

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF CONTENT AND INTEGRATED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CLIL)

Abstract. In this paper I have tried to argue that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has both advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, I pointed out its disadvantages because I believe that some aspects of CLIL are not fully planned and organized in details and that may be the reason why some problems still occur in teaching practice (e.g. loosing mother tongue proficiency, not understanding the content completely, training the staff to teach in CLIL curriculum etc.).

Key words. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), advantages, disadvantages, teaching practice, mother tongue, foreign language, curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I have tried to argue that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has both advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, I pointed out its disadvantages because I believe that some aspects of CLIL are not fully planned and organized in details and that may be the reason why some problems still occur in teaching practice (e.g. loosing mother tongue proficiency, not understanding the content completely, training the staff to teach in CLIL curriculum etc.).

CLIL curriculum is successful in some countries but many countries, such as Sweden, Slovenia and Iceland, are being afraid of implementing CLIL because of the power of English as a language of globalization. I would like to research CLIL implications on language teaching further because I believe that some aspects of language teaching through CLIL curriculum may give me few ideas how to solve some teaching problems or may point out to some mistakes that occur in such curriculum and may help me to avoid them in my teaching practice. Furthermore, with this -paper I would like to point out that CLIL is very efficient way of learning both content and language in the same class, why it is not accepted and implemented in all countries.

Languages seem to be a fundamental aspect of the cultural identity of every European. Schools in which the teaching of certain subjects in the curriculum may be offered in a foreign, regional or minority language have existed in Europe for several decades. According to David Graddol (2006), the availability of English as a global language is accelerating globalization and globalization is accelerating the use of English.

Acronym of ‘Content and Language Integrated Learning’ (CLIL) has become the most widely used term describing both learning another (content) subject such as geography, mathematics or biology through the medium of a foreign language and learning a foreign language by studying a content-based subject. In English Language Teaching context (ELT), forms of CLIL have previously been known as ‘Content-based Instruction’, ‘English across the curriculum’, ‘Bilingual education’ and ‘Immersion Education’ (Darn, 2006).

The aim of this paper is to analyze advantages and disadvantages of CLIL. In addition, it will focus on issues like: How does CLIL work? , CLIL implications in the classroom (Implications both on teachers and on learners) and the future of CLIL.

WHAT IS CLIL?

During the 1970s and 1980s CLIL appeared in Canada as an experiment with immersion teaching. Then, in the mid 1990s it has been adopted in Finland and some European countries mostly in connection with English. According to Graddol (2006) CLIL is an approach to bilingual education in which both curriculum content and target language (i.e. English) are taught together. It differs from simple English-medium education in that the learner is not necessarily expected to have the English proficiency required to cope with the subject. Therefore, it means teaching curriculum subjects through the medium of a target language.

A CLIL lesson is not a language lesson neither is it a subject lesson transmitted in a foreign language. In the CLIL curriculum, it is the subject matter which determines the language needed to learn. Tasks are defined as activities that can stand alone as fundamental units and that require comprehending, producing, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language while attention is principally paid to meaning rather than form (Nunan, 1989). Hence, CLIL aims to create an improvement in both the foreign language and the non-language area competence.

HOW DOES CLIL WORK?

In order to work well, CLIL requires effective cooperation between subject teachers and language teachers. Graddol (2006) points out that this kind of cooperation is difficult to achieve because it requires sufficient funding, effective teachers’ training and the time to allow teachers to gain experience and bring about the necessary cultural change within institutions. In other words, CLIL changes working relationships within schools and requires language teachers to work closely with subject teachers. Hence, in order to ensure that language development is appropriately catered for, sufficient time for planning and preparing lessons is in demand.

According to Maldonado (2006) the commonest situation is to select subjects which are convenient to be instructed through foreign language (i.e. science as a

school subject and theme ‘Solar System’) and these subjects can be selected from across the entire curriculum. Maldonado claims that content is the main part of the CLIL project but the results show that “children do pick up language” (Maldonado 2006). Namely, knowledge of the language becomes the means of learning content. Learners develop fluency in English by using it to communicate ideas that are related to content. Therefore, fluency is more important than accuracy in terms of CLIL and errors are natural part of language learning (Peachey 2006).

