

# CLIL Approach to Overcome Language Acquisition Barrier of Non-Linguistic Specialty Students

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This article presents the principles of a Content and Language Integrated Learning approach at English learning process as effective tool for students in higher schools of Kazakhstan. The purpose of this paper is to search the working hypothesis of educational CLIL approach and examine the impact of 4Cs principles (Content, Cognition, Communication. and Culture) to overcome practical language barrier of students of non-linguistic specialties. Successful Content and Language Integrated Learning requires teachers to involve students into effective learning, presenting the teaching objectives, and the learning results. CLIL involves teaching methodologies, language teaching and presents new challenges in teaching and learning either teachers or learners. This study scrutinizes the theoretical and practical materials of CLIL approach founded on Coyle research (2005). The greatest objection for CLIL teachers is to prepare materials and assignments which are linguistically affordable whilst being cognitively demanding. Authors offer practical activities to verify the effectiveness of “4Cs” aspects: Quick-Write, Think-Pair-Share, Mind Map, Two Stars and a Wish. These activities help students to get information on specific topics, engage them to study the professional fields and subfields of specialty. All activities are aimed at developing all language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing).

**Key words:** *Approach, Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture, Integrated Learning, Language Teaching*



## **Introduction**

The Republic of Kazakhstan's national education strategy guarantees the achievement of an international quality of education. The education system is based on state normative documents. The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev, in his Annual address to the Nation of Kazakhstan, pointed out that the 'global community is turning to be more open: people and information have become the basis of the modern world without borders conception' (Boonyarattanasoontorn, 2017; Nazarbayev, 2017). Quality education positively enhances future economic, political and socio-cultural prosperity of the country (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010). To achieve this, qualitative development of human capital needs much investing in education (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010). The National Project of Language Education Advancement is a key platform to implement trilingual education. Today, many new educational programs have been endorsed by government for the next twelve years. The State Development Program on Education and Science for 2016-2019 sets out to develop trilingual education in all educational institutions and acts as a 'road map'. This map articulates the new State Compulsory Standard of Education for higher education and provides measures to work on amendments in curricula and standards in higher education.

Kazakhstan is considered as a trilingual country with Kazakh, Russian and English spoken by its citizens. Notably, each of these languages has its own status, a status proclaimed in October 2006 at the 12th session of the Assembly of the Nations of Kazakhstan. The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbayev, stated that the knowledge of three languages is important for future generations. The young generation of Kazakhstan should be fluent in three languages; have a progressive and global worldview; and know the history, language and culture of the country. In fact, Kazakh is a state language, Russian the language of intercultural communication and English an international one (Abdullah, Laily Ramli, & Rafek, 2017; Nazarbayev, 2017).

## **The Theoretical Concept of the CLIL Approach in Teaching**

CLIL, as any other educational approach, has specificity for educational and methodological principles. It is an instrument to promote understanding of a foreign language for learners. Navarro-Pablo and Garcia-Jimenez (2018) clearly define the effectiveness of CLIL in teaching foreign languages. Sepesiova (2005) notes that integrated language learning has become the fashionable approach in education. CLIL focuses on the lesson's content and using quality learning materials to promote critical thinking, discussion and learner autonomy (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008; Wu, 2017). CLIL is a single educational approach that involves different models. CLIL can be seen as an umbrella involving several ways of



teaching in which content is learnt using a foreign language. CLIL is based, firstly, on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development: what I can do, what I can do with the help, what I cannot do. Secondly, the basis of it is Krashen's Language Acquisition Model. CLIL is not considered a new model of language and subject education. In fact, CLIL combines content and language teaching and is not considered a new topic (Dulton-Puffer, 2011). It is an innovative fusion. In other words, the base is the same, but the way of teaching is different. Teachers should know their students' wish for learning. Given this, CLIL is a new mode to collect knowledge and to load it into special boxes or packages (Marsh, 2008).

