Development of intercultural communicative competence in the context of multilingual education

S. H. Vavilina
Zaporizhzhya National University, Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine

Abstract. This article explores some issues related to the formation of professional intercultural communicative competence in a multilingual and multicultural Europe as well as prospects of collaboration between language and subject teachers taking part in bilingual educational projects. The main focus is on the challenges facing teachers in implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Ukraine. The other aspect explored is the role of teachers of Languages for Specific Purposes in the CLIL programs.

Keywords: content and language integrated learning, professional intercultural communicative competence, foreign languages for specific purposes, basic language skills, academic language skills.

Introduction. Multilingual education is the practice for responding to linguistic diversity in Europe by using more than one language for instructional, administrative and research purposes as well as by teaching curriculum subjects in different languages. Implementation of multilingual education in Ukraine is relevant to the state policy in the educational sphere. The number of government initiatives [2; 3; 5] shows the highest priority given to learning foreign languages in the context of European integration. In response to the state proposals, many Ukrainian universities adopt educational strategies aimed at creating conditions for teaching and learning languages in accordance with the European standards.

These processes in the education at the national and local levels will eventually lead to modernization of educational content and finding new approaches to teaching and learning. CLIL (or Content and Language Integrated Learning) is one of such approaches that have been introduced to meet the needs of rapid internationalisation in European universities. CLIL combines language and content learning objectives and encapsulates methods, forms and technical means of teaching chosen to address the educational tasks in different academic contexts.

Overview of publications on the topic. Recently, the research on CLIL has been done in the following main directions: 1) CLIL goals, rationales, general guidelines and descriptions for CLIL curricular models (D. Coyle, P. Hood, D. Graddol, A. Maljers, D. Marsh, W. Zydati); 2) studies on classroom interaction, language functions (P. Ball, J. Clegg, D. Coyle, J. Cummins, S. Darn, T. Nikula, D. Pinkley); 3) outcome studies (on language and content knowledge, participants beliefs and attitudes (A. Bonnet, C. Dalton-Puffer, D. Gassner, C. Haunold, A. Llinares, C. Mewald, H. J. Vollmer). Summarizing a survey of the kind of questions pursued in current research on CLIL, C. Dalton-Puffer recognizes the necessity to state more explicitly which language learning aims are pursued through the practice of CLIL in order to avoid stagnation in CLIL development. Clear view on language learning goals will help CLIL teachers to align their teaching methods in a way that will make their classrooms content- and language-rich [17].

The purpose of this article is to look at the learning aims that a teacher of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) should set in class to prepare students for participation in CLIL projects. It also outlines prospects of collaboration between LSP and subject teachers for successful implementation of bilingual education programs.

Results and their discussion. There is no doubt that teachers of Language for Specific Purposes work within the area of Content and Language Integrated Learning as they bring the subject content into their foreign language lessons. In the context of academic discipline “Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes” elements of CLIL are aimed at the development of professional intercultural communicative competence. Successful acquisition of language skills and sociocultural knowledge enables University graduates to compete in the international labour market.

Relevance of CLIL to the teaching LSP can be demonstrated by correlation of the main dimensions of this approach with the four components of professional intercultural communicative competence: 1) competences in reading, speaking, listening and writing; 2) linguosociocultural competence; 3) linguistic competences (phonetic, orthographic, lexical, grammatical); strategic competence [4]. D. Coyle singled out four key elements of CLIL (four Cs): Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture [14, p.10]. These four parameters lie within several important dimensions which are related to the constituent parts of professional intercultural communicative competence, namely Culture, Language, Content, Learning, Environment [19]. If we look at the first dimension of Culture, we will see that the main tasks of it involving “building intercultural knowledge and understanding, learning about specific neighboring countries” [19, p.139] and introduction of the “wider cultural context” [19, p. 140] are similar to those of linguosociocultural competence. Similarly, the Language dimension includes improvement of overall target language competence and development of oral communication skills, which can be correlated with linguistic competences (lexical, phonetic, grammatical, orthographic) and competences in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The Content dimension that provides “opportunities to study content through different perspectives” [19, p. 143] and prepares “for future studies and/or working life” [19, p. 144] is closely interrelated with professional orientation of intercultural communicative competence. The Learning dimension which compliemes individual learning strategies and strives to diversify methods and forms of classroom practice [19, p. 144-145] is directly related to the strategic competence. Although the Environment dimension refers exclusively to CLIL, its aims of “preparing for internationalization, specifically EU integration” and “accessing international certification” [19, p. 140] are consistent with the expected out-
comes of successfully formed intercultural communicative competence.

