Development of second-language communicative competence of prospective teachers based on the CLIL Technology (From the experience of a pedagogic project at a Department of History)

Desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa de un segundo idioma de futuros docentes basados en la tecnología CLIL (a partir de la experiencia de un proyecto pedagógico en un Departamento de Historia)

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ABSTRACT:
The article addresses the problem of using the CLIL technology, reveals the importance of using it, its advantages and disadvantages; it highlights the importance of using this technology during the development of second-language professional-communicative competence in students. Moreover, the article describes a pedagogical project that was conducted at the department of history of a humanitarian-pedagogic university with consideration of the requirements of the CLIL technology.
Keywords: CLIL technology, content and language integrated learning, second-language professional-communicative competence.

RESUMEN:
El artículo aborda el problema del uso de la tecnología CLIL, revela la importancia de su uso, sus ventajas y desventajas; destaca la importancia de utilizar esta tecnología durante el desarrollo de la competencia profesional-comunicativa de segunda lengua en los estudiantes. Además, el artículo describe un proyecto pedagógico que se llevó a cabo en el departamento de historia de una universidad humanitario-pedagógica teniendo en cuenta los requisitos de la tecnología CLIL.
Palabras clave: tecnología CLIL, aprendizaje integrado de contenidos e idiomas, competencia profesional-comunicativa en el segundo idioma.

The changes in education goals that occurred at the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century and that partially correspond with the global goal of providing an individual's integration in the social world and productive adaptation in this world, are becoming increasingly oriented at the "free development of an individual", the creative initiative, independence, competitiveness and mobility of a prospective specialist. The changes that occur in the modern society require accelerated improvement of the educational space and definition of education goals that consider the needs and interests of the state, the society

and the individuals (MIshlanova, Zasedateleva, 2013).

Considering that the modern society needs an effective information exchange and international collaborations, it is crucial to raise specialists that not only possess professional competencies, but also know foreign languages at a high level (Bystray, 2017). Therefore, the problems of teaching and learning foreign languages gain increased attention, and the teaching practice involves new educational technologies, including the technology of content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

A modern teacher needs to know a foreign language at a practical level in order to solve many professional tasks. A teacher needs a foreign language to share the teaching experience and scientific achievements with the other members of the global professional community, to publish in the leading international journal and to participate in the international conferences, as well as to use a large number of original sources published in the foreign languages. Therefore, the modern university training of prospective teachers has to be aimed at developing students' second-language professional-communicative competence.

The current state of higher pedagogic education is characterized by the revision and integration of the new standards that have been developed according to the competency-based approach. According to the new requirements, the primary goal of education is developing general cultural and professional competencies that match the third-generation Federal State Education Standard (FSES) and that are necessary for preparing the graduates for pedagogic, project-oriented, research and cultural activity. To summarise, the main goal of the professional education program for prospective teachers is to orient the students to the prospective content of their professional activity. This is the main reason why the primary focus of teaching a foreign language is the professional component. It is currently impossible to teach a foreign language to students of different specialities in the same way. A modern foreign language lesson implies integrating the language and the content of education. The CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) technology provides such opportunity. The CLIL technology in a university implies the learning that equally includes learning the content of the profile subject and the foreign language, which becomes the language of the educational process.

The concept of CLIL was introduced by David Marsh in 1994. From the methodological perspective, CLIL describes the teaching techniques where the educational subjects, or their parts, are taught in a foreign language, which has a dual goal: to learn a subject in a foreign language and to learn a foreign language through the taught subject (Marsh, 2002). Therefore, this technology allows teaching two subjects at once – the foreign language and the target subject. In this case, learning a foreign language becomes increasingly target-oriented because the language is used for solving specific communicative tasks.

The CLIL technology helps the students to understand and learn more about the culture of the studied foreign language. The students process a rather large amount of language material on different topics, which allows them to learn a large number of special terms and get familiar with certain grammar structures. All of this prepares the students for the further studying and using the obtained knowledge in practice. Learning a foreign language and another, or several other, subjects is an additional way of developing students' thinking for achieving the set goals and aims. Additionally, it benefits both the learning of a foreign language and the studied subject and allows developing students' linguistic and communicative competencies in a foreign language in the same educational context as the one where their general educational knowledge and skills are developed (Bentley, 2010; Roelcke, 2009).

In our opinion, using this technology during the foreign language lessons would help to develop second-language professional-communicative competence. We define the structure of second-language professional-communicative competence as the integration of motivational component (urge to master professionally relevant abilities and skills and knowledge of a foreign language, as well as the wish to use and improve them in the prospective professional activity), knowledge component (knowledge of the competencies content), practical component (using the theoretical knowledge in various situations),

individual activity component (students' activity for obtaining linguistic and professional knowledge) and subjective component (professionally relevant qualities, personality qualities, beliefs and axiological orientations).

