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**STUDENTS' INTEGRATED COMPETENCY AS A RESULT OF CLIL TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION**

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**Abstract**

This article is devoted to the problem of finding and associating a certain competency which could be formed while applying the principles of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in higher education. The aim of the article is to try to introduce the concept of students' integrated competency, as well as to identify the meaning, structure and competences that make up this notion. The authors give an in-depth analysis of research papers devoted to the development of CLIL as an approach to teaching, its introduction in various educational institutions, describe its variety – integrating language and content in higher education – ILCHE and provide us with the methodological foundations of this approach. The papers of the most prominent researchers that contributed to the elaborating this sphere have been analyzed. Besides, the overview of theories concerning various types of competences related to foreign language learning, i.e. communicative, linguistic, cross-cultural etc., as well as competences related to the professional development of students, is provided. A new structure of students' integrated competency is proposed in this article accompanied with the description of its components. The opportunities for its implementation and possible drawbacks are given in the discussion section. The authors conclude that the proposed competency structure could be considered as another step towards the dissemination of CLIL practice into the academic environment.

### Keywords

Content and language integrated learning – CLIL – Competence – Non-linguistic university

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## Introduction

One of the prior tasks of higher education to be solved nowadays is training of highly-qualified specialists capable of competing at the world labor market. The priority today is not only forming special professional skills but also creating the environment for further activation of knowledge obtained during the whole life. Today due to globalization issues happening in our society many new jobs appear and some old ones are going to vanish soon. Consequently, it is important to train graduates able to withstand these challenges and ready for constant learning and self-development. It is a well-known fact that the majority of scientific research papers are published in English. That is why it is hard to overestimate the ultimate importance of foreign language proficiency especially for students of non-linguistic universities and majors because after graduation they should gain access to international knowledge databases in order to be able to exchange the information in their professional sphere.

Due to a popular nowadays concept of life-long learning and continuous education teaching foreign language must also consider some new features like focusing on global tendencies, applying new education technologies including self-education techniques, explicit cross-cultural character of education. The overall competency of a new specialist will definitely include competences related to cross-cultural communication using foreign language, information processing skills, reflexive competencies, tendency to self-improvement during their whole life.

Talking about personal skills we need to say that qualities that are in demand now are tolerance to other cultures, creativity, open-mindedness, sociability, critical thinking, flexibility, ability to represent their country in professional cross-cultural context. Consequently, higher education institutions have to meet the educational challenges of today in order to create an environment for a new competency arising from the need in professional cross-cultural communication using foreign language – an integrated competency.

There appears a logical problem – by what means, using what approaches, methods or technologies in education is it possible to form an integrated competency of future graduates? What should be the structure and integral components of this competency? How could we pursue the integral character of this competency?

The literature review considering both local and international publications shows that the popularity of bilingual and integrated learning practices in higher education is constantly growing. One of the well-known approaches in this sphere is content and language integrated learning (CLIL) which has proved its efficiency in Europe and North America.

The term “content and language integrated learning” appeared back in 1994 thanks to David Marsh, the prominent scientist in the field of bilingual education<sup>1</sup>. Now it is an umbrella term combining various approaches to language learning based on content. Integrated approaches came into wide use in secondary schools of Europe and initially they meant teaching science subjects using second, usually English language. Later in the beginning of XXI century D. Marsh proposed to consider the purpose of foreign language

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<sup>1</sup> D. Marsh; A. Maljers y A. K. Hartiala, Profiling European CLIL Classrooms. Languages Open Doors (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2001), 15-55.

learning as a tool to get the knowledge of another subjects<sup>2</sup>. Finally, another very important researcher of CLIL Do Coyle suggested the dual focus of CLIL – studying the language and the content simultaneously<sup>3</sup>. Theoretical foundations of CLIL are thoroughly presented in the papers of O. Meyer, T. Ting, V. Pavon, Ph. Hood, P. Mehisto etc. Together with D. Marsh and Ph. Hood Do Coyle worked out the basic principle of CLIL – the combination of 4C's – content, cognition, communication, culture<sup>4</sup>, which has become one of the most recognizable foundations of CLIL and have to be put into practice. T. Ting studied differences between language immersion programs and content and language integration<sup>5</sup>. She found out that the main difference between them is scaffolding techniques that are used widely in CLIL classrooms. In Russia today we consider integrated learning of foreign language and content as an essential characteristics and condition of high-quality education in non-linguistic universities. Thus, we mainly address the variety of CLIL which is called ILCHE – Integrating language and content in higher education.