In the context of this research there is a need to highlight some aspects of CLIL approach that have important implications not only for foreign language teaching but also for the whole system of education.

Firstly, CLIL provides opportunities to create different curricular models stipulated by CLIL educational objectives and contextual variables (CLIL-preparatory programs, dual-school education, bilingual education, interdisciplinary approach, language-based projects, specific domain vocational CLIL, etc. [13, p. 14-26]).

Secondly, CLIL has the dual-focused objective of the learning of content with the simultaneous learning of a (foreign) language. From the perspective of the CLIL approach “content” is understood as a curricular content from school subjects or academic non-language disciplines, whereas “language may be viewed as a scaffolding tool, with its own content as a system, which can be used to express functional meanings” [8, p. 115].

The next very important aspect is that CLIL saves time by providing “exposure to the language without requiring extra time in the curriculum” [12, p. 8]. Thus CLIL seems to address not only educational objectives but also administrative needs.

Moreover, CLIL motivates to learn a foreign language by giving reasons for learning, because understanding of subject content is compulsory. It also focuses on assessing the subject content and the ability to use language properly to express this content rather than mastery of linguistic knowledge. What is more, CLIL provides logic and consistency of a syllabus as opposed to language teaching where conceptual content – topics, themes, stories – are subordinated to the underlying linguistic objective.

The last but not least important aspect is that CLIL causes changes in methodological approach. This aspect concerns both language and subject teachers who will have to adjust their teaching methods to ensure that students understand the content. To achieve that teachers will have to employ those means (group work, instructions, tasks, etc.) which would result in an increase of the skill-based focus of the learning. They will also need to adjust educational materials and textbooks to reflect this approach [7].

In the process of introducing these changes, CLIL teachers will inevitably face certain difficulties because while teaching in second language they have to overcome the language barrier. One of the biggest problems is that students taking part in CLIL programmes are not fluent in a foreign language and they usually acquire new subject concepts and the language to express those concepts in the same lesson. The lack of basic language skills or basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) [16] will lead to students not being able to talk in groups in a foreign language without help. Among other challenges, writing sentences with grammatical mistakes, difficulties in following teacher’s talk and laborious reading of subject textbooks in a foreign language are most significant.

Another thing that complicates the teaching process is the low level of academic language proficiency or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) [16]. These are the skills for the purposes of learning (in our case at university) hence the term “academic”. What makes the teaching of these skills so challenging is the fact that they are acquired in the “context-reduced” settings of a classroom by means of cognitively demanding tasks [15, p. 16-17]. The lack of academic language skills leads to students’ inability to work through a problem in a group and report their findings. Students may also have difficulties understanding a complex lecture on an unfamiliar topic as well as reading complex subject textbooks. The fact that students have not learned certain skills needed for planning, drafting and revising a piece of coherent writing implies that they will experience problems with writing assignments. They may also have difficulties in expressing academic thinking processes of defining, classifying, comparing, hypothesising, showing cause and effect, etc.

To address these difficulties and to teach a subject in a foreign language efficiently teachers should employ two main strategies. Firstly, they should recognize which language problems learners will have by acknowledging the language demands of lessons [10]. Secondly, teachers should help learners to deal with language problems by providing different types of support.

It is worth noting that students usually acquire basic language skills (BISC) implicitly through learning how to communicate in a foreign language. CLIL students are often regarded as implicit learners as “CLIL is often delivered through a form of naturalistic situation that allows for largely implicit and incidental learning” [19, p. 151]. Nevertheless, when it comes to the development of academic language proficiency (CALP) researchers agree on the necessity to create the instructional environment required to enable students to catch up academically. Besides giving a primary focus to the context-embedded and cognitively demanding tasks [16], teacher language awareness requires metacognitive thinking that help both subject and language teachers plan and teach their lessons efficiently [19, p. 62]. This metacognitive knowledge about cognition in general and the way how learners acquire a foreign language will help teachers to create a proper educational environment that actively supports development of students’ language awareness. Teaching academic language is a challenging task, because this language needs to be broken into components and “made visible to students” [19, p. 70]. Researchers agree on the necessity to teach academic skills by means of scaffolding, an instructional technique of providing individual support that enables learners to build on prior knowledge and internalize new concepts.