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF CLIL

With increased contact between countries and the expansion of the European Union, the need for communication is seen as central issue. In other words, the need for communicative skills in second and third language is in increase and languages will probably play a key role in curricula across Europe (Darn 2006). Thus, CLIL offers the deployment of language skills which emphasize effective communication and at the same time, this kind of an education, motivates learners to learn languages by using them for real practical purposes (Maldonado 2006).

Learning is improved through increased motivation and the study of natural language seen in context and real-life situations. When learners are interested in a topic they are motivated to acquire language. Maldonado (2006) argues that CLIL is long-term learning and she points out that students become academically proficient in English after five to seven years in a good bilingual programme. According to her experience, learners who have been studying content through foreign language find it easier to learn another language because they already acquired important language-learning skills and experience. Therefore, “CLIL is a suitable opportunity to consider what *good teaching* is” (Maldonado, 2006). It is also good opportunity for the teachers to consider how they can use learners’ experience and acquired language-learning skills in order to improve them and how to make their learners more successful in learning process.

On the other hand, there is a problem of training academic staff to be able to teach in English. In terms of teaching some questions are being raised: How do you train the academic staff? Do you require the staff to have doubled degree-in the discipline and language teaching? Should all academic staff be able to teach in English? According to Marsh (2005), teaching in English without appropriate language-sensitive curricula and methodologies, inevitably leads to a confusion, despair and high drop-out rates. Also, Graddol argues that many countries just do not seem to be equipped to implement CLIL and he adds that it may take thirty or forty years to make it works in European countries. Further, implementing CLIL is often difficult for democratic governments who are re-elected every three to five years. It took Finland thirty to fifty years to fully implement CLIL. Hence, one of the earliest mistakes, according to Graddol, was that people who work in educational system assumed that what works in one city will probably work in another city or country.

Successful language acquisition depends on the amount, quality and richness of input. Yet, not all input becomes intake. If input is limited than output of a student will probably be limited too (Marsh 2005). That is why all teachers should take responsibility for nurturing language development in the classroom. In addition, teachers in CLIL service should have possibility to maintain and improve their language skills and to deepen their understanding of foreign culture. Maldonado points out that English teachers and subject teachers work together, they also cooperate in preparing lessons and while doing that they are solving problems that appear. Therefore, tandem or team teaching, as we may call it, is important issue.

In Graddol's (2005) view tandem teaching is a heavy solution because schools will need more teachers who are proficient in English, have wider training in child development and who are able to motivate young children to learn both content and language. Such teachers are in short supply in many countries. Not only is planning lessons very important and difficult issue for both subject and language teachers but also the assessment. There is a real problem for assessment of language ability through the content. In some countries where CLIL is already implemented, teachers have separate assessment: content teacher for his subject and the language teacher for his. But, do they have the right assessment instruments and who is going to judge that? What is more, teachers very often experience constant tension in terms of assessment because they have to decide if they going to disregard language mistakes or not and what does learner know but he cannot express because of insufficient language knowledge. In Germany and in quite a lot of European universities, for example, status of English language teachers is low while subject teachers do not have full capability to teach at university level. Thus, it may take very long time before initial training at universities will offer teachers with a foreign language competences and subject competences too.

There are some other problems as well: English teachers are suspicious about loosing their jobs while subject teachers are 'jealous' about the high standards for their academic subject. Lange (2005) gives an example of Italy where government reduced time for teaching foreign languages from 36 hours to 33 hours per week. This means financial cuts for system of education which is for some CLIL experts an advantage. Reducing costs in education is an advantage but teaching quality should precede quantity. She also argues that in this way the education chance of a generation of children is destroyed because more attention is towards the content than to the language itself. This leads to focusing on only what is essential to pass the course without additional readings. Students experience constant feeling of inferiority when they are not always able to express their profound thoughts in target language (Smith 2005). In this way language is treated as a functional tool rather than the explicit object of study which is, in terms of language learning, unacceptable.