Nowadays in Russia there are some universities where groups of researchers are conducting experimental work on introduction of this approach into educational practice. Let us list some of them. Professors from Peter the Great Saint Petersburg Polytechnic University N. Almazova, L. Khalyapina, T. Baranova etc. have been studying the differences between ILCHE and ESP (English for special purposes), which traditionally was more popular in higher schools in Russia<sup>6</sup>. E. Vdovina is working on integration between Economics subjects and English for academic purposes<sup>7</sup>. A step-by-step plan of introduction the system of integrated learning has been worked out starting at the bachelor's level and up to the master course. Scientists and practitioners from Kazan State Federal University headed by professor L. Salekhova are focusing on cognitive potential of integrating content and language<sup>8</sup>. They are taking into consideration the integration between not only Russian and English language but between Tatar and so-called math language as well. K. Grigoryeva and R. Zaripova studied the possibility of formation of bilingual subject competence using CLIL<sup>9</sup>. Professor T. Serova from Perm National Research University studied the process of

<sup>2</sup> P. Mehisto; D. Marsh y M. J. Frigols, *Uncovering CLIL: Content and Language* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> D. Coyle, Supporting students in content and language integrated learning contexts: planning for effective classrooms. In Masih, J. (ed.). *Learning through a foreign language: models, methods and outcomes* (Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, 1999), 46-62.

<sup>4</sup> D. Coyle; P. Hood y D. Marsh, *CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Y. L. T. Ting, "CLIL not only Immersion but Also Much More than the Sum of its Parts", *English Language Teaching Journal* Vol: 65 num 3 (2011): 314-317.

<sup>6</sup> N. I. Almazova; T. A. Baranova; E. K. Vdovina; N. D. Galskova; E. G. Krylov; L. Yu. Minakova; O. A. Obdalova; S. V. Rybushkina; L. L. Salekhova; T. S. Serova; T. V. Sidorenko y E. M. Shulgina, *Lingvodidakticheskaya kharakteristika otlichitelnykh osobennostei professionalno-orientirovannogo obucheniya inostrannym yazykam i integrirovannogo predmetno-yazykovogo obucheniya. In Integrirovannoe obuchenie inostrannym yazykam i professionalnym distsiplinam. Opyt rossiiskikh vuzov* (Saint Petersburg, 2018), 53-73.

<sup>7</sup> E. K. Vdovina; N. V. Popova y M. S. Kogan, "Predmetno-yazykovoie integrirovannoe obuchenie (CLIL) kak metodologiya aktualizatsii mezhdistsiplinarnykh svyazei v tekhnicheskome vuze", *Vestnik Tambovskogo universiteta. Seriya: Gumanitarnye nauki* Vol: 23 num 173 (2018): 29-42.

<sup>8</sup> L. L. Salekhova, *Didakticheskaya model bilingvalnogo obucheniya matematike v vysshei shkole*. Ph.D. Thesis. Tatar. gos. gumanitar-ped. un-t. (Kazan, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> K. S. Grigorieva, *Formirovanie u studentov tekhnicheskogo vuza inoyazychnoi kompetentsii v sfere professionalnoi kommunikatsii na osnove tekhnologii CLIL*. Ph.D. Thesis. Kazan. 2016 y R. R.

formation of language and communicative culture while integrating content and language<sup>10</sup>. Finally, professor E. Krylov from Izhevsk State Technical University was working in integrating engineering competences with linguistic ones and stated that integrated communicative competence should be a part of professional one<sup>11</sup>. Researchers from Bauman Moscow State Technical University Sirotova A.A. and Sergeeva M.G. are studying the problems of introducing CLIL practice into the learning process of a non-linguistic university<sup>12</sup>.

As you can see, there are many scientists who devoted their papers to the CLIL approach. They were studying various aspects of its implementation, but anyway, the crucial point remains unsolved – how can we describe the results of this kind of education? What competence should we choose to summarize the desirable outcome of using such an approach to teaching in higher schools?

### Materials and methods

Many authors tried to find out the necessary competence from the existing ones or create their own competence and assign it to the results of ILCHE due to the fact that higher education in Russia must be organized according to Federal state educational standard which is designed according to the competence-based approach. Now we will study the existing competencies which could be considered as results of integration of content and language.

