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Contribution of CLIL Methodology to the Development of Bilingualism and Bilingual Language Competence of Slovak Secondary-School Students

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Abstract: In almost all European countries, many schools offer a form of bilingual education provision according to which content subjects are taught either through two different languages or through one foreign language. This approach is known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The main problem addressed in this research article is the need to examine and describe the contribution of CLIL methodology to the development of bilingual language competence of students of a secondary vocational school. In addition, the study looks at the teaching and learning within a bilingual Slovak-English study program of the school, specifically at the implementation of CLIL methodology in content subjects taught within the program. Specifically, the extent, approaches, materials used in the study program to enhance bilingualism at school in general and the bilingual language competence of the students through CLIL methodology in particular, as well as opinions and perceptions of teachers and students were investigated. Three data collection tools were used – interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations and document review. The results of the study indicate that various factors inside and outside the classroom and school enhance students' bilingual language competence with CLIL methodology playing an important but not a decisive role.

Keywords: *Bilingualism, bilingual education, CLIL, qualitative research, Slovakia.*

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Introduction

The European Commission encourages learning of languages and linguistic diversity across Europe. Based on the conclusions adopted by the European Council meeting in December 2017, the multilingualism policy of the European Union (EU) aims to meet an ambitious goal: enhancing the learning of languages among young people and enabling citizens to learn at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue. To meet the challenges of the globalized world, the European Council (2017) calls on EU Heads of State to take work forward with a view to enhancing the learning of languages, encouraging student mobility and participation in the sphere of education of culture, and strengthening strategic partnerships across the European Union between higher education institutions and promoting the emergence of about twenty "European Universities" by 2024. In Europe, there is nowadays not a consistent system of education; national educational systems follow traditions and cultures of different European countries. In almost all countries in Europe, some schools provide a form of education in which content subjects are taught either through two different languages or through a single, foreign language thus giving non-native speakers an opportunity to acquire a foreign language through a natural approach. This approach is described as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). According to Eurydice (2017), the only countries not providing this kind of education are Denmark, Greece, Iceland and Turkey. Although it occurs in almost all countries in Europe at primary and secondary levels, CLIL is not widespread across European education systems. According to the European Commission, the only countries in which CLIL provision exists in all schools throughout the whole education system are Belgium, Luxembourg and Malta. Among other countries making this kind of provision available, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Germany, Estonia, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania generally offer CLIL at primary as well as secondary level. As such, CLIL proved to be a favourable educational approach that integrates learning a content along with a foreign language (Breidbach & Viebrock, 2012; Perez-Canado, 2012). Numerous studies have been undertaken in Europe in

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order to examine the outcomes of CLIL (Dalton-Puffer, 2008; Perez-Canado, 2018). Much research has been done on the effectivity of CLIL in supporting pupils in improving their proficiency in the target language (de Zarobe & Lagabaster, 2010; Gonzalez, 2011).

According to the European Commission, in the majority of European countries, CLIL classes are offered at primary and secondary (lower and upper secondary) level of education. In some countries, particularly Belgium, Italy, Spain, Finland, Wales, Scotland, Poland and Romania, activities in another language are organized from pre-primary level onwards. Among other countries making this kind of provision available, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Germany, Estonia, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania generally offer CLIL at primary as well as secondary level.

In Slovak background, CLIL has been seen as an appreciated compromise between ambitious bilingual education, i.e. some subjects being taught in a foreign language, and a conventional educational approach to foreign language education in which foreign languages are provided as single academic subjects (Pokrivcakova, 2013). In Slovakia, CLIL classes are provided by both mainstream and bilingual schools where CLIL methodology is implemented into non-language subject lessons such as mathematics, science, geography or religion.

According to Pokrivcakova (2013), CLIL methodology has been applied in primary schools in Slovakia approximately since the beginning of the new millennium. English-speaking CLIL programs were established on a large scale in the 2000s. The first kind of teaching subject content through a foreign language in Slovakia emerged in the form of bilingual education, which meant teaching at least three subjects completely in a foreign language. Consequently, in response to this demanding way of teaching and learning, a method of CLIL started to be implemented in Slovakia in 2000, with the teaching time in a target language restricted to a maximum of 50% (Hanesova, 2015). Currently, there are several dozens of primary schools which incorporate CLIL methodology as an integral part of their school education programs. As compared with the spread of secondary and tertiary CLIL, the most frequent occurrence of CLIL is primary CLIL which is also well developed and supported by a large body of research (Pokrivcakova, 2013). There is no official statistics providing exact numbers of primary and secondary schools using the CLIL methodology; however, the number of published literature and school projects indicates that the number of secondary schools applying CLIL is much lower than that of primary schools (Pokrivcakova, 2015).

The main source of information on applying the CLIL methodology at primary and secondary schools, as well as of inspiration and practical materials, are school websites. Another useful source of information is the official website of The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. This website provides information on the number of bilingual secondary grammar schools and business academies across the whole country. Unfortunately, it lacks the information on the number of bilingual secondary vocational schools and secondary health-care schools. More data on the application of CLIL methodology and projects can usually be found on the school websites. There are a few secondary schools with economic specializations – so-called business academies which apply CLIL, namely Business Academy in Trnava, Topol'cany, Cadca, Kosice, Hlohovec, Veľky Meder, Surany, Zlate Moravce, Zilina, Presov. There are a few secondary schools of nursing which experience CLIL, namely in Zvolen, Kosice, Nove Zamky, Topol'cany and Lucenec. Only a very few secondary vocational schools with other specializations have successfully applied CLIL in Slovakia, namely secondary vocational schools of business and services in Komarno and in RoZnava, secondary vocational automotive school in Kosice and polygraphic secondary vocational school in Bratislava.

