it is approached in a completely different way. In LSP, language is both the content of the course and the means of learning content, it is often adapted to the learners’ proficiency level or rather the learners are often grouped according to their language proficiency levels. In CLIL, it is advised to use ‘scaffolding’ strategies to make content more manageable without really adapting it. In CLIL language is viewed as a means and is not a goal in itself, which means it is learned when needed and not, as in more traditional approaches, LSP among them, when language content leads towards the choice of content topics. In CLIL learning strategies are employed to provide language support for content acquisition.

More tolerance to language usage, more support for language production, enabling learners to acquire language in such a way is one of the key principles of CLIL as opposed to traditional language teaching. CLIL also tolerates more use of L1, code-switching strategies.

One more key difference is teachers. An ideal CLIL teacher is a subject specialist with appropriate language proficiency level. Sometimes in CLIL tandem teaching of content and

subjects specialists is used. A typical LSP teacher is a language teacher who does not take on the responsibility for teaching subject content as it is beyond their competence because of high cognitive demands of subjects in higher education. One of the ways of solving the “content” issue for the language specialists in HE is to rely more on project or problem based teaching and to co-operate with subject specialists.

Case study is an example of problem-based teaching which follows the main principles of CLIL methodology defined by Mehisto, Marsh, Frigols (2008) and can be qualified as CLIL type way of teaching. The main principles include:

1. *Authenticity*. It is an authentic case from the real world, students take on roles of authentic business world (company owners and consultants), the case analysis follows ‘real worlds’ situation.
2. *Multiple focus*. The main focus in a case study is on: 1) content understanding and analysis (development of cognitive skills through the analysis of the case content, choice of relevant information for the question assigned); 2) group work and inter-personal communication; 3) presentation and discussion skills; 4) language (L2) skills; 5) learning to learn skills (time management, group work, information management); 6) ICT skills for information search and presentation preparation.
3. *Active learning*. The learners are actively involved both at the preparation and presentation stages; they are at the centre of the project taking all responsibility for the running of the whole case. They are also responsible for the development of criteria for peer evaluation and then evaluating their colleagues.
4. *Safe learning environment* is created by familiar classroom setting and peer participation, followed by self and peer evaluation.
5. *Scaffolding*. Consultations with the teacher and colleagues, all class discussion of the case prior to assigning the tasks, vocabulary clarification and understanding are conducted before the project discussion in class. There are also ample opportunities for the students to clarify any difficulties with peers, as the project is extended over several weeks in time, so that sufficient time is devoted to the preparation stage.

A case study provides ample opportunities to develop and integrate skills, knowledge and attitudes, i.e. develop learners’ competences (Coyle, Hood, Marsh, 2010).

Survey Results

All in all one hundred and three questionnaires were returned by ISM University of Management and Economics first year students of Management and Business Administration and Economics from three academic years (2006, 2008 and 2010). The size of the sample was 120 students who received questionnaires at the end of corresponding term. The students followed Business English course and worked on the case-study as one of the term assignments. The students’ language

proficiency level ranged from low intermediate (B1) to upper intermediate (B2) with some advanced (C1) level students, according to CEFR.

The survey was conducted in order to find out students' evaluation of the case-study project in terms of general interest and motivation in general, and more specifically concerning their achievement in terms of language and content acquisition and interdisciplinary skills development. The questionnaire included nine statements where students had to indicate the degree of their agreement or disagreement with them on the scale from 1 to 5.

The table below sums-up the percentage of students' responses to the questions.

Table 1. Findings of ISM student survey, %.

FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Mark your opinion by choosing one number from 1 to 5, where:

1 — strongly agree, 2 — agree, 3 — have no opinion, 4 — disagree, 5 — strongly disagree.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. The project was interesting	39.8	42.7	10.6	6.7	0.9
2. I gained knowledge in business	20.3	51.4	22.3	7.7	0
3. I gained English language knowledge/ developed skills in Reading	23.3	42.7	20.3	8.7	5.8
4. I gained English language knowledge/ developed skills in Vocabulary	34.9	45.6	8.7	10.6	1.9
5. I gained English language knowledge/ developed skills in Grammar	1.9	30	31	26.2	9.7
6. I gained English language knowledge/ developed skills in Speaking	43.6	33	12.6	1.9	5.8
7. I developed inter-personal skills	17.4	45.6	28.1	8.7	0
8. I learned to work in groups	33	33.9	13.5	7.7	3.8
9. It was a difficult task	11.6	30	20.3	30	5.8
10. It was a creative task	31	45.6	20.3	2.9	2.9
11. I think the evaluation was fair	34.9	32	19.4	7.7	4.8
12. I would like to have similar assignment in the future	32	36.8	22.3	2.9	4.8
13. Comments					

Motivation. As can be seen from the table, the majority of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the project was interesting. Almost similar trend can be seen in the answer to the question about having similar projects in the future, although the percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed is slightly lower. A bigger number of students

were not sure whether they would like to have similar projects in the future. The reason could be that they thought that they had already learned to do such tasks. It shows that the assignment was motivating and found useful by more than half of all the students questioned.

Content acquisition. Although the project was included in the language curriculum, even 20 % of students strongly agreed and 51 % agreed that they gained knowledge in business while doing the project. Only 7 % disagreed and nobody strongly disagreed with the statement. This clearly demonstrates that the students perceived the task as contributing to their subject knowledge acquisition.

In the comments section of the questionnaire the two above aspects of the case study project were further supported by student comments on the assignment as being very interesting and useful for developing business knowledge, doing “real” business task, learning more about business from language classes than from subject classes.