Under these conditions CLIL teachers should certainly opt for explicit instruction and should integrate this type of instructions into their classes. It is no coincidence that some researchers call CLIL the “instructional approach” [20, p. 1] and find it relevant to Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach (D. Brinton, B. Leaver, M. Snow, F. Stoller, S. Styker) [8]. As for the studies about the role that teacher’s instructions play in teaching foreign languages, the number of instructional models for teaching learning strategies have been developed (A.U. Chamot, A.D. Cohen, M. Grenfell, V. Harris, R.L. Oxford, H.H. Stern, A.L. Wenden). These models share some common features. They emphasize students’ metacognitive understanding of the importance of learning strategies and the teacher’s role in modeling and monitoring this understanding. All the authors agree on the necessity to provide students with opportunities to practice and imply acquired strategies in their further learning processes. They also suggest that students should reflect on the use of strate-
gies, evaluating their effectiveness and transferring to new tasks.

Among these models, the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) seems to be the most relevant to the development of academic language skills in CLIL context as it is aimed at learning academic content, language and strategy use [9]. CALLA creators (A.U. Chamot, J. Robbins) insist on the integrated and explicit teaching how to use language learning strategies with the help of task-based activities, visualizing techniques and various graphic organizers [9]. These strategies can be of great help at all the four stages of a CLIL lesson framework: processing the text, identification and organization of knowledge, language identification, tasks for students [18]. D. Pinkley compliments the list of learning strategies proposed by A.U. Chamot and J. Robbins with such “CLIL-appropriate” meaningful activities that provide support for academic reading and writing as anticipation guides, blind sequencing, clustering in context, graphic organizers for reading and writing, jigsaw, thin-pair share, KWHL (what I Know, what I Want to know, How I can find out, what I Learned) charts, etc. [20, p. 4].

The following example from our practical experience in teaching English for Specific Purposes to the students of Journalism shows how we tried to predict problems in developing some components of professional intercultural communicative competence and what kind of support we used. While working on the topic “Films”, we expected that students would have difficulties in both reading and writing professional film reviews. Addressing these difficulties, we created a graphic organizer, namely, Film Review Template (See Fig. 1). It represents the layout of a film review, the aspects they usually cover and the phrases to introduce these aspects. It is worth noting that the phrases in the ‘useful language’ were taken from the reviews that students had read in their text-books in the previous lesson. In this lesson they had to read reviews from The Guardian in pairs and use the template to identify their structural elements, the aspects they cover and complete the third column of the template with the new phrases from their reviews. These templates were later used by students for writing their own film reviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Useful Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paragraph 1 (2)</strong></td>
<td>Background (the film genre, director, setting, basic plot, summary of the reviewer’s conclusion about the film)</td>
<td></td>
<td>This is a well-researched, fact-based drama..., The film is set in..., The film tells the story of..., The film is a homage to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main body</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paragraph 2 (3,4..)</strong></td>
<td>Main points of the plot (description of the plot and the action, information about actors playing the roles, pointing out what is difficult for the film to do and whether it achieves it)</td>
<td></td>
<td>The plot focuses on..., The story begins..., The plot has an unexpected twist..., The film reaches a dramatic climax..., The challenge for the director is to make..., The best thing about the film is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paragraph 3 (4, 5..)</strong></td>
<td>General and critical comments (strengths and weaknesses of the film, comparison of other movies or previous editions)</td>
<td></td>
<td>It is rather long/confusing/slow etc., The cast is excellent/weak..., The script is dull/clever..., The film is both gripping and revelatory..., What is missing, however, is..., It has a tragic/surprising end...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paragraph 4 (5, 6..)</strong></td>
<td>A recommendation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t miss it, it will change the way you see..., It is well worth seeing..., I wouldn’t recommend it because..., Highly recommended, The film is currently available on Netflix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong> (when the film is or where it can be seen)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Film Review Template

One more meaningful activity in the form of a word map was used to develop lexical competence and facilitate the revision of the vocabulary. All the words on the topic “Films” were organized into three word maps according to the stages of making the film: pre-production, production, post-production. Students had to give their own definitions for the words in the maps and then use them to outline the entire process of filmmaking. This task shows how the language may be progressively learnt and used through interrelated perspectives of the Language Triptych [13]. One perspective is language of leaning that allows access to the content. The second part of the Triptych is language for learning needed to carry out classroom tasks, organize and present information. The third part, or language through learning, provides new language emerging from the cognitive processes performed by learners [8, p. 114]. By giving their own definitions for the words in the map students employed the “trinity” of elements that CLIL enables: concepts, procedures (skills) and language. Fig. 2 shows how the content (conceptual) was learned through a procedure (skills) which required a certain type of framework.

