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CLIL APPROACH IN KAZAKHSTAN: LEARNERS' PERCEPTION AND EXPERIENCES

Abstract. In modern society, a new education system is being formed and the acquisition of one or more foreign languages is becoming a priority, and it is seen as one of the tools for expanding professional knowledge and opportunities. In this regard, new educational methods appear for teaching a second language. One of them is the Content and Language Integrated Learning approach which is increasingly becoming one of the innovative approaches to teaching and learning foreign languages. However, there exist several issues related to the implementation process of the CLIL approach. Thus, this article aims to demonstrate the senior school students' perceptions of CLIL. The research questions are concentrated on identifying the challenges that they face while applying the CLIL method and illustrating the benefits of this approach in the teaching and learning contexts. By investigating their attitudes and perceptions toward CLIL, it will be possible to search out solutions for challenges that students face during the CLIL lesson and to improve their skills.

Keywords: content, perception, challenges, language acquisition, communication, cognition.

Аңдатпа. Қазіргі қоғамда жаңа білім беру жүйесі қалыптасып, бір немесе бірнеше шет тілдерін меңгеру басымдыққа ие болып, кәсіби білім мен мүмкіндіктерді кеңейту құралдарының бірі ретінде қарастырылуда. Осыған орай, екінші тілді оқытудың жаңа әдіс-тәсілдері пайда болуда. Солардың бірегейі - шетел тілдерін оқыту мен оқудағы инновациялық тәсілдердің біріне айналып келе жатқан «Пән мен тілді кіріктіріп оқыту» тәсілі. Алайда, бұл тәсілді жүзеге асыру процесіне қатысты туындайтын бірқатар мәселелер мен қиындықтар бар, сол себепті, бұл мақаланың негізгі мақсаты жоғары сынып оқушыларының CLIL туралы түсініктерін көрсету болып табылады. Зерттеу сұрақтары CLIL әдісін қолдану кезінде кездесетін қиындықтарды анықтауға және осы тәсілдің оқыту мен білім беру контекстіндегі артықшылықтарын көрсетуге бағытталған. Студенттердің CLIL тәсілі туралы көзқарастары мен түсініктерін зерттей отырып, CLIL сабағы кезінде кездесетін қиындықтардың шешімін табуға және олардың біліктіліктерін арттыруға болады.

Түйін сөздер: мазмұн, қабылдау, қиындықтар, тілді меңгеру, қарым-қатынас, таным.

Аннотация. В современном обществе формируется новая система образования, и приобретение одного или нескольких иностранных языков становится приоритетом и рассматривается как один из инструментов расширения профессиональных знаний и возможностей. В связи с этим появляются новые образовательные методы для обучения второму языку. Одним из них является предметно-языковое интегрированное обучение, который все больше становится одним из инновационных подходов к преподаванию и изучению иностранных языков. Однако существует несколько проблем и трудностей, связанных с процессом реализации подхода CLIL. Таким образом, цель данной статьи является продемонстрировать восприятие CLIL старшеклассниками. Вопросы исследования сосредоточены на выявлении проблем, с которыми они сталкиваются при применении метода CLIL, и на демонстрации преимуществ этого подхода в контексте преподавания и обучения. Изучая их отношение и восприятие подхода CLIL, можем найти решения проблем, с которыми студенты сталкиваются во время урока CLIL, и улучшить их навыки.

Ключевые слова: содержание, восприятие, проблемы, овладение языком, коммуникация, познание.

Introduction

Nowadays, Content and Language Integrated Learning has become topical and a common phrase in society. There have been various scientific findings that are significant toward understanding of CLIL. Content and language integrated learning is the use of languages to comprehend the subject. This is about urging students' passion to study, and enhancing their communication and thinking skills (Stenberg, 2001) [1].

Marsh (2002:15) defines: "CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language". The language and content have a common position in certain actions where a second language is used as a medium for teaching a non-language subject [2]. According to the Dzemila (2006), CLIL is a fairly strong and truly inspiring tool that provides the instruction of a second language without requiring extra time in the educational program. At the same time, the strategy coincides with European language policies to encourage and enforce multilingualism [3].

