

Assessing the capabilities of CLIL technology in development students' foreign language professional skills

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ABSTRACT

The present literature is devoted to the development of foreign language professional communicative capabilities of learners in the framework of content and language incorporated learning. The article is aimed at analyzing the effectiveness of using an integrated approach in foreign language professional training. Empirical research was conducted, involving international relations specialty students. The results derived in the interrogative and evaluation of the level of motivation and foreign language knowledge and skills of learners before and after experimental teaching were systematized. The results of testing students on the determining of their foreign language professional knowledge and skills before and after experimental teaching revealed the efficiency of the use of problem-based methods in the framework of CLIL technology. The positive impact of the given methods applying is also reflected in the students' motivation increase to the discipline "Professionally-oriented foreign language", which is confirmed by the final students' questioning. The analysis of the conducted research results made it possible to identify peculiarities of the CLIL technology used for shaping foreign language professional competence of international relations specialty students.

Keywords: Integrated approach, Professionally-oriented foreign language, Foreign language competence, Efficiency, CLIL technology

Introduction

At present time, education is the main priority in the development of our country. Modernization of the content of education is reflected in our country the Republic of Kazakhstan at the State Program for the Development of Education and Science for 2020-2025, which aims to grow the international competitiveness of Kazakhstani education and science [1].

According to S.S.Kunanbayeva, a foreign language acquires the status of an instrument for the formation of the intellectual

potential of modern society, which is becoming one of the main resources for the development of a new state [2].

Therefore, for developing the foreign language communicative competence of our students it is necessary to use innovative methods and technologies in teaching a foreign language at university.

One of the innovative pedagogical technologies that meet the requirements of integrated foreign language and core disciplines teaching is CLIL technology (Content and Language Integrated Learning - subject and language integrated learning). English is considered the most widely applied target language for CLIL in Europe [3].

At present time, CLIL is used in Europe and some Asian countries. CLIL is based mainly on the Canadian language proficiency program that began in the mid-1960s. S.D.Krashen emphasized, that Canadian immersion is the most successful program in the professional language-teaching literature [4].

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In recent decades, educational programs have been preparing students for jobs, careers, and a set of skills that are necessary for our contemporary society [5].

In the work "A CLIL Approach: Evolution and Current Situation in Europe and Spain" the researchers note that CLIL will become the future methodology in teaching a foreign language [6].

Nowadays, CLIL "responds to the needs of globalization and uses lingua franca as a means of communication within multinational communities" [7]. Consequently, content and language integrated learning increases motivation develops students' cognitive knowledge and critical thinking, promotes effective learning outcomes; and encourages real-life use of a language in a multicultural environment.

The majority of foreign researchers point to the authenticity of the content of CLIL that provides engagement of students and drives their learning experience [8, 9].

Literature review

One of the developers of CLIL technology, British Professor of Pedagogy Do Coyle, connects this technology with the internationalization of education and penetration of the English language into the educational system worldwide [10].

Despite the abundance of scientific views on CLIL technology, the researchers support the Finnish scientist David Marsh that a foreign language in such training acts as a tool for studying the content of a non-linguistic subject, a profile (core) discipline. According to D. Marsh, the use of content and language integrated learning focuses on the achievement of two goals: simultaneously learning a foreign language and academic discipline [11].

I.Fitriani investigates the CLIL practice in the Indonesian higher education context. The researcher examines the students' attitude toward CLIL implementation and its effect on their foreign language competence. Students state that this technology is interesting, challenging, improving vocabulary, and motivating [12]. The data of the qualitative study were collected using questionnaires and interviews. The findings of the study are intended for evaluating CLIL for further analysis.

Dalton-Puffer and other scholars argue that the term CLIL "has acquired some characteristics of a brand name, complete with the symbolic capital of positive description: innovative, modern, effective, efficient and forward-looking" [13].

At present time, CLIL technology takes place in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. In the study "How effective is the assessment component of a customized CLIL program?" the researcher investigates the content and language integrated learning in English as a foreign language program. The results indicate that the university students and English language teachers in Turkey developed a positive attitude to the assessment component of content and language integrated learning [14].

According to W. Yang, literature done on the application of CLIL in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China has affirmed that CLIL can be a practical choice to the traditional ELT approaches for accommodating students' subject knowledge and linguistic

competence [15]. In Asian settings, the CLIL approach has achieved good teaching efficacy. To support students' learning teachers use scaffolding in English classes because academic language can be difficult to acquire. Based on the findings of the scaffolding research CLIL teachers use several approaches [16].

In the paper "Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): Compatibility of a European Model of Education to Japanese Higher Education" K.Tanaka emphasizes that "CLIL serves as an excellent approach to teaching both content and English..." [17]. In the study, the author describes an English language course as a platform for preparing students to develop "the 21st Century Skills and Global Competence" [17].

