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CLIL Interdisciplinary projects in technological and cultural spheres

Comparative Analysis

1. Introduction

Enhancing English language learning is an important objective of the St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University to help advance its position in world university rankings. One of the ways of realizing this goal is to develop new CLIL courses in which mainstream curriculum content, e.g. computer engineering, is taught through the medium of the English language. The CLIL course is developed through the collaboration of foreign language (FL) and technical departments, and due to that the degree of its professional orientation is higher than that in ordinary foreign language course books. The CLIL course is focused on two technical disciplines of the mainstream curriculum, and is aimed at preparing second-year students for specialized lectures in English in their third year. In view of these obvious interdisciplinary links between theory and practice, listening comprehension is the most significant aspect of the course. A similar project is being developed in the Saint-Petersburg University of Culture, in which FL teachers are collaborating with their colleagues from the choreography department in terms of text and multimedia resource selection for their students. Comparison of the two projects, both from the point of view of structuring, linguistic vs mainstream contents and peculiarities of their Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle or Sakai versions can help to improve the regular courses and make them more efficient in practice. Benefits derived from sharing the experience are considered as well.

2. Prospects of CLIL course design in Peter the Great St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University

Measures to optimize learning a FL in higher schools become particularly urgent when an institution is chosen for a special program. On the basis of competitive selection Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU) became a member of the “5-100-2020” program in which numerous activities are planned for the development of international relations, increase of students’ academic mobility and publication activity of research staff (Rudskoy 2013). The university has received grants for the implementation of activities that contribute to the promotion of the university in the international rankings, and for its entry in 2020, among the top five Russian universities, into the first one hundred best universities in the world according to the criteria of the QS agency.

Since the basis of all these activities for the internationalization of the University is, above all, the knowledge of a FL, the professors were tasked with improving the quality of teaching English as the main language of international communication. Key measures to achieve the stated objectives include a significant increase in the number of foreign language classroom hours at the basic level for all the students, an increase in the professional FL learning period from two to four years for a bachelor degree, and the introduction of the elective course “Preparation for IELTS international exams” in the fourth year (Akopova/Popova 2013). In order to ensure the continuity of FL training for all university students, the university administration has approved the decision to provide specialized lectures in English for third year students. Each SPbPU institute identified specific professional disciplines and lecturers capable of delivering courses in English, at least two or four hours a week.

In preparation for the delivering of professionally-oriented lectures in English, many professors began to doubt whether students’ linguistic competence was enough for them to understand their content. For students, we believe, it will be definitely hard to understand an academic discourse, for example, on the subject of “Databases”, which for them is a symbiosis of linguistic and professional difficulties. If students do not prepare properly, for some of them, these difficulties will be insurmountable. Thus, there was an understanding of the need to create an advanced professionally-oriented course tailored for the second-year students, integrating the basic aspects of the content of the disciplines which will be offered to students in English in their third year at the university.

assignments with the use of both language and choreography oriented resources, e.g. web-sites of opera and ballet theatres, of ballet dancers, YouTube recordings of the best performances, and at least some dictionaries, grammars, etc. (E-CLIL 2015). All included self-access materials (e.g. Macias 2012; Haegeman 2015; Devel/Smirnov 2014) on the program will be placed in LMS Sakai.

6. Conclusion

Teaching English as a FL at a non-linguistic University is always a challenge because professors are expected to teach the language but are allocated an insufficient number of classroom hours to do so. In view of this they should be very careful about using the time intended for teaching most efficiently. Our idea of course design is the use of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in order to realize the interdisciplinary links principle. CLIL as a didactic instrument of course arrangement enables us to draw on basic professional discipline content, which can be partially introduced into the content of the foreign language syllabi.

We have compared two possible variants of CLIL course implementation, those at St. Petersburg Polytechnic University and St. Petersburg University of Culture. Even though the polytechnic CLIL is narrowly focused on future lecture courses to be presented in English, and the University of Culture CLIL is more widely focused on the further disciplines of advanced courses, both of them implement the same interdisciplinary idea of optimizing preparation of students for professional disciplines while learning English during their undergraduate studies. Both CLIL courses have been developed to meet the existing challenges of contemporary education and are to be tested in 2016. Only then, after thorough testing, can their effectiveness in English language teaching and their simultaneous introduction into subject-specific disciplines be evaluated.

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Mostly in such discussions, language as content of the interaction during foreign language classes is seen in terms of talking about grammar rules and explicit attention to formal, especially grammatical, correctness. Note that such an understanding implies that language classes have no legitimate content beyond metalinguistic knowledge, at most, some cultural information on the target culture(s) (cf. Met quoted in Snow 1998, 259). In how far such an attitude is justified is an intriguing question in itself, but it will not be pursued any further in this context. Nina Popova, Liudmila Devel CLIL Interdisciplinary projects in technological and cultural spheres 1. Introduction Enhancing English language learning is an important objective. The CLIL course is developed through the collaboration of foreign language (FL) and technical departments, and due to that the degree of its professional orientation is higher than that in ordinary foreign language course books. The CLIL course is focused on two technical disciplines of the mainstream curriculum, and is aimed at preparing second-year students for specialized lectures in English in their third year. In view of these obvious interdisciplinary links between theory and practice, listening comprehension is the most significant aspect of the course. In CLIL-based lesson, a language teacher becomes also a subject teacher. As a result, we have a lesson which is neither a language lesson nor a subject lesson but the combination of both. However, the main role is assigned to the subject. Each CLIL lesson should combine the elements of the following: Content – Progression in knowledge, skills, and understanding of the subject under investigation. Culture – Exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, a wider range of cultural contexts and a better attitude towards international and local citizenship. Read more about the components of CLIL in this article. In a CLIL lesson, all four language skills are exercised through their extent and nature are changed a little bit. Integrating content and language study in higher education. Part 1: What is CLIL? Concepts, methods and research. Elisabeth Wielander 11 June, 2013, Aston University. Session 1: Outline. What is CLIL? Research into CLIL across Europe Conceptual frameworks and methodologies. The Road to CLIL. Education in a language other than L1 is not new - dates back to Antiquity. 20th century: growing focus on cognition, interaction and meaningful communication (Piaget, Vygotsky). Today: new driving forces for language learning require new approaches. Precursor: Canadian Immersion. Canadian Immersion. 1.2 Language learning assumptions in CLIL. CLIL is based on sound theoretical premises and has been trialled for a number of years in various locations. The many children that have already experienced CLIL all around Europe have proven the approach non-detrimental and mainly successful as regards both language and content. The main language learning assumptions of CLIL concern quantity and quality of exposure to the foreign language as well as increased motivation to learn. The primary school curriculum also contains many topics and projects that can be incorporated into CLIL. For instance, mathematics can be taught with limited vocabulary and with considerable use of manipulative experiences.