Talking about ILCHE it is important to realize that there could be several ways of implementing the integration – language-led and content-led, meaning that focus could be shifted to language aspect or to the subject. But anyway, there should be a balance and real integration between these two sides.

When teaching a foreign language, we naturally think of a so-called communicative competence. The author of this term is American linguist and philosopher N. Chomsky<sup>13</sup>. First, he wrote about linguistic competence of an “ideal” native speaker, which was criticized by another scientist D. Hymes<sup>14</sup>. He was sure that social and cultural context is of a high importance for language learning. So, the interest of people to the nature of communicative

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Zaripova, Modelirovanie obucheniya na inostrannom yazyke v vuze na osnove integrirovannogo predmetno-yazykovogo podkhoda. Ph.D. Thesis. Yoshkar-Ola 2016.

<sup>10</sup> T. S. Serova, Professional'no-orientirovannoe chtenie kak komponent professional'noj deyatel'nosti i ego osnovnye funktsii. In Vidy rechevoj deyatel'nosti v sisteme professional'no-orientirovannogo obucheniya inostrannomu yazyku v vuze (Perm': PGUPPI, 1986), 3–11.

<sup>11</sup> E. G. Krylov, Integrativnoye bilingval'noye obucheniye inostrannomu yazyku i inzhenernym distsiplinam v tekhnicheskome vuze. Ph.D. Thesis (Yekaterinburg, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> M. G. Sergeeva; A. A. Sirotova; V. V. Kolchina; G. V. Brega; V. V. Kaftan; N. N. Kulakova y E. V. Luchina, “Content and language integrated competence of students at non-linguistic universities”, Journal of Advanced Pharmacy Education and Research Vol: 9 num 2 (2019):143-148 y A. A. Sirotova y M. G. Sergeeva, Processual'naya harakteristika integrirovannogo obucheniya inostrannomu yazyku i professional'nym distsiplinam v neyazykovom vuze. Nauchno-metodicheskij elektronnyj zhurnal «Koncept» Vol: 4 (2019). Available at: <http://e-koncept.ru/2019/191029.htm> (access date: 13.06.2020)

<sup>13</sup> N. Chomsky, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965).

<sup>14</sup> D. N. Hymes, On communicative competence. In J.B. Pride, J. Holmes. (eds.). Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings (Harmondsworth: Penguin Publ., 1972), 269-293.

competence resulted in a model of foreign language communicative competence which became very wide-spread in the world.

In general, having a foreign language communicative competence means that you are able and ready to use a foreign language for communication purposes. While integrating content and language, an ability to use a foreign language is obviously regarded as one of the targets. But what exactly does it imply? Researchers M. Canale and M. Swain believed that there were three sub-competencies – grammar, socio-linguistic and strategic<sup>15</sup>. Grammar competence despite its name included not only knowledge of grammar rules, but also vocabulary, spelling and phonetics. Socio-linguistic competence included the ability to use the language correctly in various contexts and also was looked at in terms of cultural awareness and strategic implied an ability to overcome possible communicative obstacles with the help of paraphrasing, asking questions and so on. Later the fourth element was added – discourse competence.

In Russia the most popular model of foreign language communicative competence was offered by I. Bim and included linguistic, discourse, socio-cultural, strategic and study-cognitive competence<sup>16</sup>. The last one was regarded as the most controversial but nowadays it has proved its high importance.

Nowadays we can see that a lot of authors suggest combining communicative competence with another one, related to language learning – cross-cultural. The idea is that acquiring a language is impossible without getting to know the culture but if communicative competence is fully based and depends on a language, cross-cultural competence is built on a language but is regarded separately from it.

Talking about formation of these competences while studying at the university many authors write about such a concept as professional communicative competence. To tell the truth, this paradigm does not exist de jure in Federal state educational standard, however, the majority of researchers studying the problems of foreign language teaching in higher school admit the necessity and validity of this notion.

Moreover, when we try to incorporate the integration principles into higher education and implement ILCHE, we need to think of a new category that will imply everything that CLIL can offer with the inflexion of professional education.

