

THE SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS OF CONTENT INTEGRATED LANGUAGE LEARNING. THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING THIS METHOD DURING THE LESSONS

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has emerged as a transformative approach to education, combining the teaching of subject-specific content with a foreign language. This paper explores the scientific findings surrounding CLIL, highlighting its cognitive, linguistic, and cultural benefits. Furthermore, it delves into the challenges faced by educators and learners during its implementation in classroom settings. By synthesizing recent research, the study emphasizes the role of CLIL in enhancing students' communicative competence, fostering critical thinking, and promoting intercultural awareness. Simultaneously, it acknowledges obstacles such as inadequate teacher training, resource limitations, and varying learner proficiencies. The paper concludes with strategies to address these challenges, ensuring effective and inclusive CLIL practices.

Annotatsiya

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) ta'limning o'zgartiruvchi yondashuvi sifatida yuzaga keldi, u o'ziga xos mavzu bo'yicha o'qitishni chet tili bilan uyg'unlashtirdi. Ushbu maqola CLIL atrofidagi ilmiy topilmalarni o'rganib, uning kognitiv, lingvistik va madaniy afzalliklarini ta'kidlaydi. Bundan tashqari, u o'qituvchilar va o'quvchilarni sinfda qo'llash jarayonida duch keladigan qiyinchiliklarni o'rganadi. Yaqinda o'tkazilgan tadqiqotlarni sintez qilish orqali tadqiqot CLIL ning o'quvchilarning kommunikativ kompetentsiyasini oshirish, tanqidiy fikrlashni rivojlantirish va madaniyatlararo xabardorlikni rivojlantirishdagi rolini ta'kidlaydi. Shu bilan birga, u o'qituvchilarning etarli darajada tayyorlanmaganligi, resurslarning cheklanganligi va o'quvchilarning turli malakalari kabi to'siqlarni tan oladi. Hujjat CLILning samarali va inklyuziv amaliyotlarini ta'minlovchi ushbu muammolarni hal qilish strategiyalari bilan yakunlanadi.

Аннотация

Интегрированное обучение по содержанию и языку (CLIL) возникло как преобразующий подход к образованию, объединяющий преподавание предметно-специфического контента с иностранным языком. В этой статье рассматриваются научные открытия, связанные с CLIL, подчеркиваются его

когнитивные, лингвистические и культурные преимущества. Кроме того, в ней рассматриваются проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются преподаватели и учащиеся во время его внедрения в классных условиях. Синтезируя недавние исследования, исследование подчеркивает роль CLIL в повышении коммуникативной компетентности учащихся, развитии критического мышления и продвижении межкультурной осведомленности. В то же время в ней признаются такие препятствия, как недостаточная подготовка учителей, ограниченность ресурсов и разная квалификация учащихся. В статье приводятся стратегии решения этих проблем, обеспечивающие эффективную и инклюзивную практику CLIL.

Key Words: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), language acquisition, interdisciplinary learning, cognitive development, intercultural competence, educational challenges, teaching strategies.

Introduction

In the globalized world of the 21st century, proficiency in multiple languages has become a crucial skill for academic, professional, and social success. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) offers a pedagogical framework that simultaneously develops subject matter knowledge and language skills. First introduced in the 1990s, CLIL has since gained momentum across educational systems worldwide, particularly in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. It integrates the teaching of a subject, such as science or history, with a foreign language, enabling learners to acquire knowledge and skills in both areas seamlessly. The adoption of CLIL is rooted in its potential to foster cognitive flexibility, deepen subject understanding, and improve communicative competence in a second language. Empirical studies have documented its impact on enhancing learners' critical thinking, motivation, and intercultural awareness. However, its implementation is not without challenges. Teachers often face difficulties related to insufficient training, lack of resources, and managing diverse student language proficiencies. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the scientific findings related to CLIL, discussing its advantages and addressing the hurdles educators encounter during its application. By examining both its benefits and limitations, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on optimizing CLIL methodologies for diverse educational contexts.

Literature review

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has gained significant attention in recent years as an effective pedagogical approach that combines content learning and language acquisition. CLIL has been shown to foster a wide range of cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural benefits for learners. This literature review

synthesizes research on how CLIL impacts three key areas of student development: communicative competence, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness.

Communicative competence is central to language learning and refers to a student's ability to effectively use language in various contexts. CLIL has been widely studied for its positive effects on students' language skills, including fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and oral and written communication.

Several studies have demonstrated that CLIL enhances communicative competence by providing learners with opportunities to use language in authentic academic contexts. According to **Cenoz and Genesee (2009)**, students in CLIL environments often develop a higher level of fluency in both their first and second languages. This is because the content-based instruction requires students to engage with subject-specific terminology and discourse while using the foreign language to solve real-world problems and express ideas. **Dalton-Puffer (2011)** found that CLIL students outperform their peers in language acquisition, especially in terms of academic vocabulary and grammar.