Therefore, the development of second-language professional-communicative competence of prospective teachers is the main goal of the modern second-language education, since the second-language professional-communicative competence is an important component of a teacher's general competence that would allow a teacher to use the foreign language as a tool for performing his/her professional activity. We define the second-language professional-communicative competence as a complex characteristic of prospective teachers' professional training that reflects the level of development of professional knowledge, abilities, skills and experience in the field of a foreign language which is necessary for performing the professional activity in practice.

It is necessary to point out that the technology of content and language integrated learning is extensively used in many European countries (Finland, Germany, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, France, etc.). The CLIL technology gained wide recognition due to being universal and easily adaptable to all foreign languages, age groups of students and level of their language proficiency (Maljers, 2007; Mehisto, Marsh, 2011). As far as Russia is concerned, the use of the CLIL technology is episodic and is conducted partly and in single educational institutions (Laletina, 2012).

The main specifics of the CLIL technology are:

- Simultaneous dual direction of the learning process (professional and linguistic), i.e. a foreign language is integrated with the content of the subject [CLIL at School in Europe, 2005]. Moreover, the integration can be conducted in two directions: 1) when the learning of a foreign language is included in the program of the speciality subject; 2) when the teacher of the foreign language collaborates with the teacher of the speciality subject (Inozemtseva, 2016);
- The foreign language is a vehicular language for learning the speciality subjects, rather than the goal per se;
- Natural learning of the foreign language takes place during the professional communication;
- Professional communication is more important than grammatically correct speech (if the mistakes do not prevent communication);
- High level of students' motivation is defined by their personal interest towards the professional topics.

Many of CLIL researchers state that one of the main goals of this method of language learning is the development of students' cognitive skills (Mehisto, 2008). The main statement of this idea is the language acquisition theory of S. Krashen (1982). He considers that a specially coordinated learning of the speciality subject and the foreign language facilitates the successful mastering of both subjects, as well as the development of students' cognitive skills by establishing various neural connections in the brain (Krashen, 1982).

In the European countries, the design of an educational course based on the CLIL technology consists of the 4 "C"s: content, communication, cognition and culture. Apart from that, the definition of principles of the content and language integrated learning includes five aspects, each of which presents differently depending on the students' age, social and linguistic environment and the level of immersion in the CLIL. They include: *cultural aspect* (studying and understanding the culture of other countries, development of the skills of interpersonal communication, extended understanding of cultural interactions), *social aspect* (possibility to take an exam for obtaining an international certificate, increase of the educational level), *linguistic aspect* (increase of the general level of language competence, development of communicative skills, in-depth understanding of both native and foreign language, use of the foreign language for practical goals), *content aspect* (possibility of versatile learning of the subject, access to special subject-related vocabulary through the foreign language, preparation for the future learning and work), *educational aspect* (possibility of using various educational strategies, use of different forms of class work, increased students' motivation) (Laletina, 2012).

The main didactic principles of CLIL are: equality of the subject content and the foreign language; consideration of the linguistic characteristics of the specialized texts;

communicative nature; and the principle of progression. The methodical principles include orientation to the activity, orientation to the subject, inductive method, visualisation, game and reflection.

As any other educational technology, CLIL has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the main advantages of this technology is the increase in students' motivation to study a foreign language. Learning a foreign language becomes meaningful because the language is used for solving specific communicative problems. The students become more prepared for communicating in the foreign language in the professional context. Therefore, they become more competitive specialists. Apart from that, the students have an opportunity to learn more about the culture of the studied language. However, the integration of this technology might face certain difficulties. One of the main problems is the fact that the teachers of the foreign language do not have sufficient knowledge of the speciality subjects, while the teachers of the speciality subjects are not proficient in the foreign language. One of the ways to solve this problem might be to organize the collaborative preparation for the lessons by the foreign language teacher and the speciality subject teacher, as well as mutual consults or the conductance of the lesson by the two teachers at once. Another problem is the low level of language proficiency of the students (Krashennikova, 2016).

It is understandable that using the CLIL technology requires a completely new approach to conducting the lessons. The teachers have to use various forms of material presentation and lesson organisation; they have to focus on the individual and creative activity of the students, and primarily use such social forms of interaction as work in pairs, groups, or individual work (Krashennikova, 2016).

Despite certain disadvantages, we would like to point out that the advantages of using the CLIL technology are the fact that the students are integrated into a broader cultural context and the fact that the students get prepared for the prospective professional activity in a foreign language. Moreover, they increase their competitiveness and motivation for self-actualisation and achieving high results in the professional activity.

The main linguistic-didactical unit in the CLIL method is a special text that becomes the basis for reaching the abovementioned goals. The text as a source of information presents a certain topic to the reader, but it also serves as the basis of a lexical and grammar module that provides acquisition of the scientific technology and certain grammar and structural-stylistic constructs. The text also serves as a starting point for the discussions and the expansion of the vocabulary on the given topic, thus simultaneously stimulating the development and activation of communicative skills of dialogue and monologue speech.

We came to such conclusions through the exploration of the CLIL technology. In order to confirm our conclusions, we decided to conduct a pedagogic project among the 1st-year students of the Department of History of South Ural State Humanitarian-Pedagogical University.