## Results

We suppose that expected educational results of ILCHE should be based on CLIL fundamental principles 4C – content, communication, cognition and culture. Together with this idea we should take into consideration the methodology of competence structure and competency formation. As ILCHE is related to university education, we deal with formation of professional competency of future graduates. So we think that the overall professional competency must definitely include foreign language competence meaning the ability to communicate in foreign language in their professional sphere. The overall professional

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<sup>15</sup> M. Canale, From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In Richard, J.C., Schmidt, R.W. (eds.). *Language and Communication* (London: Longman Publ., 1983), 2-27.

<sup>16</sup> I. L. Bim, “Nekotoryye aktual'nyye problemy sovremennogo obucheniya inostrannym yazykam. Inostrannyye yazyki v shkole”, *Foreign Languages for Schools Vol: 4* (2001): 5-7.

competency is usually regarded as integrated competency and personality characteristics which incorporates both foreign language communicative competency as well as professional one. Students' integrated competency is based on two pillars – subject competence and foreign language competence. Moreover, the integrated competency formation is impossible without taking into account the approaches to foreign language teaching as they should provide the foundation for proper interdisciplinary integration. As we have said above, we are positive that integrated competency formation should be attained using integrated teaching techniques, i.e. CLIL or ILCHE talking about higher education.

All in all, students' integrated competency could be defined as integrated personality characteristics defining the ability and willingness to obtain, extract and later use foreign language potential and information in their professional engagement as a means of communication, information collection, analysis and solution of professional tasks.

Students' integrated competency formation could be roughly split into two big categories – linguistic competency formation and professional competency formation. It should be stated here that integrated competency is formed within the framework of several subjects, including teaching both foreign language and vocational subjects.

Based on our research, we figured out that linguistic competency formation mainly includes the development of language, socio-linguistic, strategic, discourse and studying competences; while professional competency formation engages cognitive and subject competences. Moreover, according to 4C principle of CLIL we can single out four competences that arise from it – communicative (communication), subject (content), cross-cultural (culture) and cognitive (cognition). As you can see, some of them coincide with the above mentioned ones, which means that they could be compiled.

Consequently, the structure of students' integrated competency formation could be presented in the following way (Table 1):

Students' integrated competency			
Linguistic competency		Vocational competency	
Communicative competence ("communication" & "culture")	foreign language competence (ability to use grammar, subject-related vocabulary and functional language)	Cognitive competence ("cognition")	Ability to develop high order thinking skills while processing professional information using foreign language
	socio-linguistic competence (ability to use the knowledge about social and cultural context in professional communication)	Subject competence ("content")	Ability to process the professionally oriented content while studying both foreign language and professional subjects
Studying competence	Study skills and abilities to extract information and knowledge from foreign language sources	Studying competence	Study skills and abilities to analyze and apply the subject information from foreign language sources

Table 1  
Students' integrated competency structure

## Discussion

Compared to the existing theories regarded the expected learning outcomes of integration of language and content the proposed structure of students' integrated competency has several advantages. Firstly, it fully corresponds to the integrated nature of CLIL and ILCHE and proves its dual character which is reflected in its double linguistic and vocational composition. Secondly, it complies with the approved classification of competences described in Materials and methods section. Thirdly, it is based on the fundamental principle of CLIL – 4C.

However, there are still some vague moments that should be covered. For example, it is not clear enough how this structure should correspond to the Federal state educational standard in Russia. Higher educational institutions have to design their curricula in accordance with the requirements of Federal state educational standard, which gives the following classification of competences: universal (including “communicative competence”, “cross-cultural competence” and “critical thinking”), general professional (including “ability to solve general professional tasks based on the obtained information”) and professional competences. On the one hand, we can observe the coincidence in the integral parts of the proposed structure of students' integrated competency and the classification of Federal state educational standard. On the other hand, it is still unclear how it could be combined and implemented, especially taking into account the fact that de jure the term “professional communicative competence” does not exist in the standard.

## Conclusion

As it can be seen, still much remains to be done in the field of defining the real possible learning outcomes of CLIL and ILCHE in Russia. We should admit that despite the effort of the scientific community both in our country and abroad we are not close to the solution of this problem. It is obvious to many scholars and practitioners all over the world that this integrated approach has a great potential because it can provide future graduates with the environment where they can develop learner autonomy, ability to critical thinking, ability to work with various data using more than one language and for sure be able to present their country's findings in different fields of science and technology on a global stage. That is why it is of a high importance to continue the process of incorporating integrated technologies into the studying process of universities in order to encourage academic mobility and foster the internationalization of education all over the world.

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