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Application of CLIL Feature in VET

Example of Good Experiences from an Upper Secondary Vocational School

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Abstract

The Upper Secondary Vocational School for Transport in Bratislava takes up the challenges of arming its students with relevant education. Due to the fact that students learn in various ways, the teachers implement a combination of approaches including synchronous, asynchronous, critical thinking, case study, tutorial, and team-based learning among others. They provide education in both classroom mode and on the online platform. Moreover, they try to educate their students in both Slovak and English languages. Besides the regular English language programs, the teachers also provide core skill-enhancing courses like *Technical English*, *Business English*, as well as, *English of automotive mechanics and commerce*. The paper presents examples of good practice related to the use of a recently written textbook *English of Automotive Mechanics and Commerce* within the teaching processes, which has been essential for skilled language teachers who also have a nice command of mechanical and commercial understanding.

Keywords:
Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
Bilingual education
Vocational education and training (VET)
Automotive mechanics and commerce

1 Introduction

The transport and automotive industry represent a significant area of the tertiary sector of the Slovak economy and it needs a sufficiency of skilled labour forces. One of the providers of vocational education and training of labour forces for transport and transport services is Upper Secondary Vocational School for Transport in Bratislava. The school prepares graduates directly for practice (Hašková, Zatkalík, M. 2017, 2018), while a part of them continues their studies at universities, mainly those with technical and traffic orientation. The school and its staff take up the challenge of arming its students with relevant education. Teachers in this school use to implement a combination of approaches including synchronous, asynchronous, critical thinking, case study, tutorial, and team-based learning among others. They provide education in both classroom mode and on the online platform. Moreover, they try to educate their students in both Slovak and English languages. However, at the secondary school level students find themselves between the lower and the higher phases of education and they as learners do not require to be proficient in the target language, for example, English, to follow the content, but they create a reasonable bond (Graddol, 2006). That is why so-called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) can be a very important tool for them to gain or boost knowledge and comprehend the content

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while using and cultivating the target language simultaneously. As e.g., Coyle and others mention (Coyle et al., 2010) CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language.

There have been two reasons at the Upper Secondary School of Transport, which evoked a need of this school to implement in some way CLIL into its practice. One reason was comments and evaluations stated in different discussions by those students who returned home after they had conducted some practice and work abroad. These students strongly emphasized the relevance of the dual-focused educational approach. The second reason was the experiences of teachers who got back after performing work or practice in some automotive company abroad. In the opinions of many of these teachers, CLIL might be very useful for both teachers and students, who conduct certain technical activities abroad. Moreover, various companies that function in the global environment, academia, and vocational schools advise the importance of being armed with dual-focused education.

2 Innovative CLIL methods at the Secondary School under discussion

CLIL approach is one that is favorable in content-based language learning. According to Ellis (2003), content-based language learning is premised on the supposition that learners would effectively learn a language that engages them in learning content matter. Nonetheless, this approach also has several downsides Kondal, Bairi, 2017). For instance, language teachers are required to teach subjects or content in the CLIL approach. But since most of the teachers are not familiar with the implementation of the CLIL approach this is causing a challenge (Kováčiková, 2013). Similarly, students also face challenges. For example, students who involve in the CLIL approach predominantly focus on the content of the subject matter without giving more priority to the target language. This remains a challenge while making the approach less productive. CLIL classroom instruction can be unsuccessful. One of the reasons is a lack of sufficiently trained and qualified teachers operating in the process of the CLIL approach. These downsides result in a necessity to renovate the CLIL approach itself, what is referred to as innovative CLIL (ICLIL;e.g. Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Students naming in English parts of the equipment.

Fig. 2: Group work during commercial lesson.

Since the process of learning takes place in multiple ways, as concerns the method of learning, the teachers who have adapted to the innovative CLIL approaches, in their classrooms or online lessons, implement a combination of approaches including synchronous, asynchronous, critical thinking, case study, tutorial, team-based learning and the like. The way of learning in a synchronous approach means that two or more things

happen at the same time. The asynchronous approach means that two or more things happen at different times. Teachers provide education in both classroom mode and in the online setting using one or more of the appropriate methods. Moreover, the teachers put the necessary efforts to educate their students in both Slovak and English languages. Lessons are also given in the German language albeit the intensity is comparably lesser.