The aim of our project was to create and validate a system of tasks based on the CLIL technology that would facilitate the development of second-language professional-communicative competence in the prospective history teachers.

Participants in the project were twenty-nine 1st-year students of the Department of History that study at the speciality 44.03.05 "Pedagogic education (with two profiles of training)". Before starting the project, we conducted a survey among the students. 16 people out of 29 that participated in the survey (55%) noted that the current state of English teaching is unsatisfactory. The prospective history teachers do not understand how the knowledge obtained from the basic foreign language course could be used in the future professional activity and think that learning a foreign language in a university should be practice-oriented and be conducted in the close interaction with the profile subject (History). The conclusions of the survey confirmed the importance of conducting our project. In order to conduct the project, we chose the topic of the Second World War, because the students were learning this topic during the history lessons.

Apart from the survey, we conducted a test that allowed us to define the initial level of development of the second-language professional-communicative competence of the

students from the Department of History. The test consisted of three parts – speaking, listening and reading. As a speaking task, the students were asked to watch a "silent film", a short episode without words, and answer questions. The video was on the topic of the Second World War; it was accompanied by music appropriate for the video, which made a strong impression on the students and helped them understand its content. The questions were the following: Did you guess what the video was about? How did you understand it? What do you know about this historic period? Are you interested in this topic? The task was very interesting for the students. However, they were not able to conduct a complete conversation because they did not know the necessary terms on the topic and kept switching to speaking Russian. In the listening task, they were required to listen to a text about the Battle of Stalingrad and fill in the gaps in the sentences. The test was concluded with a reading task. The students were asked to read a fragment of the memoirs of a Soviet general and do the tasks.

The performance was evaluated on a five-point scale. We would like to note that the average score in the speaking and listening tasks was 2.5, while the reading task had the average score of 4. Therefore, the test allowed us to reveal that the students of the Department of History had a rather low level of English language proficiency.

Within the project, we selected texts and developed a system of exercises within the topic of the Second World War. The proposed texts and exercises were aimed at reaching the main goal of second-language education of the prospective history teachers, i.e. the development of second-language professional-communicative competence.

The developed system of exercises consists of two blocks. The first block includes exercises that require brief answers, for example, exercises for establishing a chronological order, exercises for knowing the dates, facts, processes and phenomena, exercises for systematizing historical information (multiple choice questions), exercises for defining a concept by several characteristics, exercises for working with historical texts, exercises for working with historical map (diagram), exercises for analyzing illustrative material.

The second block includes exercises with extended answers, for example, exercises with open questions, exercises for the analysis of a historical situation and exercises for presenting a well-argued historical evaluation or version of a situation.

The students were proposed the following texts: "The Great Patriotic War", "The Smolensk Battle", "The Moscow Battle", "Heroic Siege of Leningrad", "The Stalingrad Battle", "Work at the periphery", "Creation of anti-Nazi coalition"; after each text, the students did the exercises that we developed. By working with the texts, the students learned the historical vocabulary and did the proposed exercises. We noticed the high level of students' interest in performing those exercises.

At the end of the project, we asked the students to do a project task in groups. The students were required to prepare and present a mini-project on the topic of Chelyabinsk in the years of the Great Patriotic War. The students were required to describe the processes that took place in the economic, political, social and religious fields. At the final lesson, the students presented their mini-projects. During the preparation and presentation of the projects, the students were able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired during the learning with the elements of the CLIL technology. Crucially, the students were highly interested in doing the project because they were engaged by the content of the project. If the project presentations were considered as a part of speaking, the students also succeeded in this task by actively participating in the discussion. They were also asked to do a test that included listening and reading tasks. The listening task required listening to a text and filling in the gaps in the sentences. The reading part required reading a fragment of the memoirs of a Soviet general and do the tasks. Hence, the types of the listening and reading tasks were the same as in the initial test, which had been done intentionally.

General results of the whole test showed that the average students' scores in speaking increased from 2.5 to 4 points, in listening – from 2.5 to 3.5 points, and in reading – from 4 to 5 points. The largest increase was observed for speaking. The conductance of our pedagogical project showed that, during the learning with the use of the CLIL technology, the level of development of the second-language professional-communicative competence of

the 1st-year students of the Department of History increased in all three types of speech activity (speaking, listening and reading).

In conclusion, we repeated the survey where the students were asked to respond to a number of questions. The students noted the high level of interest in both learning the vocabulary and working with the texts because it helped them to expand the knowledge of history (21 students, i.e. 72.4%). By learning the vocabulary, they were able to read the additional material on the topic in English. As a consequence, the motivation to learn English increased as well, which was noticed by 25 students (86.2%).

We would like to reiterate that we used the CLIL technology in the presented pedagogical project. Here, the content and the language components were equally important and equally represented.

The use of the CLIL technology is a very important tool for motivating the students to learn not only a foreign language but also other subjects (in our case, history). Effective work of a teacher and students at the lessons that used this technology would help to develop the necessary level of second-language professional-communicative competence in the students and would help to continue the development of general scientific knowledge and skills.

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[Index]

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