

## CLIL or “just good teaching” in Kazakhstan?

### ¿AICLE o solo “buena enseñanza” en Kazajistán?

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#### ABSTRACT

CLIL is an approach in which an additional language is used to teach non-language subjects in the curriculum. Despite the fact that this approach has been implemented for more than two decades, there is still a dearth of research on CLIL pedagogies. This article reports on results of research into the implementation of CLIL in an elite school in Kazakhstan, which provides instruction to gifted students in three languages. The research examined teachers' practices of CLIL with the focus on the design of CLIL lessons, the way to integrate language focus, comprehension support as well as strategies for promoting interaction among students. The findings of the study indicate that teachers tended to perceive CLIL as just teaching through an additional language. Even if they implemented CLIL strategies, they did not always realize they were using them or did not attribute those techniques to CLIL. This may suggest that most of the strategies and methods recommended for quality CLIL implementation are common to good teaching practices not necessarily specific to CLIL.

Keywords: CLIL lessons, CLIL implementation, language focus, teaching practices

#### RESUMEN

AICLE es un enfoque en el que se utiliza un idioma adicional para enseñar materias no lingüísticas en el currículo. A pesar de que este enfoque se ha aplicado durante más de dos décadas, todavía hay una escasez de investigación sobre las pedagogías de AICLE. Este artículo informa sobre los resultados de la investigación sobre la aplicación de AICLE en una escuela de élite de Kazajistán, que imparte instrucción a estudiantes dotados en tres idiomas. La investigación examinó las prácticas de los profesores de AICLE, centrándose en el diseño de las clases de AICLE, la forma de integrar el enfoque lingüístico, el apoyo a la comprensión y las estrategias para promover la interacción entre los estudiantes. Los resultados del estudio indican que los profesores tendían a percibir AICLE como una simple enseñanza a través de un idioma adicional. Aunque implementaron las estrategias de AICLE, no siempre se dieron cuenta de que las estaban utilizando o no atribuyeron esas técnicas a AICLE. Esto puede sugerir que la mayoría de las estrategias y métodos recomendados para la implementación de AICLE de calidad son comunes a las buenas prácticas de enseñanza no necesariamente específicas de AICLE.

Palabras clave: Clases AICLE, implementación de AICLE, enfoque en el idioma, prácticas de enseñanza

## 1. INTRODUCTION

CLIL is an approach in which an additional language is used to teach non-language subjects in the curriculum. The fact that CLIL is usually linked to and identified with the previous bilingual education models might be explained by some misconceptions leading to confusing interpretations of this approach. Although CLIL shares characteristics with its predecessors (Cenoz & Ruiz de Zarobe 2015; Somers & Surmount 2011), Canadian immersion or American bilingual programmes 'bear little resemblance to the study of English through the CLIL programmes in Europe, particularly in terms of the sociolinguistic and sociocultural context in which the L2 is learned and the authenticity of the input' (Gallardo del Puerto et al. 2009, p. 65), a statement also supported by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010). Effectively, CLIL "synthesizes and provides flexible way of applying the knowledge learnt from these various approaches" (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008, p. 12). Yet, a dual focus of teaching on both content and language distinguishes CLIL from the abovementioned approaches (Coyle, 2008; Dalton-Puffer, 2008; Marsh, 2000).

Despite the fact that this approach has been implemented for more than two decades, there is still a dearth of research on CLIL pedagogies." (San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2019). Coyle, Holmes and King (2009) recommended a range of CLIL strategies for supporting students' comprehension in L2 and developing language. These strategies include the use of contextual clues, activating existing knowledge, reading strategies, speaking and writing scaffolds, inquiry-oriented tasks, graphic organizers and other types of visuals as well as a thoughtful use of code-switching which are considered features of a successful CLIL lesson.

Emerged as a way of promoting linguistic diversity and competitiveness in Europe, CLIL has become increasingly widespread in other parts of the world. Vazquez and Ellison (2013) warn that "the popularity of CLIL should not be mistaken for something that is easy to implement and deliver" (p. 67). As the interest in CLIL continues to grow, it is important to explore how the approach is enacted in actual classrooms which testify whether actual teaching practices support broad educational goals claimed to enhance the quality of learning.