Lechner writes 'CLIL is an instrument of expressing thought or cognitive skills. Thinking skills are realised by means of language, namely classify, define, describe, evaluate, explain, explore and report' (Lechner, 2016). Wolff (2003) declares that CLIL is based on the well-known principle that foreign languages are best learnt by concentrating on the classroom and not on language. The form and structure of CLIL concludes in the content through which language is transmitted. Coyle (2005) highlights that successful Content and Language Integrated Learning requires teachers to identify alternative ways to planning their lessons for effective learning. CLIL is not language teaching that enhances by range of content; neither is it content teaching translated in a different language (code) from the native tongue. However, in applying CLIL, elements of both learning language and subject teaching are apparent.

More importantly, CLIL is a method that merges the content of teaching with the curriculum. CLIL involves multiple methodologies from language and subject teaching to present new challenges for teachers and learners. CLIL can be characterised by the 4Cs: content, communication, cognition and culture (Coyle, 2007; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Niamhom, Srisuantang, & Tanpichai, 2018; Madina, Sholpan, Zhanar, Bekzhan, & Kuandy, 2017). A CLIL approach develops communication skills, expands academic cognitive processes, and encourages intercultural understanding and community values. CLIL encourages the learner to be more cognitively active during the learning process (Van de Craen, Mondt, Allain, & Gao, 2008). As a pedagogical approach, CLIL enables learners to acquire ample vocabulary and to express ideas presented in their native language as well as in the learning language. In other words, learners achieve at any advanced level in all four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking).

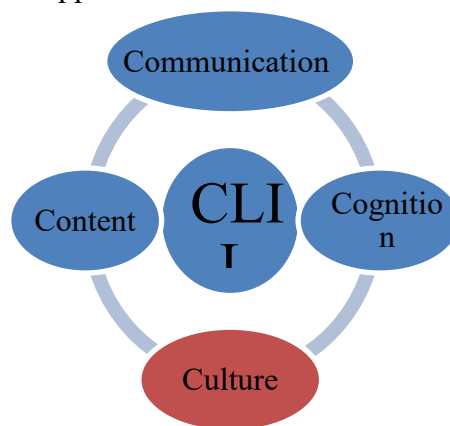
### **Research Questions**

The research was conducted at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan, (ENU). Two hours per week, over a fifteen week period, are spent on English. To implement research questions into practice and make evident the efficiency of the CLIL approach, third-year Psychology students were engaged in this research. There was no specific criteria for the selection of students; those who participated were all volunteers. The research question

centres on the efficiency of a CLIL approach in teaching English to overcome language acquisition barriers through the implementation of “4Cs”.

Targeted teaching points of the English study included learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures through questions and answers. CLIL provides an opportunity to introduce cultural contexts and to learn content through language. CLIL incorporates the 4Cs and it is here that culture is the main aspect for content, communication and cognition (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Four aspects of CLIL approach



Content Learning Integrated Languages involves students in a culture of a studied language; they come to know traditions, customs, rules and modes of life in order to communicate fluently. They come to deeply recognise all details of language (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) as well as developing intercultural understandings.

With regard to Table 1 below, the 4Cs are the fundamental aspects of the CLIL approach and define and frame lesson objectives and useful activities to overcome barriers in language acquisition.

**Table 1:** Objectives and activities of the CLIL lesson

<b>4Cs</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<i>Content</i>	to provide relevant learning contexts to students' future professions (specialty)	Quick-Write
<i>Communication</i>	to present opportunities to interact facing or through technologies (online conference, internet, skype)	Think-Pair-Share
<i>Cognition</i>	to focus on students' language development and thinking skills	Mind Map
<i>Culture</i>	to explore connections between language and cultural identity by examining behaviours, attitudes and values in order to expand students' understandings of their own culture and others'	Two Stars and a Wish Mind Map

### ***“Quick-Write” Activity***

This activity allows students to process content at a much deeper level. Teachers prepare a blank space for students to write and organise their thoughts about given questions or problems. Afterwards, a teacher collects these blanks and analyses students' thought processes. This activity provides opportunities for students to listen to their partners, interact more deeply with the content of the lesson and take ownership for their learning.

### ***“Think-Pair-Share” Activity***

This activity provides the easiest technique to introduce assignments. The teacher asks questions to students and students have two minutes to discuss their responses with their partner. Questions should be open ended and require students to analyse, compare and prove partners' opinions and points of view.