Western scholars note, that the results of the carried out experiment show that "CLIL programs studied did generally provide an inspiring learning environment for the select group of the most motivated and confident EFL learners" [18]. Students from Netherlands, Italy, and Germany participated in the experiment.

M.R.Francomacaro points out, that "CLIL welcomes any procedure or method which proves to be effective in achieving the primary goal: enabling students to grasp content through a foreign language" [19].

The two-sided nature of CLIL is highlighted in defining it as an innovative combination of existing methods for the joint teaching of a language and a non-language subject" [20].

The present study aims to assess the effectiveness of an integrated approach to teaching a professionally-oriented foreign language to students majoring in "International relations".

Materials and Methods

In our study to investigate the effectiveness of the integrated approach, we used empirical methods: interviewing and monitoring.

The experiment was carried out using CLIL technology. During the pedagogical experiment, pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire were completed.

Results and Discussion

The given article focuses its attention mainly on the teaching content of practical classes on the discipline "Professionally-oriented English language" in the framework of CLIL technology, involves the improvement of foreign language knowledge and skills of students in all types of speech activities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The experiment was conducted during the semester in the academic year 2019-2020. Twenty-five second-year students of the "International Relations" specialty of Karaganda University took part in the pedagogical experiment. The experiment included three stages: diagnostic stage, experimental teaching, and final stage. At the diagnostic stage of the experiment the testing of students of the specialty "International relations" was carried out to determine the level of students' foreign language skills. When assessing the English language proficiency of

students, we used the criteria for evaluating foreign language knowledge according to the common European assessment scale [21].

The results of the initial testing indicate not a high level of English proficiency of students of the specialty "International relations": 37,1% of students had A2 level, 43,5% had B1 level of proficiency, and only 19,4% of students showed B2 level of English proficiency, there were no C1 level students. The results of the testing are shown in the diagram given below (**Figure 1**).

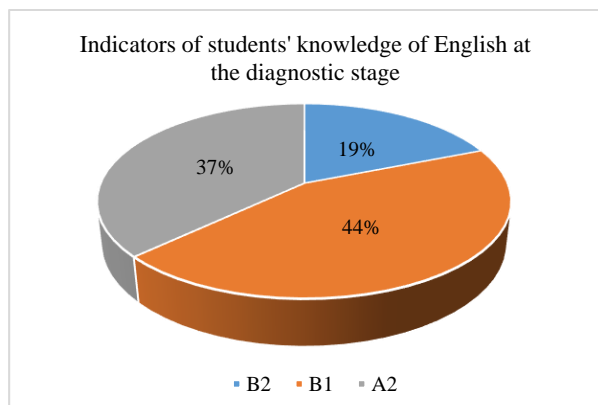


Figure 1. Indicators of students' English proficiency in percentage at the diagnostic stage

To evaluate the motivation of the students being trained in the framework of integrated approach the survey as a component of the evaluation model was carried out. The survey included two parts – the pre-training and post-training ones. Most of the students' answers testify to the lack of particular interest in the subject. 47% of students showed no interest in learning a foreign language; 32,5% of learners had an average motivation; 20,5% of the group students showed significant interest in learning English. The results of the students' survey on motivation in learning a foreign language are shown in **Figure 2**.

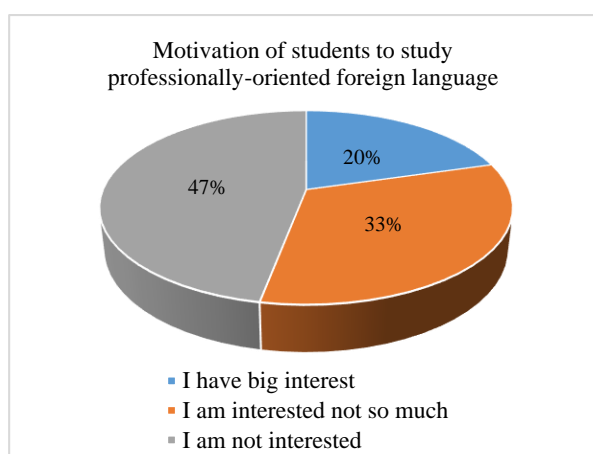


Figure 2. Students' answers to the question: How much are you motivated to learn a discipline professionally-oriented foreign language?

The question: "In what form are foreign language classes conducted?" was aimed to reveal the teaching styles that students experienced before the start of the experiment. 61,7% of students responded that classes were mainly conducted in the

form of traditional methods and techniques. 13,5% of students indicate the use of problem-solving activities at the lessons, and 24,8% of learners - using information and communication technologies. The third question was aimed to find out the preferable students' learning styles. The students' opinions were distributed as follows: 34% of students prefer the classes to be conducted in the form of a discussion; 33% of learners expressed a desire to use a 'round table'; 20% of students wanted project work to be used in classes; 13% preferred the use of information and communication technology in foreign language classes.

So, our observations showed that not all learners of the group demonstrated a particular interest in the discipline of professionally-oriented foreign language, as the classes were conducted using traditional methods and techniques.