The purpose and objectives of the study

This study provides an opportunity to develop students' CLIL skills by exploring their perception about CLIL approach, and identifying its benefits and challenges. By investigating their attitudes and perceptions toward CLIL, it will be possible to search out solutions for challenges that students face during the CLIL lesson, and to improve their skills.

Scientific and conceptual theories underlying the CLIL approach

Hanesova (2014) defines CLIL as an approach that emphasizes an efficient type of learning subject matter where students get an opportunity to enhance their own knowledge by applying their critical thinking skills, and thus CLIL is considered as a method of constructing own knowledge [4].

According to Hanesova's study (2014) Constructivism contributes to acquiring a second language through the interaction with other people and it examines students' own construction of a new context in the framework of comparing it with prior experience and knowledge [4].

Constructivism subdivided at least into three streams :

a) Cognitive constructivism focuses on learners' action in addressing problems therefore students should establish for themselves their own rules, schedules, additional information and other factors. The efficiency of construction relies on the extent of students' commitment in examining and constructing their own meaning of concepts. In addition, in this educational process students are the only considerable subject that can organize, examine and construct new information.

b) Social constructivism focuses on the significance of the social and cultural interaction in constructing the knowledge. Vygotskij (1978) stated that social interaction is the precondition for the development of cognition [5].

c) Pedagogical constructivism is the combination of the previous two approaches which demonstrates their positive properties and provides their educational accomplishments, for instance CLIL.

Hanesova (2014) mentioned that teachers, who are familiar with constructivism theory , are able to provide students with learning strategies that enhance their self-contained skills. However, there are some obstacles to construct a new knowledge , for instance, a poor experience of CLIL might look like as a typical translation class [4].

Bruner (1950) defined the scaffolding theory as "a process of setting up the situation to make the child's entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handling the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it". Bruner introduced the term "scaffolding" considering the zone of proximal development theory which originated by a Russian scholar, Lev Vygotsky [6].

Scaffolding not only provides immediate outcomes, it also creates the abilities that are necessary for solving problems independently (McLeod, 2019) [7]. According to the teacher's degree of dynamicity ,scaffolding strategy is classified into two categories such as fixed and adaptive. The first one is the pre-reading tasks which are prepared in advance, second one is encouragement that appeared during the task performance.

Previous studies

This section includes previous studies on the implementation of CLIL approach in different countries where the acquisition of foreign language is significant for academic society as a circumstance in Kazakhstan. The study by Anna Tsagkari (2019) presented the implementation of the CLIL method in Japan, Indonesia and China. She focused on the identification of the students' perception and their views, and their general attitude toward this approach. She organized an interview with four Asian students: two Chinese, one Japanese and one Indonesian. The results showed that the application of this approach is unrealistic, because it needs a high level of proficiency from the teachers. The author summarized that the CLIL can be fulfilled successfully when the governments of these three countries take appropriate action related to the CLIL [8].

The study of Roiha (2014) investigated Content and Language Integrated Learning in Finland. The author tried to demonstrate how teachers perceive the approach and what kind of methods are used in order to overcome several challenges related to the CLIL. According to the results, it is seen that teachers perceive the approach differently, and this distinction is correlated with the practice and experience of teachers [9].

The similar research was conducted with Spanish students who study at the Art Faculty (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2015). The students' awareness was investigated, and their preferences for personal activities, improvement of language skills were analyzed. In the framework of the questionnaire, the authors identified that students prefer to work cooperatively, and for them all language learning aspects are significant. In conclusion, they stated that students improve their language level better in CLIL lessons than their English language class [10].

Methods and Materials

Qualitative research design has been chosen to assemble more detailed information about students' awareness about CLIL, and to indicate vital information on how common is the CLIL approach among Kazakhstani senior school students. This study helps to investigate senior school students' perception about CLIL, their views and considerations of the strengths and weaknesses of applying the CLIL approach. Besides, this research design provides an opportunity to directly contact research participants. Thus, this study answers research questions as following:

1. How do Kazakhstan students comprehend the notion CLIL?
2. What challenges do they face while applying the CLIL approach?
3. What kind of outcomes do students acquire by using this approach?

The study was conducted among senior school students in Taldykorgan. They are students of Lomonosov school and Specialized Lyceum for gifted children with teaching in three languages. Participants are 10th grade students who have studied biology and physics through the CLIL approach.