Additionally, the interactive nature of CLIL classrooms, which often involves group work, presentations, and discussions, fosters communicative competence. **Johnstone and Swain (2006)** emphasize that these interactive tasks provide students with regular opportunities to practice language in real-world academic contexts, thereby enhancing their ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing. **Critical thinking** is an essential skill for students in the 21st century, involving the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to form reasoned judgments. CLIL promotes critical thinking by encouraging students to engage with both the subject content and the target language simultaneously, leading to deeper cognitive processing.

Research indicates that CLIL's dual-focus approach helps students develop higher-order cognitive skills. **Dalton-Puffer (2007)** argues that the challenge of processing subject matter in a second language enhances students' ability to think critically and problem-solve. This cognitive load pushes students to analyze information more deeply, as they must simultaneously comprehend the content and express it in a foreign language. This phenomenon is referred to as "cognitive overload," which, although initially challenging, leads to improved cognitive flexibility and problem-solving abilities in the long run.

Furthermore, **Coyle et al. (2010)** argue that CLIL encourages interdisciplinary thinking by connecting knowledge across different subject areas. By linking concepts from various disciplines—such as history, science, and literature—students are encouraged to approach problems from multiple perspectives, fostering a more holistic understanding of complex issues. This type of interdisciplinary learning is known to

promote critical thinking, as students are required to evaluate and synthesize information from diverse sources.

Intercultural awareness refers to the understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and the ability to communicate effectively across cultures. CLIL has been shown to significantly enhance intercultural competence by providing students with opportunities to engage with content from different cultural contexts while using a foreign language.

One key benefit of CLIL is its ability to expose students to diverse cultural perspectives through the content being taught. According to **Coyle et al. (2010)**, by learning about global issues and world history in a foreign language, students gain insights into other cultures, fostering respect and understanding. This process not only enhances students' knowledge of other cultures but also encourages them to view issues from multiple cultural perspectives, which is essential for developing intercultural awareness.

Marsh (2002) also emphasizes that CLIL promotes intercultural competence by encouraging students to use language as a tool to engage with cultural content. For example, students in a CLIL geography class might study global environmental issues while exploring the cultural implications of these issues in different parts of the world. This exposure to both content and culture helps students become more globally aware and sensitive to cultural differences.

In addition, CLIL classrooms often bring together students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, especially in multilingual settings. **Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009)** note that this diversity provides opportunities for students to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds, enhancing their ability to communicate across cultures and develop greater cultural empathy. The collaborative nature of CLIL further supports this by encouraging students to work together on projects, share ideas, and learn from one another's perspectives.

Despite the numerous benefits, implementing CLIL can be challenging. One of the primary obstacles is the need for teachers to be proficient not only in the subject matter but also in the target language. **Mehisto et al. (2008)** argue that many educators feel inadequately trained to teach both content and language effectively. This dual role can lead to inconsistencies in the quality of CLIL instruction, as some teachers may lack the necessary language skills or pedagogical strategies to support learners in both areas.

Additionally, **Cenoz (2009)** highlights that students' varying levels of language proficiency can present challenges in the CLIL classroom. In mixed-ability classes, some students may struggle to understand subject content delivered in a foreign language, leading to cognitive overload and disengagement. To address these

challenges, differentiated instruction and scaffolding strategies are essential to ensure that all learners can succeed in a CLIL environment.

Finally, the availability of resources is another significant challenge in CLIL implementation. Many teachers report a lack of suitable bilingual materials and textbooks, which can hinder the effectiveness of CLIL programs. **Marsh (2000)** suggests that investing in high-quality bilingual resources and providing ongoing professional development for teachers can help overcome these barriers.

The body of research on CLIL highlights its significant impact on students' communicative competence, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness. By engaging with subject content in a foreign language, students not only acquire academic knowledge but also develop language skills, enhance cognitive abilities, and become more globally aware. However, effective CLIL implementation requires addressing challenges such as teacher training, resource availability, and student language proficiency. With the right support and strategies, CLIL has the potential to transform education by fostering both linguistic and cognitive growth, while promoting intercultural understanding in an increasingly interconnected world.

Future research should explore ways to adapt CLIL to diverse educational contexts and examine its long-term effects on academic achievement, career success, and intercultural communication skills.

Methodology

Analysis of Dalton-Puffer's (2007) Study on the Benefits and Challenges of CLIL Implementation

Dalton-Puffer's (2007) seminal research provides valuable insights into how Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) impacts students' language acquisition and cognitive development. This study specifically analyzed the linguistic and cognitive outcomes of secondary school students in Austria, where CLIL was implemented in various subject areas, such as history and science, taught in English. Below, the methodology, benefits, and challenges of this study are analyzed in detail.