Using an integrated approach while teaching students majoring in "International relations" was targeted to increase students' motivation to study the discipline "Professionally-oriented foreign language", to improve their knowledge of the English language, to develop students' foreign language professional communicative skills. In the framework of CLIL technology, the lessons were conducted using problem-solving activities: discussions, debates, role-plays, projects, case-study.

At the same time, special attention is paid to the work with specialized texts of professional character. This form of work is necessary for students to understand and analyze general scientific, popular-scientific texts connected with their future profession.

Improvement of foreign language professional, communicative competence is closely related to the development of students' skills through such types of reading as scanning, skimming, detailed reading with further discussion.

Before conducting activities, discussing problem-solving situations and issues, we carried out preparatory work: reading and analyzing with students professional-oriented texts; doing exercises on practicing the use of terminological vocabulary on a specialty within the studied topic and also communicative speech exercises in the framework of the discipline "Professionally-oriented foreign language". Students actively participated in the following discussions: "Political ideologies", "Constitution of the World Health Organization", "Diplomatic communications between states", "Diplomacy and politics" and others. Role-plays on the topics "Convention on special missions", "Agreements between states" were conducted. Students of the group "International relations" wrote essays on the following topics: "My future profession", "Diplomacy and international relations", "Diplomatic correspondents", "The role of ambassador in international relations" and others. Presentations on the theme "Future diplomat", "Convention for special purposes", "Letters" were prepared. In addition, students took part in other activities at classes on professionally-oriented foreign languages.

After experimental teaching, the final test was conducted. This test presented the syllabus-based component of the comprehensive evaluation model. For assessing students' foreign language proficiency, as before, we followed the assessing scale of the CEFR. The result of the final testing on determining the level of students' knowledge showed positive dynamic in

students' English proficiency level: 54,3% of students had B1 level, English proficiency of 45,6% of learners was equal to B2 and there appeared 2,1% students with a C1 level of English proficiency. Thus, the use of an integrated approach proved to be efficient and improved students' English proficiency.

At the final stage of the experimental work, there were no students with A2 level anymore; the number of students with a B1 level of English language proficiency has increased from 43,5% to 54,3%; the number of students with B2 level has increased from 19,4% to 45,6%, and the number of students with C1 level was equal to 2,1%.

The results of the comparative analysis of students' English level proficiency are shown in the diagram given below (Figure 3).

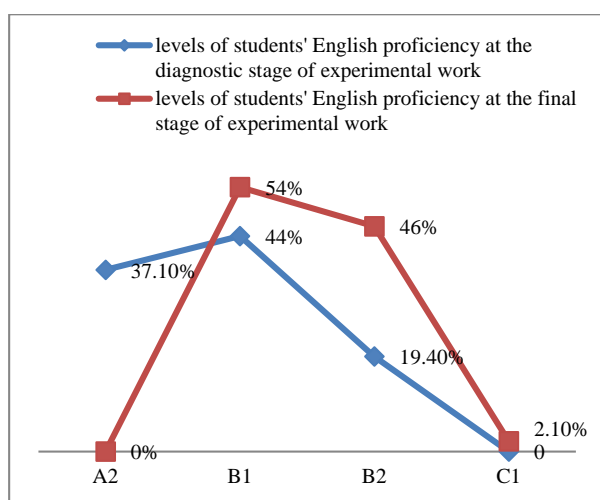


Figure 3. Comparative analysis of foreign language proficiency of students at the diagnostic and final stages of the experimental work

The final survey included students' self-assessment. Most of the students, i.e., 93,6% of learners majoring in "International Relations" answered that their level of foreign language professional skills has increased in the process of using active methods in the framework of CLIL technology. 89% of learners gave a positive response to the question of whether they are motivated to learn a professional foreign language. 89,7% of students preferred classes to be conducted using problem-solving activities and 10,3% of students wanted the use of the traditional methods and techniques at foreign language classes.

Thus, the results of the study indicate the effectiveness of CLIL technology and have a positive effect on improving the level of foreign language competence of international relations students within the discipline of professionally-oriented foreign language.

Conclusion

The study and analysis of the literature on the considered issue, and experience of teaching professionally-oriented foreign language allow to highlight the following advantages of integrated approach: it increases students' motivation; develops students' thinking ability and creativity; develops foreign language competence; immerses students in the language environment;

contributes to obtaining a more comprehensive knowledge for the future professional communication; intensifies the process of teaching professional foreign language; develops and improves cognitive abilities of students; combines the subject area and language, thereby the vocabulary on specialty is replenished.

Along with this, there are specific difficulties in the use of this technology: the imperfection of English textbooks, insufficient number of classes (hours) in this discipline, different levels of knowledge of foreign language learners.

This study determines our further research, which will consist in finding effective pedagogical technologies aimed at forming foreign language professional communicative competencies of students within the content and language integrated learning.

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