At the core of the education, the process is also approached like the case method, a form of learning where one reads and discusses a real situation and its outcome, critical thinking development that involves analysing and evaluating information, or a tutorial, a meeting between a student and a tutor, either one-to-one or in small groups (Fig. 2). Overall, the school relies on the advanced pedagogy of modern time and new methods or approaches to teaching and learning processes, which incorporate collaborative, constructivist, integrative, reflective, and inquiry-based learning. CLIL is innovative in and of itself due to its dual-focused learning approach. Nevertheless, it is equally appropriate to recognize that the innovative CLIL approach is not innovative solely because of its dual focus, it is rather the ever-improving methodology, enabling change of attitude in learners, that makes it innovative.

Also, we may consider the vision of the school administration as a part of material and psychological preparation which is an integral part of internal and external conditions enhancing innovative CLIL approaches. The school puts much effort into innovative teaching and creative learning. This is very visible during the preparatory phase of selecting teaching materials and teaching aids (content and method), which involve complex sources including digital resources, such as the HGS data, an online tool (Hella Gutmann Solutions GmbH), helpful to teaching technical details in the areas concerning the automotive technology. Here, in fact, the teacher acts as an authority, he or she uses their indispensable gatekeeping position before knowledge materials are properly disseminated to the learners for use. The teacher selects the relevant materials in a responsible and professional manner from available sources, evaluates, weighs, organizes, and presents them to the learners in an enjoyable and palatable style. Needless to say, the effort contributes toward directing the education system to a higher standard. One of the means supposed to contribute to a higher quality, efficiency and attractiveness of the education offered by the school, is a newly created textbook *English of Automotive Technics and Commerce* based on innovative CLIL approaches towards English language acquisition (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

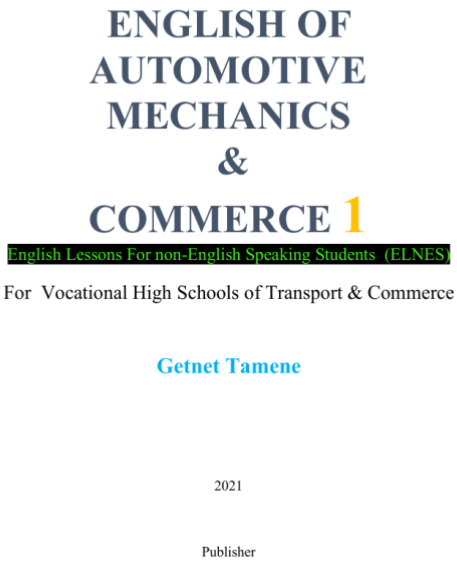


Fig. 3: Cover page of the textbook.

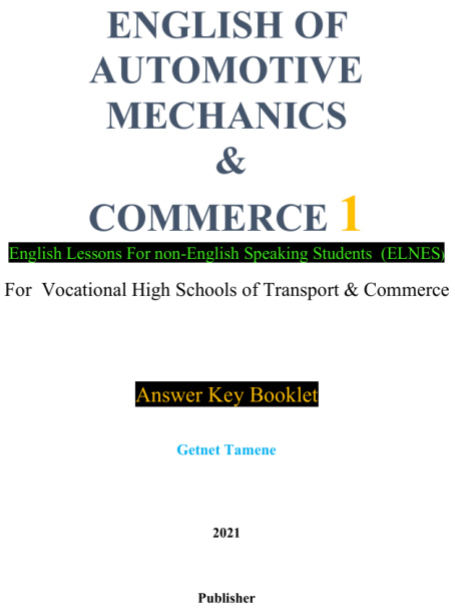


Fig. 4: Cover page of the *Answer Key Booklet*.

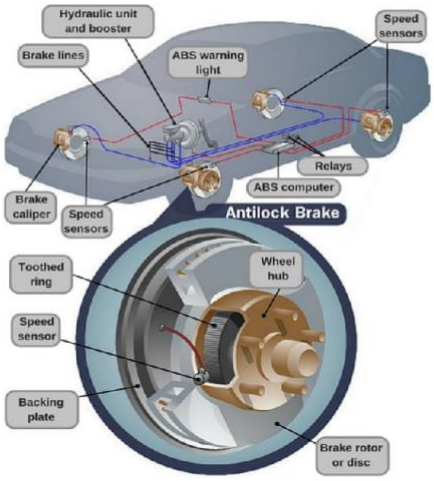
3 The textbook as a result of a survey among the teachers and students

Recently completed (ready to publication textbook) entitled *English of Automotive Technics and Commerce* (Getnet Tamene) was written with the aim of providing technical English lessons for non-English speaking students (ELNES), in the Upper Secondary Vocational School for Transport, but it is also recommended for use elsewhere. The textbook (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4) is designed for higher vocational secondary schools of transportation and commerce, where automotive technics and business lessons are incorporated into the educational process. The contents of the textbook are susceptible to digital-based teaching and learning environment. It is open to CLIL and further innovative approaches, such as ICLIL.