Students of different nationality who learn content through target language learn about each other's language and culture as a regular part of the curriculum. In this way, according to Freeman (1998), dual-language program offers greater multicultural understanding within a culturally pluralistic educational discourse.

Consequently, students will be prepared for life in a more internationalized society and will be offered better job prospects on the labour market.

Tahiya Al Daghaishi from Oman, student of English Language Teacher Development (ELTD) at Nottingham University, believes that “with CLIL people will be able to communicate more and students will have more opportunities to have jobs outside their countries” (the questionnaire is given in appendix 2). She also believes that students in CLIL programme will become more confident in using other languages and in addition their knowledge about other cultures will be widened too. According to Miss Al Daghaishi, mother tongue (MT) will not be affected and lost when content is thought in foreign language. Anna Koj, ELTD student at Nottingham University, originally from Poland, agrees with Miss Al Daghaishi that MT will still exist and will not be lost because “not everyone has the ambition to study foreign language” (the questionnaire will be given in appendix 3)

On the other hand, Artemis Artemiou from Cyprus, also ELTD student from Nottingham, does not approve CLIL that was already introduced in her country, because she believes that it “neglects and ‘kills’ mother tongue” (the questionnaire is given in appendix 4). She adds that students who learn content through foreign language often forget some terms in MT and are not able to communicate in academic level in some subjects. Another example is native Spanish-speaking students who tend to lose proficiency in Spanish in bilingual programmes in United States (Freeman 1998). In terms of mother tongue, ELTD students at Nottingham University, Lili Huang, originally from China and Samra Al Jahdhami originally from Oman, point out that their mother tongue will not disappear because Chinese and Arabic are languages in expansion and are growing as population speaking these languages is growing too (appendix 5 and 6). On the contrary, if mother tongue is disappearing in one country then national identity of this country will be losing its strength too and finally it will also disappear. This was another disadvantage of CLIL.

Some CLIL experts believe that one of its advantages is that target language is acquired in a rather natural and effortless way. Namely, students are surrounded with their peers who are also at the same level in language proficiency and they understand each other very well. Also, they add that young people who learn content through target language tend to look at their own language and culture with more objective eyes. Smith (2005), on the contrary, argues that in CLIL curriculum target language is learned in conscious way during the lessons and what is more, when the learner leaves the class there is little or no exposure to the target language. In this way, Smith makes the difference between language acquisition and language learning. Language acquisition is when learner acquires target language in natural way, constantly exposed to L2 while language learning is when learner is learning L2 in the class in conscious way knowing that his language proficiency will be marked. Hence, in Smith’s view, CLIL offers learning language in unnatural way.

Graddol (2005) finds that in Hong Kong they moved from English-medium education to Chinese language education because students who used English in

learning content were two years behind the students who used Chinese. Also, English-medium students had lower self-esteem and self-perception than Chinese-medium students. Furthermore, many students have to mentally translate the sentence into their mother tongue before they realize the meaning of it in the learning process (Fang 2005). Another example of CLIL failure is Northern Cyprus where they believe that students do not have a good command of English as a target language, so they are starting to teach English only in English courses. Thus, in CLIL curriculum students practice more language but they are not always able to master the content because they lack the knowledge of scientific terms in target language.

Another important issue is whether native or non-native speaker teachers should deliver the CLIL curriculum? Who is going to decide this? Firstly, there are more non-native than native speaker teachers. Secondly, every language carries cultural bias and sometimes teachers should be familiar with the MT of their students in order to help them to understand the content in TG. Being proficient in their students' mother tongue, teachers are able to understand the differences in vocabulary and to give extra explanations when necessary. McKay (2003) argues that the strengths of bilingual teachers of English, for example, need to be recognized and she adds that their familiarity with local culture is very useful and efficient in learning process. What is more important is teacher's constant improving of his/her teaching skills. Successful teacher "will think of his first class as the beginning rather than the end of his education" (Anderson 1967:277) Therefore, proper teaching methodologies in CLIL classes will be in demand in order to deliver the curriculum in the most efficient way possible.