This article reports on results of research into the implementation of CLIL in an elite school in Kazakhstan, which provides instruction to gifted students in three languages. The research examined teachers' practices of CLIL with the focus on the design of CLIL lessons, the language focus, comprehension support as well as strategies for promoting interaction among students. Given the scarcity of research evidence on the practices of CLIL in classrooms, it is important to answer the question of how CLIL works through describing practices and strategies that teachers implement in L2 and L3 classes to reinforce content and language learning.

The study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers in the trilingual context implement CLIL?
2. What are the most common CLIL strategies as implemented by teachers?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Stakeholders' perceptions have received a significant amount of attention in CLIL research (e.g., Aguilar & Rodriguez, 2011; Dafouz, Hüttner, & Smit, 2016; Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2016; Pena Diaz & Porto Pequejo, 2007; Pladevall-

Ballester, 2015; San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2019; Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016). Fewer studies (Aguilar & Rodriguez, 2012; Coonan, 2007; Cross & Gearon, 2013; Mehisto & Asser, 2007; Nikula, 2015) have addressed the implementation of CLIL in practice, including master's and doctoral dissertations (Herescu, 2012; LaPrairie, 2014; Savikj, 2013). In these studies, the following aspects of CLIL have particularly attracted researchers' attention: integration techniques, activities and strategies that characterize CLIL, the mode of classroom interaction, and the use of languages.

## **2. 1 Enacting integration: practices and strategies**

The way integration is manifested throughout all stages of the lesson and features of a CLIL lesson have not received a great deal of empirical attention. What is known to us from previous research is the various practices and strategies teachers applied to support students' comprehension in L2. These strategies served different purposes, including presenting new lesson input, checking student comprehension, or extending understanding. They can be grouped into the following categories: teaching subject-specific vocabulary, strategies for supporting comprehension (e.g., adapting delivery rate and repeating concepts, dramatization), promotion of interaction, non-verbal strategies (i.e., diagrams, concept maps, etc.), and use of L1 (i.e., code-switching and translanguaging).

Research indicates that teaching subject-specific vocabulary is one of the most common ways of integration in CLIL classes which are mainly content-driven. However, the focus on subject-specific language tended to be incidental as this happened unplanned when teachers realized that students needed subject vocabulary to comprehend lesson input (Herescu, 2012; Savikj, 2013). Nikula (2015) investigated the potential of hands-on tasks in CLIL Chemistry and Physics lessons as sites for learning and using subject-specific language in Finnish schools. Despite the evident content orientation in the Science tasks, language was present in the handling of those tasks. In particular, the study revealed that pre-task and post-task stages had more space for promoting the use of subject-specific language than hands-on tasks that involved more indexical language use, although the language focus remained implicit during the classes.

Adjusting the pace of speaking and lesson delivery is another strategy used for supporting students' comprehension as found in the reviewed research. Aguilar and Rodriguez (2012) reported that university lecturers adopted a slower pace of delivery as a way of facilitating student's comprehension. However, even adapted utterances were not found helpful by students who needed immediate translation of subject-specific terms from the lecturer. At the school level, contradictory results were found regarding delivery rate. According to Pladevall-Ballester (2015), primary school students could easily follow the teacher when concepts were repeated many times, and teachers adjusted their pace of speech, so the students could grasp them. The participating teachers reported that students understood instructions well when they heard them frequently.

Along with adapting the pace of speech, when not being understood teachers use dramatization. It is one of the strategies that work well in CLIL lessons (Cross & Gearon, 2013; Pladevall-Ballester, 2015). Teachers found it particularly useful for presenting new content or ensuring student comprehension. In CLIL science lessons, dramatization can be used for students to physically represent what happens, when physical substances are exposed to different conditions. Drawing and using diagrams, concept maps and other visuals have also been mentioned as strategies that assist teachers. Using diagrams or

images were particularly useful for low achievers, who could not follow classroom instruction.