The textbook embraces two sections, namely *Automotive Mechanics*, and *Commerce*. Section one *Automotive Mechanics* contains the following ten chapters:

1. Tools and Equipment,
2. Engine,
3. Diesel Engine Versus Petrol Engine,
4. Gear Pump,
5. Bearings,
6. Car Diagnostic Equipment,
7. Vehicles: Chassis and Car Body Parts,
8. General Safety Precautions in the Automotive Workspace.
9. Batteries, and
10. Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS).

Each of the chapters is divided further into 15 detailed parts. For example, the first of the chapters *Tools and Equipment* consists of the following 15 detailed parts: Reading, Description, Comprehension, Pair or group work, Sentence completion, Note on syllables and word stress, Syllable count and word stress, Completing a text, Writing one: Turning a text into an outline-skeleton, Writing two: Turning a skeleton outline into a text, Speaking, An Interview, Grammar, Exercises, Conversation (Fig. 5).



Working components of an ABS

Image source: haroldsautocenter.com, also see scienceabc.com

3. Comprehension. Read the text and match descriptions 1-10 to the text in 1, and the diagrams in 2.

1. The **diagrams** in 2 show _____.
2. The components of the **ABS** include _____.
3. Which diagram in the picture shows an **ABS** basic scheme? _____.
4. Diagrams E depicts _____.
5. An **ABS** helps the driver to maintain some steering ability to avoid _____ during the process of braking.

Fig. 5: Example of an exercise from the section *Automotive Mechanics*

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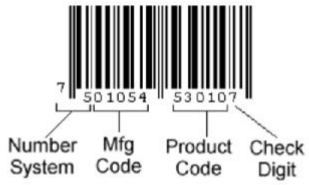
Structure of barcode



EAN – 13 SYMBOLOGY

Image source: barcodeisland.com

The Slovak Republic bears a three number EAN barcode, 858. We have a list of EAN barcodes of some countries below:

Country code

850.....**Cuba**
858..... **Slovakia**
859.....**Czech Republic**
860.....**Serbia**
400.....**Germany**
590.....**Poland**
599.....**Hungary**

While **barcodes can** identify the **country of origin** of the manufacturing company, they **do** not indicate where the product is made. The most ubiquitous **barcodes** allow an eight to fourteen digit number to be read by a laser scanner.

Fig. 6: Example of an exercise from the section *Commerce*

Section two *Commerce*, too, contains ten chapters and these are:

1. Basics of Commodity and Goods Knowledge,
2. Subjective and Objective Methods of Quality Assessment,
3. Factors that Negatively Affect the Utility Value of Goods,
4. Function of Packaging,
5. Identification of Goods,
6. Product Labelling,
7. Packaging of Food Products,
8. Factors that Affect Food Storage,
9. Iron and Its Properties, and
10. Some Implements of Vocational Relevance.

Each of the chapters is divided further into 9 to 15 detailed parts. For example, in the case of the chapter *Basics of Commodity and Goods Knowledge* the detailed parts are: Reading; Description and analysis of goods; Commodities; Description and analysis of commodities; Consumer goods and capital goods; Description and analysis of consumer goods; Capital good; Description and Analysis of capital goods as compared to consumer goods; The relevance of goods knowledge; Exercises: Task 1 – General discussion, Task 2 – What´s good?, Task 3 – Subjective and objective methods of evaluation, Task 4 – Filling a blank space, Task 5 – Syllable count and word stress, Task 6 – Write a paragraph about commodities and goods (Fig. 7).

An integral part of the textbook is the *Answer Key Booklet* (Fig. 4) which provides answers to all exercises contained in the 20 chapters of the textbook.