Although the CLIL research in Slovakia is still in its infancy (Pokrivcakova, Menzlova, & Luprichova, 2012), a few research studies have been published on this issue in Slovakia. Gondova (2012) carried out a teacher-oriented CLIL research at bilingual lower- and upper-secondary schools. The aim of the study was to identify the needs of CLIL teachers at lower- and upper-secondary schools. The results of the research showed that the teachers would welcome any language materials which would make preparation of a lesson easier and which would reflect the particular requirements of primary and secondary schools in Slovakia. More research studies on CLIL at primary and lower-secondary school have been done as parts of dissertations and theses – e.g. research on professional competences of CLIL teachers in primary education (Sepesiova, 2013), on CLIL application in the mathematics classroom (Kubes, 2012), or on application of CLIL in primary education and modernization of teaching English as a foreign language by using CLIL methodology (Kralikova, 2013; Luprichova, 2013).

As indicated before, the number of secondary vocational schools applying CLIL methodology is very low in Slovakia when compared with primary or secondary grammar schools (general or bilingual). Despite this fact, there are still a few research studies devoted to phenomenon of using CLIL in secondary vocational education. Skodova (2011) studied the possibilities of CLIL implementation at secondary vocational schools with economic specialization. Vesela (2011) did research into the effectiveness of CLIL in teacher training in secondary vocational schools. Tertiary CLIL, which is the least explored area within this methodology in Slovakia, was studied by Kovacikova (2013).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this case study was to find out how CLIL methodology contributes to the development of bilingual language competence of students of secondary vocational school, specifically in the bilingual Slovak-English study program at business academy in the town of Trnava, Slovakia. Specifically, factors that foster bilingualism of

students were explored; that is the extent, approaches, resources, documents and materials were used in the participating school to enhance the foreign language competence of students through CLIL methodology.

With regard to the aims, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What techniques and materials are used in the bilingual classes in order to achieve knowledge of the content and the language?
2. What are the benefits of CLIL as perceived by teachers and students?
3. What factors in the school appear to support or hinder the foreign language competence of students and what are the students' and teachers' perceptions of them?

Methodology

Research Goal

The main goal of this research is to observe how CLIL contributes to the development of bilingual language competence of students of a bilingual Slovak-English study program in the secondary vocational school (business academy), in the town of Trnava in western Slovakia. The aim was to find out the extent, approaches, opinions, documents and materials which are used in the school to develop the foreign language competence of the students through CLIL methodology in particular. The secondary research aims were to describe the available literature on second language acquisition and on CLIL at European level in general and in Slovakia in particular, considering the application of CLIL methodology within secondary level of education, to find out how CLIL methodology is implemented in content subjects within the bilingual Slovak-English study program, to find out how implementation of CLIL methodology affects the students' performance in the bilingual Slovak-English program, and to find out how foreign language competence of students within the bilingual study program is enhanced and fostered in and outside the classroom.

Research Design

This study uses a naturalistic inquiry. The aim of the naturalistic inquiry is to understand the peculiarities of a phenomenon in its natural setting from the perspectives of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, a portrayal of the phenomenon being studied was described by the teachers' and students' experiences and perceptions. In this qualitative research, a case study design was used to address the main three research questions guiding this investigation. A qualitative approach for this study was chosen for several compelling reasons. The case study itself was a bilingual Slovak-English study program at a secondary vocational school (business academy) in the town of Trnava, Slovakia, and the perceptions and opinions of teachers and school managers, as well as students were included. Much can be learned from the descriptions and experiences of secondary-school teachers working in a secondary vocational school offering a bilingual Slovak-English study program, who implement CLIL methodology in their teaching. Using the case study design, it was possible to gather information and learn about each experience and what the experience meant to participants. It also provided an in-depth insight into the selected secondary vocational school and the factors that appear to support bilingualism of its students and sustainability of effective CLIL implementation. As the case was the institution itself, this study could be classed as a single-case study, to use Yin's terminology (2003). Also, it can be identified as a descriptive case study as its purpose was an in-depth description of the case. Referring to Yin (2003), this type of case study is used to describe an act of intervening or phenomenon as well as the real-life context in which it took place.

Study Group and Data Collection

The focus of this study was a secondary vocational school, specifically a business academy in the town of Trnava in western Slovakia. This site was chosen mainly because the school is well-known for being a bilingual school in the region where it is located. Furthermore, it has a good reputation in the town and the region, and is perceived as a prestigious school, and it has also ranked as the best secondary vocational school in Slovakia in the last five consecutive years.

Study Group

For the sake of this study, a total of 8 teachers were interviewed in semi-structured interviews and a group of 14 students in a group interview. They all teach different content subjects from 1st to 5th grade of the bilingual Slovak-English study program at the business academy. Although the sampling applied in this study was purposeful, there were still some selection criteria the researcher followed. The selection criteria for teachers can be described as follows: (1) educational level of teachers (they all had university education either in teaching of content subjects or English language, or they had university education in other field related to the content subjects they teach); (2) they were involved in the bilingual Slovak-English study program at the secondary vocational school; and (3) they all had at least three years of working experience at the secondary vocational school. Although the school community as a whole was observed, only a selected sample of the school community was interviewed. All participants were selected on the basis of intention to get data from participants who are directly involved in the bilingual study program.

The interviews took place within a time span of two months. Prior to each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the research to the interviewees and reassured them that their privacy would be protected. As a general strategy, the conversation began by asking questions to which the interviewees could answer in full sentences, in their own words. The length of one interview with one teacher was from 20 to 30 minutes. The researcher's role during the interviews was to ask prepared questions. There were twenty-one questions the interviewees answered. All interviews were recorded on dictaphone and then transcribed on paper, and when all interviews were collected, the process of coding was initiated.