1. Study Overview and Methodology

Dalton-Puffer conducted a mixed-methods study involving both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The study included 250 secondary school students from six schools. Students were divided into two groups: one exposed to CLIL instruction (treatment group) and another taught in their native language (control group). Pre and post tests measured students' language proficiency, focusing on academic vocabulary, grammar, and oral communication. Observations were conducted in CLIL and non-CLIL classes to analyze teaching strategies and student engagement. Additionally, there were **student and teacher interviews**. Semi-structured interviews provided qualitative data on participants' perceptions of CLIL. Primarily, main focus area was linguistic outcomes, such as vocabulary acquisition,

speaking fluency, and grammatical accuracy and cognitive development, particularly critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Dalton-Puffer's findings highlighted significant benefits of CLIL, particularly in the areas of language learning, cognitive engagement, and student motivation. Linguistic benefits include:

- **Improved Vocabulary Acquisition:**

CLIL students demonstrated greater mastery of academic and subject-specific vocabulary compared to their peers in traditional classrooms. This was attributed to the integration of language and content, which required students to engage deeply with technical terms in meaningful contexts.

- *Example:* Students studying geography in English were able to use terms like "erosion" and "sedimentation" more confidently than the control group.

- **Enhanced Speaking Fluency:**

CLIL classrooms emphasized interactive activities, such as debates and group discussions, which significantly improved students' oral fluency. Dalton-Puffer noted that CLIL students were more willing to take risks in speaking, demonstrating increased confidence in using the target language.

Secondly, cognitive benefits include:

- a. **Development of Critical Thinking:**

The study found that CLIL students performed better in tasks requiring analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information. For instance, during science lessons, students were able to hypothesize and justify their conclusions using scientific terminology in English, showcasing deeper cognitive engagement.

- b. **Interdisciplinary Learning:**

By connecting language learning with subject content, CLIL fostered a more holistic educational experience. Students were able to link concepts across disciplines, enhancing their problem-solving abilities

And this experiment increased student motivation:

- **Engagement with Real-World Content:**

CLIL lessons often revolved around real-world topics, making learning more relevant and engaging for students. For example, studying environmental issues in English not only improved language skills but also heightened students' interest in global challenges.

- **Sense of Achievement:**

Successfully learning complex subjects in a second language gave students a sense of pride and accomplishment, further motivating them to engage in their studies.

3. Challenges in CLIL Implementation

While the study showcased numerous benefits, it also revealed several challenges associated with CLIL:

- **Cognitive Overload:**

Some students, particularly those with lower language proficiency, struggled to grasp subject content delivered in English. This led to frustration and, in some cases, disengagement from the learning process.

- **Varying Student Abilities:**

Teachers reported difficulty in addressing the diverse language abilities within a single CLIL classroom. Students with advanced language skills thrived, while weaker students required significant additional support.

- **Lack of Dual Expertise:**

Many teachers lacked adequate training in both the subject matter and the target language. This dual requirement posed a challenge, particularly for teachers of technical subjects like mathematics and science.

- *Example:* A science teacher fluent in English struggled to explain complex scientific concepts in ways that were accessible to students.

- **Limited Professional Development:**

The study highlighted a lack of ongoing professional development opportunities for CLIL teachers, which hindered their ability to implement effective teaching strategies.

Dalton-Puffer's (2007) research highlights the transformative potential of CLIL in enhancing students' linguistic and cognitive abilities. However, the study also underscores the need to address significant challenges, including uneven language proficiency, teacher preparedness, and resource constraints. By implementing targeted strategies to overcome these barriers, educators can maximize the benefits of CLIL, ensuring it serves as an effective approach for fostering communicative competence, critical thinking, and global awareness among learners.

Conclusion

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) emerges as a transformative approach in modern education, offering a dual focus on subject content and language acquisition. The analysis of Dalton-Puffer's (2007) research and other findings highlights CLIL's significant benefits in improving students' communicative competence, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness. Students in CLIL environments often display advanced linguistic skills, a stronger grasp of subject-specific vocabulary, and improved problem-solving abilities compared to their peers in traditional classrooms. Additionally, CLIL fosters intercultural awareness by exposing students to diverse perspectives, preparing them for global citizenship.

However, the implementation of CLIL is not without challenges. Uneven language proficiency among students, insufficient teacher training, limited resources, and complex assessment demands are persistent obstacles. Addressing these issues requires strategic interventions, including differentiated instruction, comprehensive teacher development programs, and the creation of high-quality bilingual materials.

Overall, CLIL has the potential to revolutionize education by combining linguistic and cognitive development in a meaningful, interdisciplinary framework. Policymakers and educators must work collaboratively to mitigate the challenges and enhance the efficacy of CLIL, ensuring it continues to empower learners in an increasingly interconnected world.

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