Another important point I want to make is that learning the content through foreign language in CLIL curriculum give students the opportunity to become familiar with other cultures and languages, as it was mentioned previously, but it also give students opportunity to read books in TG and to use internet as a major source of information. Furthermore, students are able, in that way, to continue their studies abroad and to become familiar with educational trends outside their country. "Studying abroad, actually at Nottingham University, gave me the opportunity to improve my knowledge in terms of teaching and learning English and also showed me the values of tolerance and respect for other cultures and languages" (My Learning Journal, 29/11/06). Thus, one of the CLIL advantages is that in bilingual classroom teachers together with their students make the connection and 'bridge' between the content and target language on one side and familiarity with culture and other people's nationality on the other.

According to Lafayette reality dictates the fact "that both curriculum and instruction are determined primarily by the choice of available materials" (Lafayette 1980: 87). Materials in textbooks should be properly selected, adjusted and designed for studying in bilingual programme. Lessons should be carefully selected and planned in order that students can master both content and target language. Still, who is going to plan these lessons and who is going to design textbooks? Not only should CLIL experts and pedagogies participate in solving previously mentioned problems but also teachers should participate too. Teachers

are familiar with problems that appear in everyday teaching process and are very motivated to solve them. “My teaching experience is very precious to me because it gives me opportunity to solve some problems that happen again. This time I am able to solve it in a more efficient way because I am already familiar with it” (My Learning Journal, 6/12/06). Therefore, creating and planning CLIL lessons and textbooks is very important issue that has to be solved. In addition, students in CLIL curriculum should be actively engaged not only in learning facts but also in explanation, description, prediction, deduction and induction. Thus, only if textbooks and other didactic material include all these mental processes, lessons will be successful and students will be satisfied with the outcome. However, do we have such books?

CLIL IMPLICATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM (IMPLICATIONS BOTH ON TEACHERS AND LEARNERS)

Graddol points out that teaching curriculum through the medium of English, or some other target language, means that teachers should convey not only the subject content and language of the discipline, but also the practical problem-solving, negotiations, discussions and classroom management in ways that characterize disciplinary pedagogic practices (Graddol 2005). This leads to another important issue: training the CLIL teachers to teach in bilingual schools. Where and in what way will the CLIL teachers be trained? Who is going to train them? As a consequence, teachers are facing very high standards in their profession, especially the CLIL teachers.

Teachers are facing constant questioning of their competences and they are being exposed to permanent learning and improving their teaching skills. What attitudes, what professional skills are to be acquired for the teaching of mathematics, for example, through the medium of the English Language? Whereas in an English class, communicative competence is the ultimate aim of teaching, and involves both accuracy and fluency, the main aim of teaching mathematics is to develop mathematical thinking. Learning mathematics includes learning the terminology and the language of mathematics. CLIL teachers should therefore have a good command of the target language and resort to the learners’ mother tongue with care. Teachers’ task is to identify and use dual-focused activities which simultaneously cater for language and content aspects. Therefore, teachers who are ready to improve every day their teaching abilities will be successful teachers.

In order to be successful in CLIL programme teachers should improve teaching strategies such as demonstrating, outlining, using visuals, rephrasing, scaffolding, linking new information to learners’ previous knowledge, etc. and all that in order to make input comprehensible and context embedded. Furthermore, CLIL teachers should be aware that equally important strategies are clearly giving instructions, accurately describing tasks, maintaining learners’ engagement in instructional tasks by maintaining task focus, pacing instruction appropriately and

communicating expectations for students' success. Teacher who use this strategies and who constantly improve his teaching abilities must be a very successful teacher. Yet, how many teachers are using all these strategies and how many teachers are successful CLIL teachers? According to this, CLIL teachers are facing high teaching standards.

