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IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Abstract: The article examines the relevance and challenges of integrating CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) into the higher education system of Uzbekistan. It explores the main obstacles to the successful integration of CLIL, including insufficient foreign language proficiency among teachers, lack of necessary methodological training, differentiated learning, limited resources, assessment bias, and undeveloped curricula and syllabuses. To address these issues, the article proposes the implementation of specialized training for teachers, updating curricula, and improving materials adapted to CLIL needs. The article contains research results based on interviews, surveys, and observations, and emphasizes the need for a systematic and standardized approach to implementing CLIL in Uzbekistan's higher education institutions.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), bilingual education, development of communicative competence, foreign language teaching, integrated learning, higher education, professional competence, educational materials.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language professional communicative competence continues to play an important role in future employment prospects in higher education. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and global communication and collaboration become more important, foreign language proficiency becomes a valuable asset for individuals pursuing higher education and career advancement.

In the context of higher education in many non-English-speaking countries, including Uzbekistan, English serves as a lingua franca (a common language used by speakers of other languages to communicate with each other), allowing students with different language backgrounds to communicate effectively with their peers and professors. English proficiency enables students to participate in classroom discussions, present their ideas, and participate in group projects, thus enhancing their learning experience. Many universities offer courses and programs in English, making English proficiency important for prospective students to access a broader range of academic opportunities.

Furthermore, in the rapidly changing labor market, employers often require candidates to have excellent communication skills, including English proficiency. Many multinational companies operate worldwide, and English serves as the main language for internal and external communication. Good English proficiency allows employees to effectively collaborate with colleagues from different countries, conduct business deals, and interact with international clients. Consequently, individuals with a high level of communicative competence in English have a competitive advantage in the labor market, as they can easily adapt to the demands of a globalized work environment.

METHODOLOGY

In modern Uzbekistan, higher education is one of the most important stages in preparing qualified personnel, without whom it is impossible to build a strong state.

Currently, almost all universities in the republic teach English as a foreign language, but not all higher education institutions offer subject content taught in English. Most English-medium programs can be found mainly in private universities.

Despite government efforts to train English teachers, develop English-language curricula, and establish partnerships with foreign institutions to facilitate English learning, several problems hinder the successful achievement of these goals. In our study, we analyzed several universities for the presence of subjects taught in English, the specifics of teaching, the development of educational materials and their content, and teachers' readiness to teach subject content in English. The research methods included interviews, questionnaires, and lesson observations. It's worth noting that due to the lack of teaching staff capable of teaching their subjects in English and the inadequate level of English proficiency among students, many universities cannot implement subject content teaching in English. However, this is only part of the reasons hindering the implementation of CLIL in teaching.

RESULTS

Based on interviews, questionnaires, and lesson observations of teachers using CLIL technology, the following main problems were identified as barriers to the successful integration of this approach in teaching in higher education institutions:

- **Insufficient foreign language proficiency among subject teachers:** Implementing CLIL requires teachers who are proficient in both the target language and the subject content they teach. However, there is an acute shortage of qualified teachers with the necessary language skills in Uzbekistan. Teachers we interviewed admitted they felt insecure about starting to teach their subject in English, despite having a sufficient level of proficiency (B2 level).
- **Choosing teaching strategies:** A primary condition of CLIL is that teachers integrate language development strategies with methods for teaching specific subjects. Inexperienced CLIL teachers may lack the necessary training and experience to effectively incorporate language learning into their subject lessons. Some teachers working with the content-language integration system mentioned that they sometimes lack a ready-made strategy for planning their lessons, as teaching subject content in English is not just translating what they previously taught in Uzbek or Russian.
- **Differentiated learning:** Even in regular classes, teachers have to work with students with different levels of knowledge. When it comes to teaching through CLIL, teachers face the problem of differentiated learning, where they must adapt their lessons to the students' level of foreign language proficiency. This requires adapting teaching materials, providing additional language support, and implementing strategies to effectively engage all students. Without the necessary language skills and strategies, teachers may struggle to explain the topic and meet the diverse needs of their students.
- **Limited resources:** Implementing CLIL requires sufficient resources, including textbooks, multimedia materials, and technological tools. In some cases, access to up-to-date resources in the target language may be limited. The lack of resources can hinder the implementation of CLIL and limit the variety of teaching materials available to teachers.
- **Assessment bias:** In CLIL classes, where language knowledge is a key component, there is a risk of unintentionally evaluating language skills instead of subject knowledge. CLIL programs often require students to demonstrate their understanding of the subject content through presentations, essays, or reports. Non-native speakers may have difficulty accurately conveying their knowledge due to language limitations, leading to an inaccurate assessment of their subject knowledge.
- **Underdeveloped curriculum and syllabuses:** Integrating CLIL requires adapting existing curricula to include language learning and content goals. Developing appropriate materials, textbooks, and resources for the CLIL approach can take time and resources. It can be difficult to create a curriculum that effectively combines language development and content learning.