### ***“Mind Map” Activity***

A Mind Map activity allows for making a diagram or a chart to visually depict all information received or transmitted. Students are taught to map out ideas in a non-linear way. Whether it is a word or a question, a mind map typically starts with a central topic in the middle of the page. Mind Maps help students build their own mental 'maps' using 'descriptive' vocabulary.



### ***“Two Stars and a Wish” Activity***

This activity improves grammar and encourages students to demonstrate critical thinking. It implies students' individual work with a given model to produce word banks, sentence starters, language frames, and point out steps of using language. Teachers provide students handouts to record two stars (advantages) and one wish (disadvantage) of a topic discussed in the lesson.

### ***Implementation of the ‘4Cs’ in English Lessons***

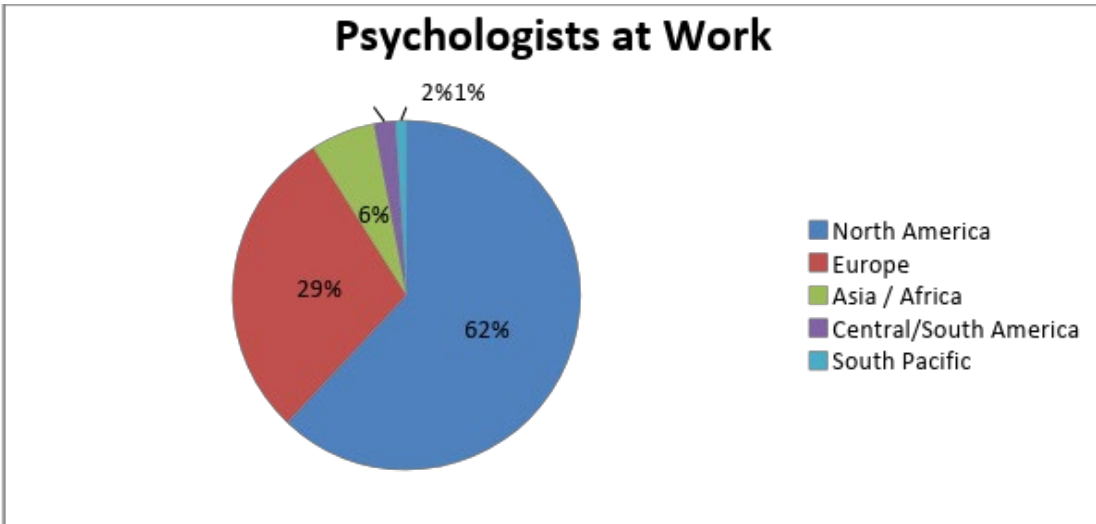
The content of this research is to identify specific vocabulary of psychology in order to overcome language acquisition barriers. Specific vocabulary scaffolds English language acquisition through learning.

A ‘Quick-Write’ activity is more productive when focused on content. The first topic of the lesson is “Psychologists at work”. Students listen to the text about the fields of Psychology. After listening, students work with prepared blanks (piece of papers) and record their thoughts about Psychology. During this activity, students work with partners, share opinions, memorise new information, study subfields of Psychology, record new professional terms, and fill in knowledge gaps. They also match synonyms or antonyms, locate definitions, ask questions, complete sentences, choose key words and work on grammar exercises.

Communication plays a crucial role in developing thinking for learning and applying acquired knowledge specialty. Learning specific vocabulary in English provides language frames to guide and produce communication ideas. Teachers give students the article “Employment of psychologists all over the world” to locate and copy out professional terms and expressions. They then construct their own sentences with the help of these terms so as to use them in their own speech. According to content and communication, students are asked to draw a diagram to visualise information about the employment of psychologists around the world

Figure 2 below illustrates how students are to visualise the knowledge they have acquired.

**Figure 2.** The employment of psychologists around the world



With regards to Figure 2 above, students, working in groups, depict the geographical spread of psychologists around the world. Moreover, students acquire additional information about their future profession and, simultaneously, learn new professional vocabulary. The results presented in Figure 2 illustrate the employment of psychologists in North America at 62%, in Europe at 29%, in Asia/Africa at 6%, in Central/South America at 2%, and in the South Pacific at 1%. This result forces students to analyse and conclude the role of psychologists' employment around the world. In fact, this activity is more productive in fostering and developing students' critical thinking skills.