Graddol (2005) argues that teachers in different countries are not being given the space and opportunity to develop their pedagogic strategies in target language. Graddol gives an example of Hong Kong where students who were learning content through mother tongue, Chinese, used to memorize parts of the books and this was their learning strategy. On the other hand, when students started to learn content through English they were faced with new strategies while memorization was not allowed. This change in both learning and teaching strategies became a problem and in 2005 government restricted the number of schools to 25% which used English-medium education. Thus, both learning and teaching strategies should be adjusted to learners' needs, content, mother tongue, target language, teachers' teaching styles and curriculum as well.

One rationale for teaching languages to young children is the idea that they find it easier to learn languages than older students (Maldonado 2006). English for young learners (EYL) also provides a foundation for transition to CLIL or even to English-medium in secondary school. In most cases CLIL is used in secondary schools and relies on basic skills in English being already taught at primary level. In fact, not all students achieve the same level of English proficiency and are not able to follow the curriculum in the same way. In addition, existing exams are not often appropriate for all students because they are not at the same level of target language proficiency. Sometimes students get low scores in exams because they cannot carry out tasks in target language even though they know the content. Therefore, finding the answers for questions like: *What will be the assessment criteria?* and *What kind of exams should be given to students in bilingual programme?* are important issues for CLIL experts.

In terms of CLIL implications on learners, gender issues must be considered too. It is believed that girls are better in learning languages so they are more successful in CLIL programme and they get better results in exams. Then, after they finish school they get more places at universities and better jobs. How can teacher recognize true knowledge of a student who is not able to express it in foreign language? What will be the assessment criteria? Hence, these things had to be work out in each country.

Another point I want to make is that if the project to make English as a second language of the world's primary schools is successful, a new generation of English-knowing children will grow up who do not need further English lessons of the traditional kind. Indeed many will be expected to learn curriculum subjects such as mathematics, history, biology and science through the medium of English. As a result, English teachers may have a problem because they may lose their subject as a timetabled space or even to lose their jobs.

THE FUTURE OF CLIL

In the world of globalization the English language is a phenomenon which lies at the heart of it. Graddol (2006) points out that English is now redefining national and individual identities worldwide, shifting political fault lines, creating global wealth and social exclusion, it is also suggesting new notions of human rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Graddol (ibid) argues that there is a massive increase in number of people who learn English and this number is likely to reach a peak of around two billion in the next 10-15 years. Then he makes a very good point with his statement that numbers of learners who learn English will probably decline. Therefore, native-speaker norms are becoming less relevant as English becomes a component of basic education in many countries, especially in those countries where in CLIL curriculum English is the target language.

Since there are more non-native speaker teachers of English, they will create major competition to native speaker teachers. Non-native speaker teachers will probably have more important role in the future in terms of teaching English. If English as the target language of CLIL curriculum in many countries becomes a basic skill, then success in other areas of the curriculum will become dependant on success in English. Hence, languages, especially English appears to be losing its separate identity as a discipline and starts to merge with general education.

Another thing is that Cazden (1992) stresses the importance of active teachers and introduces the metaphor of 'instructional detours' to capture how they introduce both planned and unplanned language teaching in their classrooms. With this statement Cazden points out the importance of lesson plans. In CLIL curriculum, as Maldonado (2006) proposes, both content and target language teacher make plans for the lesson. They work together on the content choosing the right didactic material for presenting it and they work on the language in order that students can master that content. Yet, sometimes in the classroom happens something that is not predicted with a lesson plan. That can be a question concerning the content that language teacher cannot answer or a question concerning language issues that content teacher cannot answer. Then, teacher need to detour from the lesson plan and find the right answer if possible. This is the moment when both teachers should be in the class because that would be the best solution. In CLIL programme this is not always possible. Therefore, CLIL maybe offers team work but it does not offer all answers.