List of participants

Participants	Gender	Subject	CLIL practicing	School
Participant 1	Male	Physics	1- year	Specialized Lyceum for gifted children
Participant 2	Female	Biology	1 -year	Lomonosov
Participant 3	Female	Biology	1 -year	Lomonosov

In this study interview was selected as the main tool for data collection. The interview provided an opportunity to identify senior school student's perception about the CLIL approach, its benefits and drawbacks. During the interview students were asked open-ended questions, and they were free to express and share their opinion . Each interview lasted approximately an hour and it was provided in English and Russian languages, as not all participants speak English fluently. These interviews were provided through WhatsApp Messenger due to the pandemic.

Findings

The findings indicated that all participants could understand the notion CLIL and could distinguish from other approaches . Moreover, they are able to identify benefits and shortcomings in using the CLIL approach. All three participants said that the main advantages are practicing and improving language. Disadvantages are closely connected with the lack of language level. According to the answers of participants, the role of language level is significant, because all materials in a foreign language. Also, they mentioned that their language level was not sufficient, as they didn't have enough knowledge of terminology and rich vocabulary.

Students' perception of CLIL approach

The results showed that all participants understand the core concept of CLIL as a method in which other subjects are taught in foreign language.

I understand the term Content and Language Integrated Learning as a fairly productive way to learn different languages.

(Participant 1)

CLIL is a method in which a learning process is provided in a foreign language.

(Participant 2)

CLIL is an approach that provides a chance to study scientific subjects with language at the same time. It requires language proficiency, as all texts, materials and assignments are given in second language.

(Participant 3)

Challenges of applying CLIL

First participant said that he faced problems in the lesson due to the lack of material and poor English his subject teacher. This kind of method requires highly qualified teachers both of content and language.

Second student stated that she had the same problem as mentioned above. It would be difficult to implement CLIL lessons, if there are not enough necessary materials.

Third participant stated “I faced several problems due to the lack of my vocabulary. I did not understand what was written in the sentences and used google translation .

Advantages of using CLIL approach

During the interview, students highlighted the effectiveness of the CLIL approach. According to them, CLIL lessons allowed them to enhance their English level and aroused their interest to study English more deeply. Moreover, all research participants want to apply the CLIL approach in the future.

All interviewees mentioned that the CLIL approach has many benefits for the learning process.

My conversational skills markedly improved and I began to recognize words better. I think that I have learned new scientific words. Even if they are not much applied words, they may be useful in the future.

(Participant 1)

When we studied biology through CLIL, I was motivated to learn English language and I became interested in biology. To be honest, before the CLIL lesson I did not like biology.

(Participant 2)

Discussion

This study is aimed to investigate the student’s perception of CLIL approach, to identify the problems that students face during the CLIL lesson , and to demonstrate the benefits of using this approach. Similarly to the study of (Anna Tsagkari 2019), participants of our research expressed their view on this method, stating the advantages and disadvantages. Our interviewees highlighted their recommendations and desire to the Minister of Education in order to improve CLIL, to implement this approach successfully which are not mentioned in the studies of (Roiha 2014), (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2015). Studies revealed that participants would like to study other subjects through the CLIL method, because proficiency in a foreign language becomes the most significant factor in the society and in the labor market. Thus, all authors summarized that CLIL approach provides unprecedented opportunities correlated to the acquisition of language, to the improvement of communication and cognition skills.

Conclusion

In the current study the research questions are concentrated on the investigation of Kazakhstani senior school students’ perception of CLIL approach and analysed the main pros and cons of applying this method of

learning. Data was collected through interviews, using qualitative research. The participants stated the challenges which they have faced during the CLIL lesson and they demonstrated their experience, and benefits that they have acquired by completing this lesson. According to the findings, the main problems in CLIL are related to lack of language proficiency and lack of materials. In the framework of the interview, we realized that students understand the efficiency of integrating content with language, and they have a desire to study their other subjects toward CLIL in order to enhance language skills, to be competitive in the labor market. Finally, it is seen that CLIL lessons cause students' interest to learn new things; and to motivate them to develop their language skills than their regular English classes.

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