With regards to Table 2 below, the 'Two stars and a wish' activity is used to assess students' understandings of specific topics. Students record two stars (advantages) and a wish (disadvantage) of a psychologist's profession.

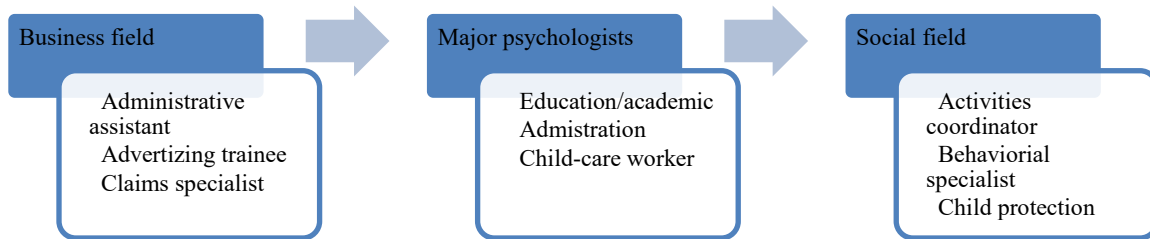
**Table 2:** "Two Stars and a Wish" activity's handout

<b>TWO STARS &amp; A WISH</b>	
<b>Star 1:</b>	_____
	_____
<b>Star 2:</b>	_____
	_____
<b>Wish:</b>	_____
	_____

This activity provided above, motivates students to be active participants of research so as to improve the process of learning. The feedback provided demonstrates the achievements of analysing and evaluating student work gained during the CLIL lesson.

In Table 3 below, the Mind Map activity assists students to construct their own mental maps using descriptive vocabulary:

**Table 3:** Students' mind maps



The activity shown above illustrates what specialties students can choose from for a future career. When students demonstrate knowledge acquisition in this way, they acquire new skills in vocabulary and speaking. They further explore links between language and cultural identity, examining behaviours, attitudes and values in different cultures, especially in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Central and South America. After analysing the global spread of psychologists and specific fields of Psychology, students are directed to undertake their own research in Kazakhstan, as displayed in Figure 3: Where do Kazakhstan psychologists work?

**Figure 3.** Working spheres of psychologists





From the data provided in Figure 3, 42% of psychologists are employed in higher education institutions and secondary schools. 7% of psychologists work in private institutions as practitioners, with 30% of them employed in hospitals. 11% of psychologists are employed in the government sector and 8% in human-service organisations. 2% of the total number of psychologists working in Kazakhstan are found in other areas of employment. Students are able to explain the reasons why psychologists work in these areas. It is evident from Figure 3 that a high proportion of psychologist are teachers and a scientists. Secondly, it is evident that this profession is closely connected with clinical practitioners.

## Conclusion

In considering the CLIL approach and experience the following questions need to be considered: what should students know and understand about the subject; what should students be able to do at the end of the lesson and; what should students be aware of? These questions play an important role in unpacking and understanding CLIL.

This research was based on specific vocabulary, texts and discussions. In order to overcome language acquisition barriers the language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking have been combined.

Listening and writing activities included:

- Listen and label a diagram / picture / map / graph / chart;
- Listen and make notes on specific information (dates, figures, times);
- Listen and write the stages of a process / instructions / sequences;
- Listen and fill in the gaps of a text in a written form.

Reading and speaking activities included:

- Question loops - questions and answers, terms and definitions, halves of sentences;
- Information gap activities with questions;
- Advantages (stars) and disadvantages (a wish) of the discussed topic;
- Class surveys using questionnaires;
- Students present information from a visual using a language support handout.

Successful Content and Language Integrated Learning requires teachers to engage in alternative ways of planning for effective learning. This paper presents the most effective activities to use in English lessons. Students learn to organise and apply knowledge, analyse points of view, evaluate each other's answers and develop critical thinking skills. In order to overcome the language barrier, teachers need to particular attention to language support through implementing the 4Cs.



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