Within the preparation phase of the textbook, semi-structured interviews and group discussions were held to reinforce the main principles and ideas of the intended textbook conception. The interviews and discussions were conducted in the time period October 2020 - November 2021. Participants in the interviews and discussions were 15 teachers and 55 students of the Upper Secondary Vocational School for Transport in Bratislava.

One of the questions posed to the respondents in the inquiry was:

Is the idea of integrating foreign languages in the didactics of automotive technology innovative? If your response is ‚Yes ', which foreign languages should the pedagogic process incorporate?

The idea was assessed by all 70 respondents as innovative. Within the second part of the question, six world languages were considered. These were the English language, the French language, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish and the German language. Preferences of the respondents with regard to each of the stated languages are summarized in a graphical form in Fig. 5. As the results show, more respondents are inclined towards favouring the English language.

The other question that was posed to the respondents in the inquiry was:

Which form of learning is preferable to you?

Within a discussion of this question, six options were considered, classroom setting, online setting, less online more classroom setting, more online less classroom setting, group mode, and individual mode. Preferences of the respondents with regard to each of the stated forms of learning are summarized in a graphical form in Fig. 8. As the results show, more respondents are inclined towards an online setting, which can be significantly influenced also by the arisen corona pandemic situation and its impact on the education sector.

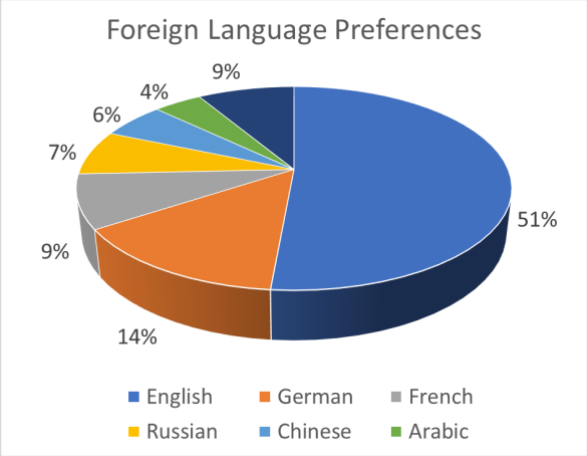


Fig. 7: Distribution of the preferences among the particular foreign languages.

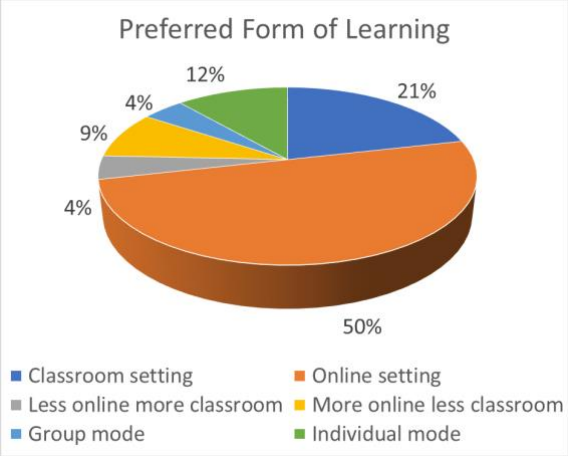


Fig. 8: Distribution of the preferences among the particular learning forms.

4 Conclusion

In general, the presented textbook is based on implementing a less traditional approach and more innovative teaching methods. This is conditioned by a current domestic and international environment that is surrounding us and encourages all of us to use the digital space, the internet, various online platforms, and the like. Both teachers and students are becoming „native speakers "of the digital language of computers and different video applications (Prenskey, 2001). Since information technology is part of our everyday lives, we are familiar with social networking, blogs, chat applications, podcast, wiki presentations, YouTube videos, as well as games, which are more frequently visited by students. These innovative inventions have an impact also on the process of education in the Upper Secondary Vocational School for Transport in Bratislava. Usually, it is possible to see students having been pretty absorbed in their cellphones, laptops, and other electronic devices in the classrooms, while the teachers are delivering the lessons they prepared for that occasion. Why are students engaged in doing such horrible things while the teachers are still teaching? This sounds like a subject of educational psychology, but one possible reason could be that they are adapted to technological devices, they probably favour the online form of learning. A vocational secondary school, it's likely to adjust this discrepancy by regulating the lessons in favour of the students' needs. This way of solving hurdles that arise in the process of learning reminds us of the robust ICLIL approach, which can be occasionally helpful.

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