Furthermore, concept maps and flowcharts helped students understand the process and facilitated oral presentation (Coonan, 2007). Those strategies were complemented by other techniques such as giving further examples or synonyms, simplifying language (Ferreira, 2011), letting students use monolingual dictionaries (Pladevall-Ballester, 2015), or activating students' prior knowledge (Cross & Gearon, 2013; Ferreira, 2011).

## **2.2 CLIL classroom interaction**

The mode of interaction and organization of class work in CLIL settings have also garnered some attention in CLIL research. Coonan (2007) reported that "student-student" and "students-students" interaction activities were successfully implemented in Italian CLIL programs. In those CLIL lessons, pair work or group work occupied from 30-40% to 70% of the overall lesson time. "Teacher-student" interaction took from 30% to 60-70% of instruction time. Interestingly, individual work was squeezed out. As a consequence of a preference for pair and group work, the emphasis was on the development of reading and speaking skills, and writing tasks were completed as homework. Cross and Gearon (2013) stated that pair work created opportunities for scaffolding. This helped students practise new language and check their understanding through the interaction with other students.

Conversely, in a case study of English-medium education, LaPrairie (2014) found that the interaction in CLIL classrooms was limited to teacher-initiated questions and one-word student answers, given in chorus. Instructional approaches were described as non-interactive, teacher-led, and content-based, which provide little opportunity for students to talk. LaPrairie concluded that the Bhutanese teachers' adherence to traditional methods of teaching may be explained by the teachers' expectations for traditional teacher-student roles. Limited interactions were also reported by Aguilar and Rodriguez (2012) in the study of a CLIL program at a Spanish university. Due to both teachers' and students' low level of communicative competence in the target language and the lack of interaction opportunities for students, students could not interact with their Erasmus peers who had a good command of English.

## **2.3 Language choices and the use of L1 in CLIL classrooms**

The use of L1 in CLIL classrooms is also a major issue documented in research (Coonan, 2007; Ferreira, 2011; Lasagabaster, 2015; Moore & Nikula, 2016; Wang & Kirkpatrick, 2012; San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2018). Despite the overarching aim of CLIL to promote bilingual skills, monolingual orientation was found in some CLIL programs. In such contexts, the use of L1 was not accepted as a valid strategy. In a South African CLIL program with English as the target language, Ferreira (2011) found that code switching was not perceived as a useful practice, although teachers admitted to occasionally using this technique. They explained the pointlessness of code switching by the fact that assessment was in the target language.

In a similar vein, a case study (Wang & Kirkpatrick, 2012) of trilingual education in Hong Kong revealed negative attitudes toward code-switching. Some experienced teachers noted that eventually students became accustomed to the teacher's instructions in English. Although teachers perceived code-switching as a "bad" practice, they allowed students to use their mother tongue when they encountered difficulties in discussions as they were

concerned with covering the subject content in the given time. Because of such practices, instruction in English became a mere formality, as students, knowing that an explanation in L1 was coming, often ignored L2 instructions, waiting for the L1 support.

While the first group of studies indicates more negative attitudes towards code-switching, the second set of studies emphasizes the strategic use of both languages in the lesson. Moore and Nikula (2016) used the term “translanguaging” to describe a pedagogic practice involving the deliberate alternance of languages. They considered translanguaging as a tool for integrating content and language. In a study of secondary school in three countries, Finland, Spain, and Austria, Moore and Nikula (2016) explored translanguaging practices in CLIL classrooms. They found that translanguaging was perceived as a salient practice since it may reinforce meaning and content-specific terminology, especially when students are learning new content through an L2. Along with explicit language focus, translanguaging can be found a useful strategy for maintaining the flow of interaction.

Over the last decade, different aspects of CLIL practices have been garnering research attention. However, most of reviewed studies describe classroom practices from the teachers' perspectives, relying on surveys and interviews. Studies which specifically focused on characteristics and stages of CLIL lessons through classroom observations are still scarce.

