

UDC 378.147:81'243

## THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CLIL

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**Introduction.** The XXI century is a time of innovations. Modern social and economic tendencies have placed higher demands on tertiary education, especially on linguistic education. That is why the First President of Kazakhstan has constantly focused on the implementation of innovative methods and technologies in the education process, as well as paid particular attention to the study of languages by young people of Kazakhstan.

In a highly integrated world integrated methods of learning have become more and more incentive. As a result, one of the modern innovations in the field of educational technologies CLIL-technology – is becoming more popular all over the world recently.

David Marsh introduced the acronym CLIL in 1994. CLIL has established itself as an umbrella term for any teaching context in which at least part of the instruction is given in another language than the L1 of the learners. An essential unit of analysis for measuring learning effectiveness in CLIL is an integration between subject and language. CLIL has been metaphorically equated to language ‘immersion,’ the argument being that “CLIL itself is one huge task which ensures the use of the foreign language for ‘authentic communication’” [1:3]. With CLIL, there is potential for programmes to not simply use a second language to learn but rather to consider shifting paradigms by moving from learning in a language to learning through language. Learning through language puts the learner in a completely various place in terms of content and language: it affords space for learners to create their own language and develop their own thoughts [2:54]. The content part of CLIL at university focuses mostly on the teaching of a discipline. Sources of knowledge in higher education CLIL are diversified and “learners are confronted with a body of knowledge in a discipline, which is by and large accepted, but not unchallenged, by the members of the disciplinary community”. [3:1]. The tutor is not the single provider of knowledge (as occurs in elementary and secondary education). The student may work independently or rely on the teacher as expert to provide scaffolding through modelling (e.g., the expert goes over the steps needed to complete a given

procedure in order that the learner may ‘envision’ and replicate it independently), exemplification or instruction (the expert provides quality teaching for quality learning). The learner is, in any case, always highly engaged in the learning processes. The language needed to support this type of teaching in CLIL requires making particular pedagogical choices. CLIL approaches language from a triple perspective. It focuses on the language needed to learn about the subject, or “the language of learning”. It also focuses on the language needed to function in settings in which the CLIL language is used, or “the language for learning”. In addition, it focuses on the language needed to think about the subjects or topics and articulate concepts and principles, or “the language through learning”. This triple language perspective entails learning the body of knowledge of the subject, explaining, analysing and elaborating it and using the language repertoire to create new ways of expressing disciplinary knowledge in the foreign language [2:37].

**Methodology.** The methodological integration of language and content is among the key challenges CLIL is called to address. As with other methods that have preceded it, CLIL is in no way perfect. This new methodology raises different kinds of concerns. CLIL educators are concerned about the ‘quality’ of the learning process where content is taught in L2. There is uncertainty about how much content and how much language should be taught. Questions arise regarding to which extent content and language affect one another and how much ‘coverage’ and ‘depth’ is considered appropriate, i.e., how much content and how much language should be taught. CLIL methodology is about teaching content and engaging in cognitively intense activities. The scientist Coyle point out that “for content learning to be effective learning, students must be cognitively engaged.” This type of engagement has its complexities. It involves making students aware of “metacognitive skills” (i.e., learning to learn) which in universities may include working in groups collaboratively, setting up question-answer sessions (e.g., Socratic dialogue) about legal-academic issues or developing problem-solving skills in simulated trials. The issue the author raises is whether learners are able to engage, and if so in which way, when learning a subject in a foreign language as medium of instruction, if they do not know ‘how’ to use the language in the first place. The essence of the point made is that “ignoring progressive language learning in a CLIL setting is ignoring the fundamental role played by language in the learning process”. The risk of language teaching neglect is, for low proficiency students in particular, the risk of early fossilization.

In CLIL programme, learners’ FL and so on is the language of instruction of each and any subject. CLIL requires the collaboration among school staff especially content teachers (subject teachers) and language teachers (English teachers). Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols explain that content teachers teaching content e.g. Economics, Philosophy, Art, Business, Law, Psychology etc. in CLIL educational process play a role in supporting their students in understanding a particular part of language awareness necessary for becoming skillful in the learning content. Language teachers do not only teach the language, in accordance with the school curriculum but they also help their learners obtain language essential to effectively learning the content.

Coyle, Hood and Marsh state that the attention in the CLIL programme is driven by different ‘language-supportive methodologies. They propose that these different ‘language-support methodologies’ belong to the concept of the ‘Language Triptych’ which comprises ‘language of learning’, ‘language for learning’ and ‘language through learning’ (Figure 1).