So these were examples of incorporating some elements of CLIL methodology into teaching English for specific purposes. Generally speaking, LSP teaching can be referred to a language-driven approach in the CLIL context. It envisages using more content than is typical of foreign language classes that is seen as “a vehicle for teaching target language structures and skills” [19, p. 149]. D. L. Banegas argues that the aim of the LSP model is to help learners at university level master academic content, materials, as well as language skills [8, p. 119]. Even though the basic objective is still language learning, it is not only up to the LSP teacher to adjust the foreign language syllabus to the language demands of the subject curriculum. It helps them to follow the conceptual sequencing of teaching, when themes are introduced according to the logic of chronology, topical relationships or complexity. The main problem here lies in the need to adjust learning materials. Although text-books for LSP of such publishers as Cambridge University Press, Express Publishing, Longman and others follow these conceptual sequencing and CLIL demands for tasks and activity types, they might not be fully relevant to the curricula of the Ukrainian universities.
Besides orienting the syllabus to the language demands of the subject, LSP teachers in CLIL projects play an important role in teaching academic language skills which find their application in all areas of the curriculum. This task is an extremely difficult one as the experience shows that students have very low skills in academic writing and speaking even in the first language. Here subject teachers should also put considerable efforts into developing academic proficiency to equip their students better for CLIL.

In terms of close collaboration with subject teachers the role of LSP teacher involves advising subject teachers on their own language use, on the language demands of their subjects and on the kinds of language support practice which the subject teachers can incorporate into their lessons. They can also work with them on planning schemes of work, making materials and assessment. LSP teacher may also provide assistance with presenting scientific research findings of subject teachers (and students) in a foreign language. Collaboration can be an informal process when teachers work with each other if they get on well and if the cooperation is professionally interesting and mutually beneficial [11].

A valuable contribution into this collaboration can be made by organizing different extra-curricular events aimed at promoting language as a means of professional and intercultural communication. The research evidence shows that language is best acquired in informal or non-formal settings instead of being taught and studied [19, p. 34].

Working within a framework of the Conception of Learning Foreign Languages adopted by Zaporizhzhya National University, teachers of the Department of Foreign languages for Specific Purposes are trying to implement the above-mentioned CLIL strategies into both their professional activity and co-operation with other departments. First of all, they are bringing content into the language learning by: developing academic language skills; giving tasks that students are expected to perform in their future professional lives thanks to developed European Key Competences (including communication in foreign languages, cultural awareness and digital competence); encouraging peer interaction in a foreign language; giving the chance to study the subject from the new perspective and creating their own professional materials; providing opportunities to acquire sociocultural knowledge about distinguishing features of their profession in other countries; asking for reactions, developing critical thinking skills and assigning written practice. Another very important aspect of work is assistance provided by LSP teachers to students with their scientific research and presentation of their findings at the international conferences.

The start was also given to the collaboration with other faculties and departments. It has already become a tradition to hold a competition for the best experts in Legal English in cooperation with the Faculty of Law and the Professor of the University of Liverpool Kiron Reid. Another annual informal event where the LSP teacher provides guidance and language support in preparing materials is the “16 days against violence” campaign.

As to adjustment of learning materials to demands of academic curriculum, the textbook in Legal English which covers some important aspects of the Ukrainian legal system was written in co-authorship with the Dean of the Faculty of Law [1]. Another important example of a fruitful collaboration with the colleagues from this faculty is preparation of the Ukrainian-English dictionary of law terms and legal definitions [6]. The dictionary contains about 10 000 legal terms and collocations pertaining different domains of the Ukrainian Law.

Conclusions. To sum up, the processes in the higher education at the national and local levels provide Ukraine with real prospects for the implementation of multilingual education. CLIL is one of the most promising educational approaches in a multicultural Europe that is strongly associated with cognitive, social, personal and academic benefits. Although some elements of CLIL methodology are being successfully introduced into teaching practices in Ukrainian universities, there are still a lot of problems to be resolved. The results of this research were presented at the International Seminar “Challenges of Multilingual Education in Ukraine” organized by Zaporizhzhya National University and Narva College of the University of Tartu (18th -19th May, 2017, Zaporizhzhya).

ЛІТЕРАТУРА

Розвиток межкультурної іноземної комунікативної компетентності в контексті мноожього образования

С. Г. Вавилова

Анотація. В статті розглядаються проблеми, що стосуються формування міжкультурної іноземної комунікативної компетентності в умовах міжнародної та міжнародної Європи, а також перспектив супроводження іноземних мов та мовистерств в якості преподавачів спеціальних дисциплін, участь яких у двоюязькових програмах. З метою значення проблем, стосовних до мовного узагальнення у процесі впровадження іноземної мови (CLIL). У статті також розглядається роль мов, як інструмент для формування міжкультурної компетентності.

Ключові слова: інтегроване навчання предмету і мови, міжкультурна межекультурна комунікативна компетентність, іноземні мови, академічні навички, академічні язичний учення, академічні языковые умения.

REFERENCES