Considering the above-mentioned problems, we propose the following solutions:

- **Teacher training:** Providing specialized training and professional development opportunities for CLIL teachers is crucial. This training should focus on improving language proficiency, integrating language learning strategies, and adapting teaching materials considering students' different language abilities.
- **Curriculum and syllabus adaptation:** When updating curricula, it is essential to consider the foundations and essence of the educational technology of teaching subject content in English. This means that the developer must be well-informed about the goals and objectives of the chosen type of instruction. We believe that the following requirements for developing CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) curricula, which have proven effective in many developed countries (Coyle, Holmes, King, 2009), must be taken into account for creating an effective curriculum:
 - The CLIL curriculum should clearly define learning goals and learning outcomes for both content and language development, which should be specific, measurable, and aligned with broader educational objectives.
 - The CLIL curriculum must support high academic standards and rigor, both in content and language learning.
 - The curriculum should consider the language proficiency levels of students and their language needs, whether they are native speakers or non-native speakers.
 - The taught content must be relevant, authentic, and aligned with the academic discipline.
 - The curriculum should include clear assessment strategies that evaluate both content understanding and language proficiency. It should outline tasks and assessment criteria, as well as provide opportunities for formative and summative feedback to support student progress in both areas. Various assessment methods should be included, such as exams, presentations, research papers, and group projects, allowing students to demonstrate their mastery of both content and language.

By addressing issues related to language proficiency, educational institutions can make CLIL programs more effective and inclusive, enabling students to acquire both subject knowledge and language skills simultaneously.

Coyle, Holmes, and King (2009) emphasize the importance of teacher collaboration and ongoing professional development in the development of CLIL curricula. Teachers should have opportunities to share best practices, engage in collaborative planning, and receive training and support for effectively implementing CLIL.

The successful implementation of CLIL in higher education institutions depends on students' understanding of integrated subject and language learning and ensuring an effective learning process. This requires careful attention to creating suitable pedagogical conditions for the development of integrated subject-language skills. This process demands the identification and subsequent creation of specific pedagogical conditions, as well as planning, regular, and conscious interventions to enhance its effectiveness. In pedagogy, conditions are factors that determine the course of the educational process. First and foremost, these include methods, forms of organization of learning, and pedagogical communication in their connection and integrity. Conditions are external (objective) in relation to the student but subject to their subjective perception. Their combinations depend on subjective factors (level of development, readiness to learn, thinking, memory, reflection, motivational sphere, prior

experience, etc.) and objective factors (content of learning, professional skills and experience of the teacher, system of control and assessments, etc.).

The formation of integrated subject-language skills in higher education students represents a scientifically justified and controlled process of acquiring communicative, subject-specific, cognitive, and intercultural competencies, in which the internal logic of their development is maintained.

These problems can be addressed to make CLIL programs more effective and inclusive, allowing students to acquire subject knowledge and language skills simultaneously. Successful implementation of CLIL in higher education institutions depends on the students' understanding of integrated subject-language learning and ensuring an effective educational process. This requires careful attention to creating appropriate pedagogical conditions that foster the formation of integrated subject-language skills. This process requires identifying and subsequently creating specific pedagogical conditions, as well as planning regular and deliberate impact for achieving the desired outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The results of the conducted research revealed a number of issues hindering the successful integration of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. These problems, identified through interviews, surveys, and observations of teachers, align with the findings of other researchers in the field of CLIL.

Firstly, the issue of insufficient language competence among subject teachers remains a key barrier to the effective implementation of CLIL. This aligns with the studies of Soyl, Holmes, and King (2009), who also indicate that language proficiency at a level no lower than B2 is a mandatory requirement for successful teaching of subject content in a foreign language. The teachers participating in the study confirmed that their language skills are not sufficiently confident for full instruction in English, despite certain financial incentives from the government. In this context, the development of specialized professional development programs for teachers becomes a priority (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008).

Secondly, the discussed problem of choosing effective teaching strategies is also supported in the literature. In their work, Soyl et al. (2009) note that the teaching strategy should include the integration of language and subject skills, requiring teachers to adopt a more flexible and thoughtful approach to lesson planning. As noted in our research, many teachers struggle to find optimal methods and strategies that take into account the varying language levels of students, which also emphasizes the importance of specialized methodological training for CLIL teachers (Coyle et al., 2009).

Differentiated instruction in the CLIL classroom is another key issue that is also discussed in the research by Dalton-Puffer and Lorenzo (2014). They point out that teachers need to use adapted learning materials and provide language support for students with varying levels of foreign language proficiency. In our study, teachers also noted the difficulty of implementing this practice due to limited time and resources, which confirms the findings of other researchers regarding the need to develop materials that consider students' language abilities (Dalton-Puffer & Lorenzo, 2014).

Limited resources are another significant barrier reported by CLIL teachers. According to the studies of Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010), the successful implementation of CLIL largely depends on the availability of sufficient learning materials and resources. In our research, teachers confirmed that a lack of access to authentic materials in the target language hampers their work, highlighting the need for investment in the development of appropriate resources for teachers.

Finally, bias in assessment also represents a serious issue identified during our research. The studies by Morton and Tang (2015) emphasize that assessment in the context of CLIL should consider both subject knowledge and language skills; however, this requires teachers to have clear criteria and an understanding of how language competence can influence subject understanding. In our research,

teachers expressed difficulties in assessment, confirming the need to revise and develop new approaches to student evaluation within the CLIL framework.

CONCLUSION

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) plays a crucial role in the higher education system of Uzbekistan, contributing to the development of students' professional communicative competence and preparing them for the global labor market. However, the implementation of CLIL in higher educational institutions faces several challenges, including a lack of qualified teachers, limited resources, and difficulties in assessment.

For the effective implementation of CLIL in higher educational institutions, it is necessary to create conditions that foster the simultaneous development of language and professional skills. This includes providing teacher training, adapting curricula and teaching materials, and establishing an assessment system that considers both the linguistic and subject-specific knowledge of students.

A systematic and standardized approach to the integration of CLIL will help overcome existing barriers and create opportunities for more successful mastery of both a foreign language and subject content in higher education. Such an approach will enable students not only to acquire professional knowledge but also to develop language skills necessary for their future careers and participation in international cooperation.

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