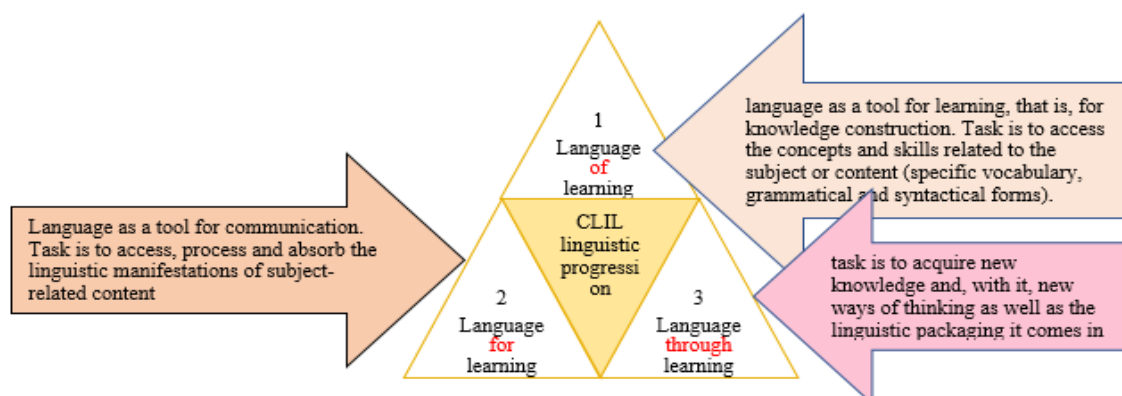


Figure 1. The Language Triptych by Coyle, Hood and Marsh [3:36].

According to this model, the language used in the classroom serves three purposes. Firstly, it allows learners to access the concepts and skills related to the subject or content. Second aspect of language aims to enable learners to learn the subjects through additional language and to discuss, dispute, as well as ask questions relevant to the subjects by using additional language [3:107]. The third perspective on language in CLIL relates to capture learners' language problems, address the emerging problems of language in the learning situation and readdress them for further language development. As they communicate with the teacher and with each other, they use both familiar linguistic material and new language they were exposed to during the input process. Unlike the two discussed, this third type of language use is unplanned, spontaneous and emerges in situ. [3:38].

In October 2018 and March 2019 I piloted a small-scale questionnaire-based survey focused on CLIL methodology. The object of the study is one particular department at one particular university in the Kazakhstan. Data were collected by means of an online survey which was administered to staff and students. The survey was created using the free online software SurveyMonkey and deliberately kept rather short to increase the likelihood of being completed by busy educators and students and thus increase the response rate. The online survey was designed to determine the status of CLIL in Higher Education, that is, how widespread integrating content and language is in Kazakhstani undergraduate programmes. The survey was attended by 10 University teachers and 62 students.

This first group of informants – educators– was selected in order to provide information regarding the first of the two core research questions of this study, namely to determine the extent of L2-taught content provision in polylingual undergraduate programmes in the Kazakhstan and to investigate how certain institutional parameters influence the introduction of such CLIL-type provision in undergraduate modern language programmes in Kazakhstani Higher Education.

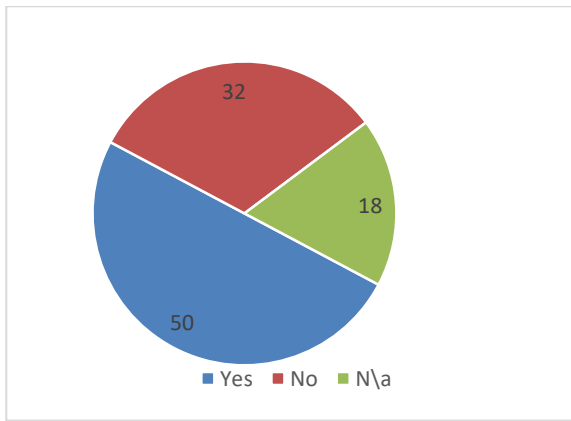


Figure 2. Respondents' answers to the second question "Have you ever encountered the term CLIL?"

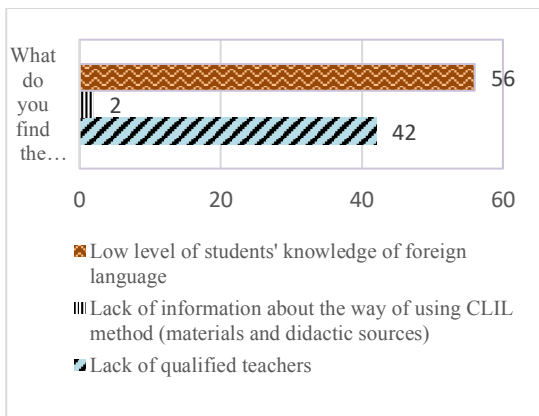


Figure 3. Respondents' answers to the third question.