Among linguistic factors, in CLIL curriculum, difficulties with vocabulary were most frequently given as the reason for differences in performance between mother tongue and target language. In addition, the language of the classroom was functionally restricted in some ways in order that students can better understand the content. Simplifying the language is not always productive because in that way student may better understand the meaning of a word in that moment but he will not acquire specialist vocabulary that he need. Thus, in bilingual teaching schools, English teachers should acquire additional skills in order that they can teach other subjects, and on the other hand, subject teachers should improve target language teaching skills.

Content and Language Integrated Learning is not often just an educational project but also a political project and economic one. A remarkable number of governments have an ambition to make their country bilingual. The European project is to create plurilingual citizens. According to Graddol, countries outside Europe, is trying to do this too. Graddol finds that Colombia's 'Social Programme for Foreign Languages without Borders' is a government initiative to make the country bilingual in 10 years. In Mongolia in 2004 the Prime Minister declared that the country should become bilingual in English. In South Korea and Taiwan, a public opinion survey published in January 2006, found that the government will designate English the second official language. Therefore, in some countries, CLIL may have a future but it is not possible to predict how long it will last.

Stern (1983) recognizes bilingualism as a social good to be developed through schooling because of its importance as a "binding force in the society across its linguistic divisions" (Stern, 1983:437). CLIL will probably have a future in those countries that have two or three official languages. Such country is Canada. Canada's official languages are English and French. People in Canada have a motive to study other official language of their country because they have friends, colleagues, peers, cousins who speak that other language different from their MT. On the contrary, students in monolingual countries are not motivated in the same way and learning content in a foreign language is just a problem for them. Therefore, we can ask a question: Does CLIL has a future.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have tried to argue that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has both advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, I pointed out its disadvantages because I believe that some aspects of CLIL are not fully planned and organized in details and that may be the reason why some problems still occur in teaching practice (e.g. losing mother tongue proficiency, not understanding the content completely, training the staff to teach in CLIL curriculum etc.).

CLIL curriculum is successful in some countries but many countries, such as Sweden, Slovenia and Iceland, are being afraid of implementing CLIL because of the power of English as a language of globalization. I would like to research CLIL implications on language teaching further because I believe that some aspects of language teaching through CLIL curriculum may give me few ideas how to solve some teaching problems or may point out to some mistakes that occur in such curriculum and may help me to avoid them in my teaching practice. Furthermore, with this assignment I would like to point out that

CLIL is very efficient way of learning both content and language in the same class, why it is not accepted and implemented in all countries.

Appendix 1

A Questionnaire about CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)

Name: _____

Surname: _____

Age: _____

Sex: a) M b) F

Country of origin: _____

Mother tongue: _____

Teaching experience: 1 year 2 years 3 years more _____

1. Is CLIL implemented in your country?

YES

NO

If YES explain here how do you feel about it: _____

If NO explain here the potential problems and why it could not work in your opinion: _____

2. What are the three main advantages of CLIL in your opinion? Explain this from your teaching and learning experience.

3. What are the three main disadvantages of CLIL in your opinion? Explain this from your teaching and learning experience.

4. What is happening with MT in your country when content is thought through L2?

5. What might happen with your MT in terms of globalization and CLIL?

6. Explain how do you feel when you have to master the content through the foreign language? Give some examples.

7. In your opinion, does CLIL have a future in your country? Why?

8. In your opinion, does CLIL have a future in the world of globalization? Why?

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Ивана Ђирковић Миладиновић

ПРЕДНОСТИ И НЕДОСТАЦИ НАСТАВЕ ДРУГИХ ПРЕДМЕТА НА СТРАНОМ ЈЕЗИКУ

РЕЗИМЕ

У раду се разматрају предности и мане подучавања наставних садржаја на страном језику (у овом случају на енглеском језику). Посебно су истакнуте негативне стране оваквог подучавања јер неки аспекти КЛИЛ-а још увек нису довољно развијени, па се јавља низ проблема у наставном процесу као што су: лоше познавање матерњег језика као и граматике и правописа истог, неразумевање садржаја који се преноси путем енглеског језика, немогућност наставника да постигну висок ниво стручности и на пољу страног језика и наставног предмета који предају.