Data Collection Tools

For the present research, a semi-structured interview was chosen, which is the most used interview technique and the most common format of data collection in qualitative research. A degree of reliability in the semi-structured interviews was reached by the same questions for each respondent and also by use of open-ended questions since they are flexible and they enable interviewees to express their opinions on the situation (Silverman, 2006). The observation was chosen because it is considered to be the most natural research method and observational methods are extensively used in the qualitative research. The observation has the particular strength in the authenticity and validity of the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). As for documents review, the data from documents are objective data, which ensure reliability of the findings. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the document analysis is best to be used as a complementary method to other methods, such as interviews or observations. Reliability in this research can be defined as stability and this can be ensured by triangulation, extended commitment in the field and continual observation.

In this case study, with the participating teachers, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted; the researcher asked structured questions. In addition, interviewed participants were asked to provide answers also to less-structured and open-ended questions to elicit their opinions or perceptions. Eight teachers from the participating school were interviewed in order to find out about their professional background, experience, opinions, content of their subjects taught by CLIL methodology and their attitude towards application in CLIL methodology. During all interviews, the ethical considerations were taken into account, ensuring the interviewees with confidentiality and making them familiar with the fact that they can withdraw at any time. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed in the form of coding. Charmaz (2002) describes coding as naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes and explains each piece of data. In addition, a focus group interview with students was used to complement and enrich data obtained from interviews with teachers. Fourteen students of the fourth year of the bilingual study program were interviewed; the questions asked were semi-structured, and open-ended, and included areas like students' motivation to study at the school, extra-curricular activities provided by school, their perceptions of the school's support of bilingualism, their perceptions of lessons, use of languages and teachers' ways of teaching content subjects through a foreign language.

Additionally to interviews, the researcher visited the participating school and observed lessons in action, while taking field notes during the observations. The aim of the research was to observe lessons taught by eight teachers teaching content subjects using CLIL methodology in the classes of the bilingual program during one school semester. To make notes, an observation form created by the researcher was used. Classroom interactions were defined as the central unit of observation and analysis for the current study. Silverman (2013) describes observations as an effort to gather 'naturally occurring data'. A special attention during classroom observations was paid to the teaching process, the use of languages during the lessons, materials used, distribution of the four language skills, techniques and strategies used, and how the combination of language and content was realized in particular lessons. During classroom observations, an observation form was used, in which notes were made. The observation form included three main parts: teacher-student interaction, time management and transition, and student on task and learning. Participating teachers and students in the classrooms were familiar with the presence of the researcher and were also used to having observers and student teachers in their school. As for the language uses, the researcher's interest consisted of what languages were used in the school environment, specifically the language balance between English and Slovak languages, who used the languages, when were they used, the places where both languages were used, and to what extent, and how bilingual language competence was supported by the school environment.

Although interviews and classroom observations were the primary methods of data collection, some school documents and classroom materials were also collected and reviewed. Curriculum plans and the State Educational Program for Vocational Education and Training were reviewed and discussed with the headmistress of the school. Document review was secondary method of data collection used in this study. For research purposes, school documents were used to inform the researcher about the background of the teaching process in the bilingual study program. The emphasis was put on the quality of the material.

Data Analysis and Data Trustworthiness

The qualitative data in this research were analyzed using triangulation which Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe as the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. In this research, three methods of collecting and analyzing data were combined: interviews,

observations and document review. The type of triangulation applied in this research is methodological triangulation, sometimes called also methods triangulation (Barbour, 1998). Furthermore, it can also be classed as within-method triangulation because at least two data-collection procedures were used (Kimchi, Polivka, & Stevenson, 1991). Data analysis included three levels of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). In the stage of open coding the data were sorted to be compared and to create categories. During axial coding, the categories were contrasted to find descriptive relations between them. During selective coding, core categories were selected. To ensure reliability of coding, hypotheses about relationships among categories created by the researcher were constantly revised during the research until they remained true for all the facts concerning the phenomena under study, which meant repeated and amended interviews, observations and reviews of documents. Moreover, during the whole coding process, the researcher tried to be unbiased, honest and consistent, which also contributed to reliability of coding.

Table 1. Research questions and Core categories

<p>Research Question 1: <i>What techniques and materials are used in the bilingual classes in order to achieve knowledge of the content and the language?</i></p> <p>Core category: 1. Materials creation and use</p> <p>Sub-categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials provided by school - Materials created by teachers - Materials created by students - Visual and auditory materials - Teachers' views of the role of language <p>Core category: 2. Uneven distribution of the four language skills in the classrooms</p> <p>Sub-categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaking skill - Listening skill - Writing skill - Reading skill <p>Core category: 3. Techniques and strategies used in the lessons</p>
<p>Research Question 2: <i>What are the benefits of content and language integrated learning as perceived by teachers and students?</i></p> <p>Core category: 1. Content and language as interconnected areas</p> <p>Core category: 2. Advancing students' cognitive development</p> <p>Core category: 3. Successful school graduates on the job market</p>
<p>Research Question 3: <i>What factors in the school appear to support or hinder the foreign language competence of students and what are the students' and teachers' perceptions of them?</i></p> <p>Core category: 1. School-based factors promoting students' foreign language competence</p> <p>Sub-categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School reputation - Supporting students' involvement in activities promoting their foreign language competence <p>Core category: 2. Classroom-based factors promoting students' foreign language competence</p> <p>Sub-categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive teacher-student interaction - Classroom management and organization - The choice of subjects taught in English <p>Core category: 3. Educational experiences of teachers</p> <p>Sub-categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers' views of their own teaching experience - Knowledge and experience of teachers from students' perspective

Results

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to describe and analyze teaching and learning of content subjects within a bilingual Slovak-English study program, using CLIL methodology. Through data analysis, the following core categories and sub-categories for each research question emerged as shown in Table 1. Furthermore, the research questions are answered.