Concerning first question my aim was to learn if the respondent teachers had ever heard the abbreviation of the method's name. The research shows that most of teachers (50%) are aware of the meaning of the term CLIL as it is apparent from the diagram below. The negative responses to the question surprised me a lot – 30,2%. There could be many factors that might have influenced the teachers' responses to the question. Age and teaching experience of the respondent teachers, the lack information about meaning and using the method could be some of the teachers' view on the CLIL approach. Moving on to question 2, the data reveals that difficulties could make the implementation of the CLIL approach impossible: Where 56% of respondents find the low level of students' knowledge of foreign language as the most frequent reason. As you can see from diagram 42 % of the teachers suppose that the lack of qualified teachers would be problematic during the implementation of the method. And only 2 % of teachers find the lack of information about the way of using the CLIL method. The second half of the survey relates directly to L2-content teaching. Overall, 50%, or 5 of 10 respondents, reported that some content modules in their polylingual programmes are taught in English. I assumed that the low level of students' knowledge of a FL (56%) would be the most frequent reason and the second one would be an insufficient teachers' knowledge of a FL (45%). Ultimately, their findings make them doubt the "predictive validity of A level English grades for entry level language proficiency and language progress rates" (See figure 4).

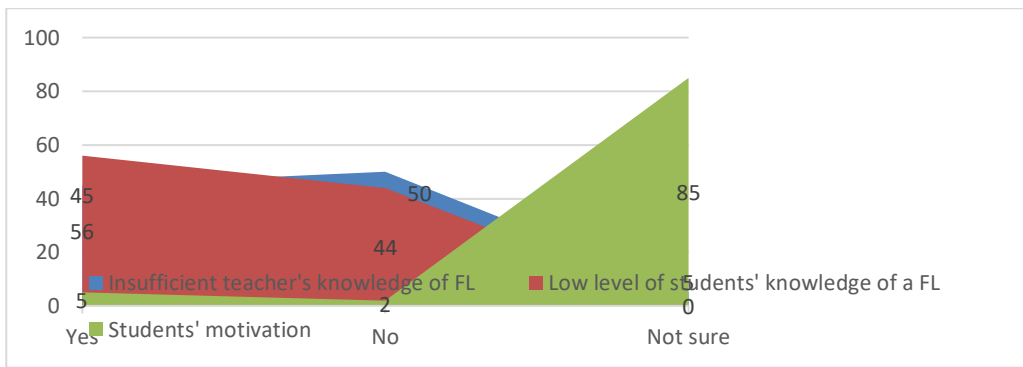


Figure 4. Respondents' answers to the 7th question “What are the most common reasons why teachers do not use a foreign language in teaching disciplines?”

Moving on to the question 8 (‘Please indicate the type of content taught through the L2). Regarding the type of content taught in English, the most common modules concern politics (66%), followed by literature (60%), engineering (55%) and history (42%). Less frequently taught in the L2 are pedagogics (38%), economics (32%), and linguistics (29%). In addition, in the rubric ‘Other’, respondents also mentioned psychology and business.

The second source of primary data were the undergraduate students. The questionnaires were administered at different times during the teaching term to allow a comparison between student opinions at the beginning of their exposure to L2-medium instruction early in the teaching term (week 3 of teaching term 1/ 2018) and again towards the end of the teaching term (Week 9 of teaching term 2/ 2019) where the module stretched over both teaching terms, once they had experienced L2-content teaching over a longer period of time.