Language acquisition. What concerns language learning, the question was further broken into more specific language areas such as reading and speaking skills, development of vocabulary and grammar. Writing and listening were excluded from the questionnaire as listening was developed only during the in-class work, and there were no specific writing tasks assigned for those particular groups of students. It was assumed that students mostly used Lithuanian language in the preparation stages while working in groups, except that their presentations were prepared and later delivered in English. What concerns grammar, the question was included although there were no references to grammar anywhere during the project.

In the students' opinion, the language areas that they mostly developed were vocabulary (79 % strongly agreed or agreed) and speaking (76 % strongly agreed or agreed). Many of them also felt that they had developed reading skills (66 % strongly agreed and agreed). The proportion of students who claimed that they learned grammar distributed quite equally: about 31 % agreed, 31 % had no opinion and 36 % disagreed with the statement about learning grammar.

Level of difficulty. Roughly one third of the students considered the task not really difficult. The perception of the level of difficulty really distributed almost equally throughout the scale, having almost same numbers of those who agreed and disagreed with the statement. However it is difficult to evaluate what exactly students meant by being difficult: either the comprehension of the text which indeed was not very demanding, or the task itself, i.e. identifying problems and mistakes in company's performance and then coming up with solutions for the problems. From the teacher's perspective, students' performance was definitely related to their academic achievement in general and language proficiency level in particular. The students with lower academic levels based their tasks on lower order skills, such as reproducing, remembering the information while academically more advanced students presented deeper analysis, gave more and

stronger arguments for their opinions and suggestions. It should also be pointed out that such projects provide excellent opportunities for peer learning and teaching both during the preparation stage and class performance.

Creativity. 31 % of students strongly agreed and 45 % agreed with the statement, 20 % did not have an opinion, whereas 3 % and 2 % respectively either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. In students' opinion the task required to creatively apply the knowledge and skills gained in both content and language classes.

Communicative skills development. Two of the questions referred to the development of communication skill, namely interpersonal communication and working in groups. 17 % of students strongly agreed, 45 % agreed, 28 % had no opinion and only 8 % disagreed with the statement that the assignment developed inter-personal communication skills. There were no students who would strongly disagree with the above statement. What concerns learning to work in groups, 33 % students strongly agreed, 34 % agreed, 13 % had no opinion, 7 % disagreed and 3 % strongly disagreed with the statement.

Evaluation. The last question related to evaluation. 34 % strongly agreed that it was fair and 32 % agreed with it. 19 % had no opinion, 7 % disagreed and only 4 % strongly disagreed. Each groups' performance was assessed on the basis of the criteria prepared by the learners themselves and related to the analysis of the problems and solutions (content), presentation skills and group work (communication), clear and appropriate use of language (language). Interestingly, the majority of students were of the opinion that their peers assessed their performance appropriately.

Conclusions

Despite a number of shared features, LSP can only be classified as CLIL to a certain extent, as it does not pursue content learning objectives to the same extent as CLIL does.

CLIL has definitely a lot to offer at university level. Traditional LSP programmes can be enriched by case studies or other content-based or problem-based assignments that focus on both content and language and follow the majority of CLIL methodology principles.

As in secondary education, CLIL type teaching in higher education increases learner motivation, contributing to both cognitively more demanding content and language learning and communicative skills development. It enables learners to perform to the level of their linguistic and academic competence.

Student empowerment and involvement in the criteria-based assessment proved to be motivating and perceived as fair by the majority of the students.

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IDUKM aukštajame moksle: ar yra ką pasiūlyti?

Santrauka

IDUKM (integruotas užsienio kalbos ir dalyko mokymas), kaip ES kalbų mokymo politiką atspindintis mokymo metodas, yra vis plačiau taikomas pradiniam ir viduriniame mokymo etape. Tyrejai išskiria daug šio metodo privalumų, pavyzdžiui, padidėjusią besimokančiųjų motyvaciją, palankesnę požiūrį į kalbų

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mokymąsi, geresnį turinio (ne kalbinio dalyko) ir kalbos išmokimą. Aukštajame moksle IDUKM samprata skiriasi. Vieni autoriai tokį mokymą supranta kaip „skėtinį“, apimantį ir specialiosios kalbos mokymą, taikomą aukštajame moksle jau eilę metų. Tačiau nuo IDUKM jis skiriasi pirmiausia tuo, kad, mokant specialiosios kalbos, nėra keliami turinio išmokimo tikslai ir turinio žinios nėra vertinamos. Straipsnyje apžvelgiami IDUKM mokymo pagrindiniai metodiniai principai ir galimybės šiais principais paremtas užduotis taikyti aukštajame moksle. Straipsnyje lyginami specialiosios ar profesinės kalbos mokymas bei IDUKM, analizuojama kalbos mokymo programų turinio problema aukštosiose mokyklose, bei galimybės jį praturtinti atvejų analizės metodu, projektais ar problemų sprendimu grįstą mokymą. Straipsnyje pabrėžiama turinio svarba motyvuojant studentus mokytis kalbų. ISM Vadybos ir ekonomikos universiteto pirmo kurso studentų apklausos rezultatai parodė, kad užduotim ar problema pagrįstas mokymas studentų vertinimu yra įdomus ir motyvuojantis, padeda įsisavinti tiek nekalbinio dalyko turinį, tiek lavinti visus kalbos mokėjimo įgūdžius — skaitymo, klausymo, kalbėjimo, turtina žodyną. Tuo pačiu metu ugdomi komunikaciniai, darbo grupėse įgūdžiai, studentų mąstymas bei kūrybiškumas. IDUKM metodo privalumai gali praturtinti kalbų mokymą aukštajame moksle. Užduotys, kuriose kalba yra vartojama tik kaip įrankis turinio mokymuisi, motyvuoja studentus ir yra jiems patrauklios.

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