Research Question 1

What techniques and materials are used in the bilingual classes in order to achieve knowledge of the content and the language?

In this section, the focus was on the on the quality of materials the teachers used in the bilingual classes in order to achieve knowledge of the content and the language; on the techniques they use in the classes to enhance the development of students' language competence and on language skills being developed in the classrooms. The data described in this section were obtained mainly through classroom observations and review of unofficial documents (materials used in lessons), and partly from interviews with teachers and students. Three core categories were created which are described below:

1. *Materials creation and use*

Teachers, who teach classes in the bilingual program often search for new materials, select them, create new materials and adapt existing materials in order to plan their lessons. When selecting or choosing materials, various criteria must be taken into account, such as which cognitive and linguistic skills and abilities should be developed or reinforced, the level of students' language knowledge, the teaching and learning styles, or technical equipment in the school environment (computers, software, Internet or interactive whiteboard). Based on the classroom observations aimed at use of materials, review of the materials and teachers' perceptions, the following sub-categories were created: (a) materials provided by school; (b) materials created by teachers; (c) materials created by students; (d) factors determining choice and design of materials; (e) visual and auditory materials; (f) teachers' views of the role of language.

Based on the classroom observations, the teachers who teach content subjects in the classes of the bilingual program make extensive use of various materials. This is partly due to the fact that the textbooks they use do not always meet the standards of the national curriculum or the students are not familiar with the content; or it is the ambition of teachers to make content more attractive or motivating for students that makes them create their own classroom materials or adapt the existing ones. The teacher of Economic Geography stated:

I was so happy when I found The New Wider World in the British Council. It was a great book that was an excellent choice. I borrowed it and chose chapters from it which I then used. Of course, I had to adapt the language a bit because it seemed to be too demanding for our students. So I simplified the language and made notes from each chapter. Then I typed the texts and distributed the copies among students. That's how I created my first materials. (Translation)

Furthermore, the teacher of Economic Geography explained:

I will prepare a presentation for each new topic. I summarize the most important point from the new topic and the students make notes. It's good for them because they don't have to read the textbook which is quite difficult. It's also good for me because it makes the lesson more interesting, I think. We don't just read the book. I think the students are satisfied, too. PowerPoint presentations have proven to be an effective way of teaching. (Translation)

However, when the students were asked about the use of videos in the classroom, some of them said that the use of any authentic materials from online sources does not automatically make for successful lessons and are often overrated:

I think it's sometimes a waste of time. But the benefit is that we hear authentic English, not teacher's English. (Translation)

First, as a result of the analysis of quality of materials used in the classrooms, the data showed that teachers use either materials provided by school (mainly textbooks and magazines); or they create their own materials or adapt the existing ones; or even students create their own materials. The school provides mainly textbooks which can students borrow from the school library and use for the full length of their study. However, the textbooks do not always meet the teachers' expectations, and are often supplemented by PowerPoint presentations, worksheets and exercises created by teachers, with the teachers' presentations being the most favourite and frequent way of explaining new topics. In the lessons of Business Correspondence, the students create their own materials, namely worksheets or notes made in the lessons, copy them and distribute among their classmates, thus creating a portfolio. In Social Communication, no textbooks, or teacher-made or student-made materials were used, except one lesson where students read a magazine article.

Second, an extensive use of visualizing materials was observed in almost all classes. Visualisation in the materials was used to illustrate processes and other content issues (Economic Geography), to introduce a new topic (Economic Geography and Economics), to expand and reinforce knowledge of content (Business Correspondence), and to create relaxed classroom atmosphere (Business Correspondence). Visualisation was used in teachers' presentations in form of pictures, images or graphs to visualize content. In Business Correspondence lessons, auditory materials were used, namely songs, with the aim of creating positive classroom atmosphere.

To conclude, teachers used all classroom materials particularly to teach content, not the foreign language. Use of visualizing materials to concretize content also seemed to be related to the teachers' aim to support learning the content through the foreign language.

2. *Uneven distribution of the four language skills in the classrooms*

Based on the interviews with teachers, all of them confirmed that students in the bilingual program have a high command of English. Dominance of Slovak is particularly apparent only in the first year, but only during the first

months of the school year. During the first spring months, significant improvements in students' English language skills are observed.

The distribution of the language skills in the observed classrooms varied. In some classes, the majority of time was spent on listening and speaking, in others the majority of time was allocated to listening, speaking and writing. Of all the four skills, least time was devoted to reading. The following results were obtained mainly through classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students. Four sub-categories were created: (a) speaking skill; (b) listening skill; (c) writing skill; and (d) reading skill.

As a result of the classroom observations focused on distribution of the four language skills in the classrooms, it was found out that the language skills were distributed and developed in different ways and to different extents. The most developed and best supported language skill during the lessons was that of speaking which was practiced in all lessons within each content subject. The course of lessons of Social Communication was based on free speaking, in dialogical mode. On the other hand, lessons of Business Correspondence were based more on writing, and speaking skills were neglected. One of the students stated:

We speak a lot in Economics for example, but we don't speak in Business Correspondence at all. We learn a lot of new vocabulary but we don't have time to practise it, and we forget a lot. I would welcome more opportunities to speak. (Translation)

Listening skill was being developed in all the lessons observed although the reasons for listening differed. Most of listening in the classrooms was passive listening, and it occurred mainly in the lessons of Economic Geography and Economics, with students listening to teachers' explanation of new topics. The development of writing skill was largely supported in the lessons of Business Correspondence which were based on writing business letters or completing missing words in business correspondence to a large extent. No time was, however, spent on writing a coherent text of any length, which is, according to the teachers of Economic Geography and Economics, in their lessons *useless, too time-consuming and there is no space for it* (Translation). The least supported language skill was that of reading which was not developed intentionally in the lessons and was limited to students being exposed to educational materials such as textbooks.