As outlined above, two versions of the questionnaire were administered allow a comparison between student opinions at the beginning of their exposure to L2-medium instruction early in the teaching term and again towards the end of the teaching term in order to compare results across time. This mainly concerned the information about the amount and purpose of L1 (Russian\Kazakh) used in the L2 (English) classroom, looks at the language use of students and instructors and at students’ attitude towards the use of the target language in the content classroom in general and what they perceived to be the benefits and challenges of such an approach. The hypothesis was that what the students reported at the beginning of the term might be subject to change after having experienced CLIL in the classroom. However, as we are interested in how undergraduate students deal with teaching and learning exclusively in the target language, it stands to reason that any prior experience with working in an L2-only environment will ease the transition to a CLIL university context. Two questions in 1<sup>st</sup> version of questionnaires concern the students’ knowledge of the CLIL approach and polylingual education. Question 1 asks: Did you come across the concept of the CLIL approach when you investigated this university as a potential university? Despite these efforts, only 15% of students say that they came across the CLIL approach when choosing their university. The student questionnaire concerns language use in the CLIL classroom, specifically the students’ attitude towards the use of L1 and L2 in the classroom. Overall, the results are largely positive; students feel well-prepared for attending classes. Question 5- concern students’ opinions regarding the use of English in the classroom for different purposes: As the data shows, students have a generally positive attitude towards the use of English in the classroom. For example, 70% agree that increased use of English will improve ease of communication. In questions 6 -7, students indicated (67%) whether they believed that educator and learners should always use L1 to discuss grammar and usage of English. However, what is beneficial is not necessary easy: Perhaps not surprisingly, 67% of students agree with this statement in Q 6-7: I believe that sometimes it makes things easier to use L1, even if it would be more beneficial to use English all the time (See figure 5):

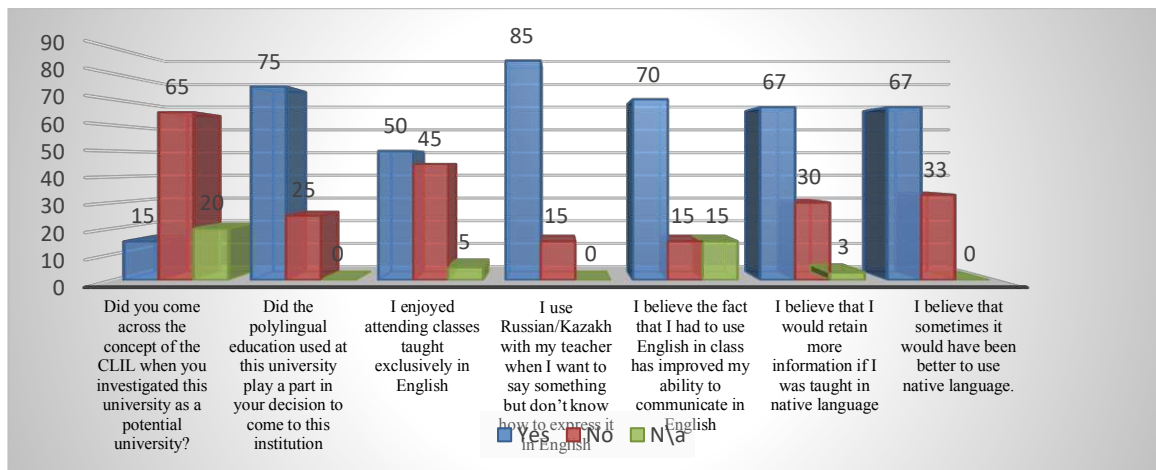


Figure 5. The students' answers to the 1<sup>st</sup> version of questionnaire.

In the second survey, students' opinions changed to the Q 3-7. The students' attitude towards the use of L2 in the classroom. In Q3, answer Yes increased from 50 % to 85 %. Students feel well-prepared for attending classes, and they feel that educators make their expectations about the use of English in class clear. They also largely agree that the fact that English is spoken throughout all classes makes it easier to communicate in English. The strongest negative results come with questions 6-7 (I believe that I would retain more information if I was taught in L1), comparing with the answers of the first questionnaire answer "Yes" reduced from 67% to 10%. By this time, the students had actually been involved in the CLIL process as active participants, and some may have found the experience slightly more challenging than others. In general, these numbers are encouraging – the students seem willing to engage in the CLIL process and seem to see the benefits of studying in an L2-only environment. To the questionnaire was added new question 8 which is asked students to agree or disagree with the following statement: I believe that, without the CLIL approach, my language skills would not have improved as significantly as they have. The results were very positive, with 87% in agreement. It appears that the majority of students personally experience L2-medium instruction as a benefit

**Conclusion.** This study has shown that the majority of staff has some background in language pedagogy, but none of them have any formal training in CLIL pedagogy, except what they have learned on the job. According to the studied material, we see that not all content-teachers speak a foreign language at the level of C1\ C2 for teaching to undergraduate students. The survey was attended by students of the 2018-2019 academic year, who for the first time this year entered the multilingual groups where the training takes place in English, according to the trilingual education program. According to the survey in the first months of study, students experienced difficulties, namely the study of subjects in a foreign language. But in the second semester, their language skills improved and they became motivated. This means that, beyond general issues involved when transitioning from secondary to tertiary education, students will also have to adapt to target-language-only teaching in both language and content modules, a process which needs to be facilitated by instructors in Year 1 language and content modules.

### Literature

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