

Content and Language – how to integrate them on tertiary level

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Abstract

The paper outlines approaches that integrate subject content and professional foreign language into learning environment on tertiary level. It is discussed if CLIL approach suits to internationalization concept of HE. The paper deals with feasibility of CLIL application in Higher Education Institutions and describes the major goals of ERASMUS+ project - *Transnational exchange of good CLIL practice among European Educational Institutions* in which Department of Languages and Humanities of Faculty of Materials Science and Technology is currently involved. Finally, potential utilization of the project outcomes on tertiary level is described.

Keywords:

CLIL on tertiary level of education
Integrated approaches
Teaching in foreign languages
ESP
Erasmus+ strategic partnership

1 Introduction

There is no doubt that globalization of the world has had great impact on internationalization of HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) what is more on “Englishization “ of education on tertiary level. Many universities in Europe entail that their teachers and students have to rely on English as their only shared means of communication, even though they usually have diverse and multilingual repertoires (Smit, 2010, p.60). To publish research data, results, thoughts, ideas, theories etc. on academic issues in English is currently a “must” to become a recognized researcher, scientist or teacher (Hurajová, 2015, p. 3). From students’ point of view, tertiary level of education should provide effective learning environment where they can learn, acquire and develop their professional knowledge, skills required for their future jobs. It seems to be impossible without developing their language skills and professional vocabulary in English. This might be a challenge for both subject teachers and foreign language teachers of HEIs. The Internationalization concept of tertiary level of education in Europe is supported by the EU (see the Bologna process), however, the context of HEIs for internationalization process varies. In some European countries HEIs are able to provide “natural” international learning environment as they manage to attract students from different cultural and language environment to study their study programmes. In these cases English can be used as a common communication tool among teachers and students. How to set up such an international learning environment in HEIs where most of students and teachers speak mother tongue? How to start “ Englishization” process in such HEIs that might contribute to attract students from abroad to study their study programmes which can lead to building of “natural” international learning environment? Can integrated learning approaches help?

2 Integrated approaches in higher education

We think, that integrating English into subject content or subject content into English is a necessity for “Englishization “ process mentioned above. The issue to be discussed is how to conduct that integration. Diverse terms are mentioned in literature and research studies conducted around the world. CBI - content-based instructions, CBLI – content- based language instructions, CBLT – content –based language teaching, CLIL – content language integrated learning, integrated ESP – English for specific purposes, EMI – English as a medium of instruction, LAL – learning through an additional language, LAC – language across the curriculum, LBCT – language –based content teaching, LEE – language-enriched education, TFL – teaching through a foreign language. All these terms covers integrated approaches used across all levels of education. Common principles applied in these approaches more less come out from dual focus on learning outcomes: a) on subject content development and b) on language skills development. The dual focus on learning outcomes calls for cooperation of HEIs teachers. As Chmelíková and Tóthová (2015) stated the collaboration between language practitioners and teachers of the other subject areas is a must, particularly at technical universities.

2.1 Tertiary CLIL

CLIL as an integrated approach of learning is mostly applied on Primary and Secondary level of education. Recently some research studies are done on CLIL application on tertiary level (Vilkanciené (2011); Brebera&Hloušková (2012); Ledergerber (2012); Aguilar (2015) etc.) Vilkanciené (2015) finds in her study that CLIL has definitely a lot to offer at university level. Traditional LSP (language for specific purposes) programmes can be enriched by case studies or other content-based or problem-based assignments that focus on both content and language and follow the majority of CLIL methodology principles. Brebera&Hloušková (2012) state that it is the very nature of CLIL that makes it impossible to give any uniformly applicable guidelines for transition to its dual-focused stage in higher education. They call for more research, more debates on local, on national as well international levels to help teaching professionals cope with demands of current language policies throughout the EU. The latest study by Aguilar (2015) shows that Engineering lecturers prefer EMI modality to CLIL approach because they refuse to teach language. They regard English proficiency as a key factor for all stakeholders and finally they think CLIL better suits less proficient students in HE. Common approach applied for years in HE by language practitioners used to develop professional language vocabulary and skills is LSP or ESP (language for specific purposes or English for specific purposes) approach that might not be always dually focused on learning outcomes. Kováčiková (2010) describes her personal experience in the class so far has proved that unlike the traditional way of ESP classes using traditional methods and materials, the students within the project work showed more enthusiasm and motivation. As it is a learner-centred approach it supports the learner autonomy used cross – curriculum ideas. Project based education is one of the effective ways of implementation this method into ESP classes at the university level.

Before implementing CLIL into education on tertiary level from internationalization concept of HE several aspects should be considered:

1. Context of HEI (natural or non-natural international learning environment)
2. Study programme for CLIL application (some study programmes require higher level of foreign language at least B2 according to CEFR – those ones are better for EMI, TFL or LAL application)
3. Types of lecturers (language ones or subject ones)
4. HEI’s facilities and level of technologies
5. Cooperation opportunity and openness (potential collaboration among subject and language lecturers)

Not all aspects have been listed above. Chmelíková (2015) emphasizes that the readiness of both teachers and students is an essential prerequisite for efficient use of interactive materials which utilization can be an excellent tool in a teacher hand. It can be added that the readiness of all stakeholders for CLIL application is also needed to build efficient dually focusing learning environment.

3 ERASMUS + project focused on CLIL

The ERASMUS+ project *Transnational exchange of good CLIL practice among European Educational Institutions* started in September 2015. 5 countries (Spain, Latvia, Sweden, Lithuania and Slovakia) and 6 partners from various educational institutions will be working on meeting the following projects’ aims:

1. Exchange of good CLIL practice on Primary and Secondary level of education
2. Preparing an e-modular CLIL training for both language and subject teachers with testing and certifying system
3. Testing the e-modular CLIL training by training teachers from partners’ institutions and getting feedback

4. Building web platform for CLIL teachers www.educlil.eu
5. Promoting and disseminating project outcomes

Two members of Department of Languages and Humanities from Faculty Materials Science and Technology in Trnava participate in this project with active involvement in preparing and testing e-modular CLIL training. One subject lecturer from Faculty will be trained via this e-modular CLIL training to gain essential knowledge about CLIL principles and how to apply them on tertiary level of education. One of the dissemination project plans is using the project outcomes to prepare another project proposal on designing CLIL application process on tertiary and start pilot CLIL implementation into some subjects at Faculty of Materials Science and Technology.

4 Conclusion

The paper mapped the terms of approaches applied across tertiary level of education around Europe, which tend to develop subject content and foreign languages in parallel. After CLIL application on Primary and Secondary level of education this approach has been recently studied if it can be efficient way to internationalize tertiary sector. It seems that CLIL approach might be applicable in cases where non-natural international learning environment is set and students' level of CLIL language is at lower level. To set up real efficient CLIL learning environment on tertiary active collaboration among lecturers (subject and language ones) should be deployed. One of the most important facts that has got a great impact on CLIL application success is students' willingness and readiness for CLIL implementation. Before CLIL application a brief survey should be conducted to find lecturers' and students' view on their readiness for this process. It is considered that CLIL implementation on tertiary is a complex process where several stakeholders are involved in (subject and language teachers-lecturers, students and HEIs' management). Some brief manuals about CLIL principles and "how to" guide should be designed and the staff should be trained before starting CLIL application. As this issue Tertiary CLIL is quite latest trend in HE more research should be done on comparing ESP vs CLIL, CLIL impact on learning outcomes of students, CLIL impact on CLIL teachers requirements, CLIL application impact on internationalization of HE in Europe etc.

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