3. Techniques and strategies used in the lessons

The third core category was created to report on the techniques and strategies used by teachers in the observed classrooms. Due to the fact that the teachers did not have comprehensive knowledge of CLIL methodology, they did not apply it to the fullest extent; however, some strategies and techniques related to CLIL were still observed. In cognitively more demanding lessons of Economics and Economic Geography, some pre-lesson strategies were used such as use of multimedia and videos with the aim to introduce a new topic. As for vocabulary, some teachers used to pre-teach vocabulary (Economic Geography) ahead of the main lesson. The new vocabulary was mostly explained in English and students figured out the meanings for themselves; direct translations were provided only in Economics with highly specialized terms. The students stated: *we need translation because they (the English) use different expressions.* (Translation). Another student remarked: *For example in Economics, the teacher explains things in English only when we really do not understand something.* (Translation). During the main phase of the lessons, mainly direct teaching, to some extent also pair work and task-based activities were used.

Research Question 2

What are the benefits of content and language integrated learning as perceived by teachers and students?

With respect to bilingual education or content and language integrated learning and teaching, the teachers had almost no theoretical knowledge of bilingualism, bilingual education or CLIL. As mentioned previously, they were not asked to implement any methodology or strategies of bilingual education, nor were they educated in bilingual education practices, except for a few exceptions. When being exposed to teaching content through a foreign language, they developed their own "methodologies" and later some of them got familiar with CLIL methodology and implemented it to some extent in their lessons. The benefits of CLIL and teaching as perceived by teachers and students were put into three core categories:

1. Content and language as interconnected areas

As a result of analysis of benefits of CLIL for teachers and as perceived by them, two main tendencies were observed. First, it was only when they started teaching content through the foreign language, the teachers who were educated both as content teachers and language teachers that they realized the importance of content in the language learning process.

Second, teachers who were educated as content subject teachers and did not teach a foreign language before realized the importance of language for the process of learning. They also highlighted the fact that professional language was an important part of content teaching in the foreign language, and that learning professional terminology helped them

develop and sustain motivation. One of the teachers of Economics remarked that a two-week course on CLIL in London was very beneficial for her:

After completing the course, I started using new activities in my classrooms such as various warming-up exercises, crosswords or meno-mesto-zviera-vec (name-town-animal-object). Students really like it, the activities make lessons more interesting. (Translation)

2. Advancing students' cognitive development

All the teachers interviewed in this study confirmed that students of the bilingual study program had high-level cognitive skills and were high-achievers who enjoy being challenged in every area of learning. The students were described as very active, ambitious and competitive learners who make full use of the opportunities offered by the school. They participate in foreign projects, foreign student exchanges, competitions, and social events organized by the school. Some of the teachers admitted that there was certain pressure put on students to reach best results. The pressure to achieve high grades was described by students as follows:

There is a pressure to achieve high grades. They think that everybody must be good at everything. (Translation)

We need percentages to show that we are the best. (Translation)

The school website offers information about the evaluation of quality of the school as made by Institute for Economic and Social Reforms (INEKO). The main criterion taken into account when evaluating the quality of the school were results of the students. The business academy reached 9 points out of 10 and was evaluated as the school with excellent students' results. 9,6 points out of ten were reached for successful completion of Maturita exam; 9,5 points out of ten were reached within the category of graduates' unemployment rates, and 3,7 points out of ten were reached for outstanding results. Hence, the quality in school is related to the quality in the system of self-studying of each learner as the combination of the influence of the school and the teachers on the students resulting in self-development of the students' personalities and their autonomy (Kollarova & Ungerova, 2013; Kra'ovicova, 2012).

As a result of interviews with students and review of information provided on the school website, it was evident that the school tries to get the best out of students. Teachers perceive students as being very ambitious and competitive. The school promotes cognitive development of the students by steadily raising students' achievement levels and increasing the levels of CLIL. However, some students perceive these efforts as being too ambitious, and they often feel under pressure to achieve high grades and best results. In students' opinion, the school management concentrates especially on reaching the best results in order to maintain the leading position within the evaluation of quality of schools made by INEKO.

Furthermore, as emerged from the interviews with students and teachers, the fact that whether the teachers' or school managements' goals are achieved or not is not directly influenced by the number of content subject classes taught through the foreign language in the curriculum, teachers characteristics and education, or classroom practices. The success of teaching and learning is a combination of various factors – students' cognitive abilities, teachers' experience and the requirements set by the school management.

3. Successful school graduates on the job market

Based on interviews with the teachers as well as information provided on the school website, it became evident that the school graduates were able to enter the labour market successfully using their professional skills and foreign language knowledge. The graduates highlighted mainly the level of professional knowledge of teachers and a high level of foreign language teaching. Thanks to sufficient language preparation many graduates study at foreign universities or work abroad in foreign companies.

As a result of interviews with teachers and review of the school website, the school educates successful graduates able to be best placed on the labour market. Thanks to excellent professional and language preparation, many graduates study at universities in English- and German-speaking countries, or work abroad in foreign companies. This fact was confirmed also by the teachers and the school management.

Research Question 3

What factors in the school appear to support or hinder the foreign language competence of students and what are the students' and teachers' perceptions of them?

