

CLIL IN TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH GEOGRAPHY

Yusupova Muxabbat Anatolevna

p.f.f.d PhD, associate professor

Head of the English language department

Khalilova Mohinurbonu Jalolovna

English language student

E-mail: bonu22122@gmail.com

Chirchik State Pedagogical University (Uzbekistan)

ABSTRACT

CLIL is an acronym for Content and Language Integrated Learning and as the term suggests, this approach is used to teach students about a new subject in a language foreign to them. In a CLIL course, learners not only learn a second language but also learn about a topic totally new to them, for example geography or climate change. Learning about geography involves developing knowledge and understanding of: where learners live, other people and places, how people and places interrelate, the significance of location, human and physical environments, causes and consequences of change, explaining geographical patterns and processes.

Key words: CLIL, Geography, Foreign Language Learning, teaching English.

The CLIL approach has gained popularity in language teaching as it offers various benefits to both language learners and educators. The success of this approach relies on the integration of the new language and the new learning content. In a CLIL course, students gain knowledge and understanding of the curricular subject while simultaneously learning and using the target language.

The fact that the target language is new might confuse the learners at the beginning, as they have to focus on both the target matter and using their foreign language skills. By assignments, group work and discussion in the classroom, students will eventually become part of a routine and nothing will seem abnormal or too difficult anymore. In order for the teacher to prepare suitable learning materials and efficiently teach, they should develop their knowledge of the target subject. This is of course a substantial time investment from the CLIL teacher especially if there are no ready-made learning content available. At the same time, the classes are best to be designed in a way that students have a good comprehension of the subject taught and of the foreign language used to teach the topic. Teachers should also be aware of the skills and difficulties of each student, and scaffold the learning activities according to the students' learning process. Concept checking questions are a teacher's right hand when

using the CLIL approach. In addition, learners are expected to be able to ask geographical questions.

For example:

Question: What happened to the Aral Sea and why did the lake dried up?

Answer: While climate change is playing a role, the building of dams, over extraction and mismanagement of water and over-fishing are all playing a part in the disappearing of the world's lakes and rivers. The Soviet government decided in the 1960s to divert those rivers so that they could irrigate the desert region surrounding the Sea in order to favor agriculture rather than supply the Aral Sea basin.

Question: How and why is this coastal landscape changing?

Answer: It's changing because of the hydraulic action of the waves. They crash against the base of the cliffs and undercut them. The overhanging cliff therefore collapses.

Geography teachers in CLIL approach therefore have to know the specific academic language that students need in order to question and explain, to analyse and evaluate evidence, to make conclusions and justify them. Teachers have to present the language of geography and help learners notice key grammatical patterns as well as key content vocabulary. By doing this, students can effectively communicate their knowledge of geographical concepts.

In teaching English by applying the CLIL approach students learn the language naturally, through conversation, observation and socializing, where learning grammar is not the primary goal. Students are also focused on a subject (geography) that interests them and the fact that acquiring more linguistic knowledge will help them learn the target matter better is very motivating. Language teachers should not be off using CLIL just because it is used for subject teaching. The point is not to be expert in a target matter, for example biology or geography, instead of it every language teacher, can add the CLIL approach in a lesson hour.

THE 4CS OF CLIL

The elements for planning successful CLIL lessons (Coyle 1999 & [Coyle 2008](#)) are:

- **CONTENT** - progression in knowledge, skills and understanding related to specific elements of a defined curriculum. e.g. What studies geography? There are two branches of geography, physical and human. Physical geography describes natural events have shaped the Earth through fields of study such as meteorology and climatology. Human geography discusses how humans have influenced the Earth's formation, natural events, rivers, ecosystems, population, etc.
- **COMMUNICATION** - using language to learn whilst learning to use language. e.g. What geography language will learners communicate during the lesson? The language of cause and effect to talk about flooding and landslides.

- **COGNITION** - developing thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language. e.g. Which **thinking skills are demanded of learners in geography lessons?** Developing thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language. Identifying locations, comparing maps, giving reasons for changes in the environment.

- **CULTURE** - exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepen awareness of otherness. (Sometimes referred to as Community or Citizenship)e.g. Is there a cultural focus in the lesson? Can learners from different language backgrounds compare and contrast physical features of their home countries with the physical landscape of their new country? What is similar, what is different and why? In multilingual context it is important to encourage learners to share descriptions of the physical and human features of their home environments and to help learners understand the reason for any differences.

PLANNING A CLIL GEOGRAPHY LESSON IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

It is helpful to start a lesson by finding out what learners already know about the geography topic. Students may know many facts about a topic in their first language but may have difficulty explaining this knowledge in a second or third knowledge. When brainstorming about a new topic, learners may use some words from their first language and then translate it. For example, some vocabulary about geography: climate change, meteorology, human geography, atmosphere, biogeography, map, latitude, longitude, topographic map, political map, scale, distribution, etc. Students will remember the vocabulary better when they can make the real visual connection to the item. For example using [Flashcards](#) to do so would be a great way to help students recall these vocabulary items.

GEOGRAPHICAL WORDS WITH FLASHCARDS

butte

a hill that rises abruptly from the surrounding region

canal

long and narrow strip of water for boats or for irrigation

canyon

a ravine formed by a river in an area with little rainfall

delta

the 4th letter of the Greek alphabet

desert

leave someone who needs or counts on you; leave in the lurch

glacier

a slowly moving mass of ice

mountain

a land mass that projects well above its surroundings

plain

simple

plateau

a relatively flat raised area of land

strait

a narrow channel joining two larger bodies of water

valley

a long depression in the surface of the land

geography

study of the earth's surface

latitude an imaginary line around the Earth parallel to the equator

longitude

the angular distance from the prime meridian at Greenwich

hemisphere

half of a round, three-dimensional shape

meridian

an imaginary great circle on the surface of the earth

PROVIDING SCAFFOLDING

For instance: writing a substitution table on the board to support skills of explaining cause and effect.

The cause of	the erosion	is that river water wears away	the rocks
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Erosion is	caused by the water wearing away	the rocks
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CLIL in teaching English through geography might be very interesting and the information that will be presented in the CLIL class may be delivered orally, in writing, on paper or electronically. It may be for whole class, group or pair work and include practical demonstrations. Teachers need to plan input and output. How are learners going to produce and communicate the content and language of the lesson, will it be communicated orally, in writing or by using practical skills? When subject is taught in non-native language wait time needed between questions and answering them. A longer wait time is needed so that students can process geography concepts in a new language.

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