The three major factors that appeared to support (or hinder) the foreign language competence of students were put in the following three core categories:

1. School-based factors promoting students' foreign language competence

The school environment of the participants played an essential role in their professional and cognitive development. The school was the most important setting in which the students developed their cognitive and foreign language skills. Teachers and extracurricular activities had a strong influence on the students' foreign language development. The main

factors which emerged from interviews with teachers, the group interview with students, classroom observations, school culture observations, and document reviews, were listed in the following two sub-categories: (a) school reputation, and (b) supporting students' involvement in activities promoting their foreign language competence. However, the largest amount of data in this section comes from the interviews with students and teachers. Within each sub-category, positive as well as negative perceptions of the participants are included.

As a result of the analysis of the school factors supporting the foreign language competence of the students of the bilingual Slovak-English study program, the data showed that the factors could be divided into two main groups – the reputation of the school and the involvement of the students in projects and extracurricular activities to promote the development of their foreign language competence. Foreign language (English) support through participation in projects and student exchanges was identified as one of the major school factors influencing the linguistic development of the students participating in the study. The results were based on the data drawn mainly from the interviews with teachers and students, from school observations, and from documents available on the school website. The teachers' and students' perceptions were included; however, their perceptions differed.

First, an overwhelming majority of students confirmed that the opportunity to study a bilingual program was the leading motivating factor for choosing the school. The students confirmed that they decided to take up the bilingual program in order to learn not only general English but also specialized English language in the field of economy. One of the interviewed students stated that he chose the school mainly because of economic education the school provides, while the English language was an asset: *In my opinion, many people chose this school because of English. I personally chose it because there was Economics in English, and I had always wanted to study at business academy. I want to be an economist.* (Translation) The teachers' reasons, on the other hand, for choosing the business academy as a place to work were not linked directly to the foreign language or the presence of the bilingual program in the school. The majority of the teachers started working in the school long before the bilingual program was introduced, and they were developing the program in its early years. The teacher of Economic Geography explains: *The headmistress of the school actually initiated this Slovak-English study program. When this program was starting, we teachers, agreed with the headmistress on the subjects we would teach. There were colleagues who were economists, so they started to teach economic subjects. I and my colleague were asked to teach geography in English (smile).* (Translation)

The fact that the school was ranked as the best secondary vocational school in Slovakia did not influence either students or teachers when choosing the school.

Second, the opportunities provided by the school to enhance their foreign language competence aroused strong critical views of the students. The teachers believed that the school offered many opportunities to participate in foreign projects and that the support of students was sufficient. The students, however, pointed to a limited number of students taking part in the foreign exchanges, obstacles related to students' worries about consequent catching up with the curriculum, or a limited support of the teachers and school management related to active searching for student exchanges and foreign exchanges. The students also expressed their desire to resume some extracurricular activities.

We arrange everything ourselves, and they then force us to write a report, they put it up on the school website, as if the school arranged it. But we did it ourselves. And the problem is that they do not even want to let us go. In the report, we have to add a sentence that we thank the school for mediation. That the school offered us this opportunity, but in fact they had not done anything. (Translation)

2. Classroom-based factors promoting students' foreign language competence

The climate of the classrooms observed, shaped by a combination of teacher practices and teacher-student interactions, proved to be an important determinant for development of students' knowledge and language skills. The substantial amount of data analyzed in this core category came from classroom observations. Based on the classroom observations, the following three sub-categories were created: (a) positive teacher-student interaction; (b) classroom management and organization; (c) the choice of subjects taught in English.

As a result of the analysis of the classroom factors supporting the foreign language competence of the students of the bilingual Slovak-English study program, the data showed that the factors could be divided into three main groups – positive teacher-student interaction, activities and organizational issues within classrooms and the choice of vocational subjects taught in English. First, the classroom climate in the classes observed was highly positive, tolerant and even joyful (in Social Communication). There were no tensions observed during any lessons. The positive emotional climate in the classrooms was enhanced by teacher-student relations in which teachers interacted positively with the students. One of the students claimed:

Relations between teachers and students are good here. The teachers do not look down on us. Some teachers are more progressive, more open; also the teaching is more interesting. I mean we discuss things, talk together freely in the lessons.... Often, when we are ahead of curriculum we talk about various issues in the classes. The teachers are sensitive. (Translation)

Student-student relations reflected the same – students cooperated with each other in a positive way and there were no tensions or troubles. In all the lessons observed, students seemed to be actively engaged in the process of learning although their levels of interaction differed. They either worked in small groups or pairs, but mainly individually, and they actively cooperated with teachers. To reduce observer bias, the participants were assured prior to the beginning of the study that their names and classes would remain anonymous, and they also did not know what aspects in the classroom were being observed.

Second, a small number of students in classes was another factor positively enhancing the students' performances. It enabled them to participate more actively and to use the foreign language more often during lessons. Division of a whole class into two independent groups taught separately was present in all content subject lessons observed. Also, the number of students in the classrooms influenced teachers when arranging seating in the classrooms and when managing the students.

Third, nearly all the students and teachers interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the choice of subjects taught in English. The choice reflects the focus of the school – teaching of vocational economic subjects, and the teaching of four vocational subjects in English was, according to participants, the right decision which will help students to find a job on foreign labour market. During interviews, the students expressed their opinions on the choice of subjects taught in English:

It is great that we learn Economy and Economic Geography in English. I find it useful, especially if we wanted to study or work abroad. It's great to know the English terminology.

But I think that for example Business Correspondence should not be taught in English, it's useless. We only do written exercises there and we can find all the expressions in English on the Internet. We do not speak there in English. (Translation)

3. Educational experience of teachers

Teaching experience of teachers proved to be another influential factor determining the development of participants' foreign language competence, either positively and negatively. The data analyzed in this core category came mostly from the interviews with teachers and students. Positive as well as negative perceptions of the participants were recorded. Based on the data from the interviews, the following two sub-categories were created: (a) teachers' views of their own teaching experience; (b) knowledge and experience of teachers from students' perspective.

First, all teachers in the bilingual program are fully qualified and have university degree in content subjects as well as in English. They continuously improve their professional as well as language knowledge and skills. The teachers' professional competences include cross-curricular competences as well (Kacinova, 2018). Although they did not have any knowledge of CLIL methodology when the bilingual program was launched, they were gradually becoming aware of this methodology, and implement it in their classes. The teachers also perceive students' performance as well as academic achievement as highly positive. The teacher of Economic Geography added:

We received a lot of teacher training courses, or credit training courses. Recently I have finished the first attestation exam. So we receive a lot of these career training courses. We also attend English language courses, I mean general English courses. But no training related to CLIL methodology.... (Translation)

Second, the students' perspective of the teachers' expertise and knowledge of the language were more negative, even critical. They expressed their negative perceptions of the teachers' language knowledge, which has a negative impact on their progress in the language. On the other hand, the teachers' expertise and knowledge of content subjects was perceived as being very good. One student of the fourth year expressed her criticism of the lessons of Economy:

For example in Economy, the new topic is presented on a high level, but the English is worse. I listen to teacher's bad English. We make progress in the subject, but not in the language. (Translation)

Conclusion

The main aim of this research was to observe how CLIL contributes to the development of bilingualism and bilingual language competence of students of a bilingual Slovak-English study program in the secondary vocational school (business academy), in the town of Trnava in western Slovakia. The aim was to find out the extent, approaches, opinions, documents and materials which are used in the school to develop the foreign language competence of the students through CLIL methodology. The secondary research aims were to describe the available literature on second language acquisition and on CLIL; at European level in general and in Slovakia in particular, considering the application of CLIL methodology within secondary level of education, to find out how CLIL methodology is implemented in content subjects within the bilingual Slovak-English study program, to find out how implementation of CLIL methodology affects the students' performance in the bilingual Slovak-English program, and to find out how foreign language competence of students within the bilingual study program is enhanced and fostered in and outside the classroom.

The focus of the first research question was to find out about the techniques, strategies and materials used in the bilingual classes in order to achieve knowledge of the content and the language, and to enhance the development of the students' foreign language competence.

The answers to the first research question can be summarized as follows:

- Textbooks written in English were used to a limited extent and the content had to be adapted to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.
- No CLIL textbooks were used.
- Teachers create their own materials such as PowerPoint presentations, worksheets or tests. These materials contained visualizing features such as images, graphs or pictures to illustrate the content.
- The distribution of the four language skills in the classes varied, with speaking being the most supported and reading the least supported and developed language skills.
- Teachers believed that the foreign language was the tool to mediate content to learners, not the target.
- Teachers had no or limited knowledge of CLIL methodology; however, they used some strategies and techniques related to CLIL in their classes.

The focus of the second research question was to find out about the benefits of content and language integrated learning as perceived by teachers and students. As a result of analysis of teachers' perceptions of benefits of content and language integrated learning for themselves, two main tendencies were observed. Teachers who were educated both as content teachers and language teachers realized the importance of content in the language learning process. Teachers who were educated as content subject teachers and who did not teach a foreign language before realized the importance of language for the process of learning. They also realized the importance of professional terminology; their learning of professional terminology was beneficial for them in terms of sustaining motivation for teaching.

The answers to the second research question can be summarized as follows:

- Content teachers who have a degree in foreign language teaching realized the importance of content in the language learning process.
- Content teachers who did not have a degree in foreign language teaching realized the importance of language for the process of learning.
- Content teachers who did not have a degree in foreign language teaching realized the importance of professional terminology that they found beneficial in terms of sustaining motivation for teaching.
- Students of the bilingual Slovak-English program were ambitious and competitive high-achievers and they were cognitively engaged and intellectually challenged during the lessons.
- Too much emphasis was put on results and on achieving high grades by the school, which was perceived negatively by the students.

The focus of the third research question was to describe the factors in the school which seemed to support the foreign language competence of students, and to provide students' and teachers' perceptions of them. It was the school environment of the participants that played an essential role in their professional and cognitive development. The school was the most important setting in which the students developed their cognitive and foreign language skills. Also teachers and extracurricular activities had a strong influence on the students' foreign language development.

The answers to the third research question can be summarized as follows:

- The school itself was the most important setting in which the students developed their cognitive and foreign language skills.
- Presence of the bilingual Slovak-English program in the school appeared to be the most influential factor when choosing the secondary vocational school.
- Study of vocational economic subjects in a foreign language was another important factor when deciding to study at the school.
- Positive classroom climate and organizational issues such as a small number of students in the classroom played an important role in effective teaching and successful learning.
- The positive classroom climate was identified as one of the major factors influencing the foreign language competence of the students participating in the study. The results were based on the data drawn mainly from classroom observations and from interviews with students and teachers.

- Teacher-student and student-student interactions proved to be another important determinant in successful learning.
- Another important factor positively enhancing the development of students' language competence was students' participation in foreign projects and foreign student exchanges.
- Focus of the school – teaching of vocational economic subjects through the foreign language was perceived highly positively by the students.
- Although all teachers had a university degree in either content subjects or the English language, the students' perception of teachers' language knowledge was quite critical.

Discussion

In this study, the aim was to describe and explore to what extent and how CLIL enters education in secondary vocational school, to evaluate its potential and practical use. The results of the case study may increase the knowledge of CLIL in relation to the development of language competences of students of secondary vocational schools. The importance of the study is also evident at the level of practical contribution to the development of the school. Although the research was based on data from an ongoing bilingual study program with CLIL methodology at a particular school (micro level), efforts were made to set recommendations for non-language vocational school teachers for that secondary vocational school study program (macro level).

In the related body of literature, it can be seen that there are research studies which reached similar results to the present study in terms of the aspects investigated. There are, however, some limitations to this study and there still needs to be attention paid to some aspects. The research was carried out in one school, so it is not possible to generalize the acquired knowledge. The obtained results should rather be understood as fragments that can help build a mosaic of existing CLIL knowledge and thus contribute to the professional discourse that helps shape new theories about this approach to education. The significance of the study is also the fact that not much research in this field has been carried out in Slovakia so far. Some research studies from Slovakia related to CLIL are, however, mentioned above. Moreover, the research of the area of attitudes of pupils and teachers in the implementation of CLIL, which the empirical part of this study focuses on, has not been carried out in Slovakia yet. On the other hand, research studies from European countries related to this particular aspect of CLIL implementation can be found in the literature. Papaja (2012) was testing attitude of CLIL students towards subjects which are taught in English in higher education in Poland and found out that the CLIL students tend to have positive attitude towards CLIL. At tertiary level, lecturer and students perceptions on CLIL at a Spanish university were examined by Aguilar and Rodriguez (2011) who found out that students' reaction towards implantation of CLIL were mostly positive; however, the most outstanding negative aspect they found was teachers' insufficient level of English. It could be concluded that these findings largely correlate with our results. In non-European context, a research study on teachers' attitudes, perceptions and experiences in CLIL was carried out by McDougald (2015). Again, many of the surveyed teachers reported they had positive experiences teaching content and language together, although lacking sufficient knowledge either in content, language or in CLIL, which corresponds with the results in the present paper. The present paper indicates that the distribution of the four language skills in the classes varied. Much research has been done on language skills development in CLIL and immersion classrooms (de Zarobe, 2010). Contrary to the results of the present study with speaking being the most developed skill in CLIL classrooms, Swain and Johnson (1996) conclude that speaking is the weakest of the four skill areas for students in immersion classes.

As part of the case study carried out at the secondary vocational school, and partly also in the theoretical part, the present paper aims to answer some of the questions that accompanied the implementation of CLIL. The work could thus be a benefit and inspiration for teachers who would like to apply this method of teaching in their subject. The paper also aims to point out the areas of the CLIL approach, which have so far raised a number of questions, thus creating scope for further investigation. For example, problems of the relationship of teachers of vocational subjects to the importance of language in teaching, or the ratio of representation of mother tongue and foreign language in these lessons. Mender Garcia and Pavon Vazquez (2012) investigated the coexistence of the mother tongue and the foreign language through teacher collaboration in CLIL contexts in order to improve the teaching process. Furthermore, the results reached in this study that for teachers the foreign language was the tool to mediate content to learners, not the target, are partially supported by research done by Gierlinger (2015). As the teaching of CLIL is concerned with the learning of a foreign language, he believes that also classroom code switching between the majority and foreign language follows an educationally principled approach. The question of whether the pupils can acquire the educational content of a non-language subject to the same extent as in their mother tongue lessons could be the subject of further follow-up work.

Suggestions

Based on the results of the research, some pedagogical implications emerged from the study. Several proposals for improving the implementation of CLIL methodology into bilingual study programs in secondary vocational schools are recommended:

Professional development of teachers teaching in bilingual study programs should be used to promote their knowledge of methodologies used when teaching content subjects in a foreign language. In particular, the teachers should become familiar with CLIL methodology, its main characteristics, techniques and strategies.

In-service training sessions for teachers teaching in bilingual programs should be organized by methodological centres or faculties of education in which CLIL methodology would be presented as one of the most effective methodologies applied in classes in which content subjects are taught through the medium of a foreign language. Furthermore, teachers should be supported by their schools to extend their education in the area of foreign language methodology. They should also be encouraged by their schools to gradually improve their language skills by attending language courses at home and abroad.

Professional development of teachers teaching in bilingual study programs should be used to promote their knowledge of methodologies used when teaching content subjects in a foreign language. In particular, the teachers should become familiar with CLIL methodology, its main characteristics, techniques and strategies. Teachers in bilingual education should try to improve their knowledge of foreign language teaching methodology in general. Also, teachers should become familiar with the goals and objectives of bilingual study programs in their schools.

Teachers should be encouraged by their schools to participate in foreign projects and exchanges among teachers, with the aim that as many as possible should have spent certain time in the country where the target language they teach is spoken.

Language teachers and content subject teachers should closely cooperate on the development of new teaching materials and/or adaptation of the existing ones in order to create a database of materials for vocational content subjects. Cooperation of other secondary vocational schools of similar vocational orientation should be encouraged by organizing meetings or workshops organized by methodological centres.

In bilingual study programs at secondary vocational schools, teaching of as many as possible content subjects through a foreign language should be encouraged.

More complex research in the area of teaching content subjects through the medium of a foreign language should be conducted, aimed specifically at implementation of CLIL methodology in the classrooms. Questions that could be addressed in future research studies on implementation of CLIL methodology in secondary vocational schools are as follows: Are there any specific educational experiences that support the development of bilingual language competence of students of secondary vocational schools? How are personality factors involved in the development of foreign language competence of students? Which home factors influence students' performances in bilingual study programs? Which methods and strategies can be used to support talented students in bilingual study programs? How does learning of some content subjects in two languages affect students' performances in other subjects which are taught in mother tongue? What are the personality and intellectual traits of the students described in this study?

The topic of implementation of CLIL methodology in secondary vocational schools and its contribution to the development of students' language competence is relevant in Slovakia mainly due to the fact that this is a relatively unexplored area of research on one hand, and that in the future, there might be a growing number of secondary vocational schools trying to apply CLIL methodology in bilingual study programs, on the other.

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