Sketching out several research tasks for further CLIL research at the national and local levels, Dalton-Puffer and Smit (2013) suggested looking into actual CLIL practices of any subject area taught in any language. The scholars stressed that more empirical studies are needed in pedagogical designs and the teaching/learning arrangements which characterize CLIL lessons, including explicit language-teaching episodes.

### **3. RESEARCH SETTING**

The present research was conducted in the network of 20 state funded elite Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) in Kazakhstan. The network was established in 2008 to serve as “agents of change,” and the platform for testing the multilingual educational model (Nazarbayev, 2010) and disseminate this experience to the rest of the schools in Kazakhstan. In order to help NIS depart from the old system, and allow experimenting new practices, the Government granted them full autonomy. The NIS network develops its own curriculum, learning resources, assessment and professional development for teachers. NIS also enjoy levels of funding considerably higher than do mainstream schools, as they currently enroll 0.4% of all Kazakhstani students at a unit cost of more than three times the national average (OECD, 2015).

NIS declared trilingual education their hallmark, and explicitly defined CLIL as a significant component of trilingual education. The content of the NIS curriculum is generally focused on in-depth study of Science and Mathematics. At NIS, there are two streams divided by the main medium of instruction which Kazakh or Russian. Regardless of the main language of instruction, in Grades 7-10, students learn about 10% of the curriculum subjects in a second language (L2, Kazakh or Russian), and 90% in first language (L1, Russian or Kazakh). In grades 11-12, all three languages are used as mediums of instruction whereby 40% of content instruction is provided in L1 and L2, and about 60% in English (L3) (Karabassova, 2018a).

The NIS Central Office has provided CLIL training for teachers and developed teacher guidelines for implementing CLIL. The guidelines suggest that the integration of content and language learning requires teachers' changing the way they traditionally teach. This

includes articulating language learning objectives for each lesson and discussing them with students ((AEO NIS, 2013). Furthermore, the guidelines also recommend teachers developing academic language and subject-specific terminology, using scaffolding, translanguaging techniques, and the adaptation of texts among other CLIL strategies.

The data were collected in Parassat NIS, situated in the City of Ken Dala (pseudonyms) in Western Kazakhstan. Parassat NIS is a typical case representing the average school in the network, and unlike schools in the Russian-dominating North or Kazakh-dominating South, the population of this region speaks both Kazakh and Russian (Committee on Statistics, 2015). Like other schools in the network, Parassat NIS was specifically designed and built to be an Intellectual School and outfitted with the cutting-edge school equipment and facilities.

#### 4. METHODS

The research reported in this paper was part of a larger study to explore teachers conceptualization and implementation of CLIL in the network of NIS. To explore subject teachers' conceptions and classroom practices of CLIL, a qualitative multiple case study design was employed, which is aimed at examining a phenomenon "in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16), using multiple sources of evidence.

The participants were purposefully selected based on length of teaching experience in the network, language of instruction, and received CLIL training. Thus, teachers who worked at NIS for at least 2 years and received some CLIL training, taught subjects through Kazakh (L2), Russian (L2) or English (L3) were targeted for this study.

The five teachers, selected for the study were referred to by the pseudonyms Ainur, Aisha, Zhadyra, Kuralay, and Paul. Their profiles are summarized in Table 1 (Karabassova, 2018b). Except for Paul, an international teacher, all the participating teachers were Kazakhstani, and women. Ainur and Kuralay instructed through Kazakh L1 and L2, Aisha through Russian L1 and L2, Zhadyra through Russian L1 and English, and Paul taught exclusively in English L3. Zhadyra and Paul often taught in a team with other teachers who are not included in this study (bilingual team teaching).

The data collection took place in the school year 2016-2017. The data in this study came from semi-structured face-to-face interviews and classroom observations which focused on CLIL practices. Moreover, teachers' lesson plans and classroom artifacts were reviewed for complementing the data. Three interviews and at least one lesson observation was conducted with each participating teacher.

Two interviews were conducted prior to and one interview, after classroom observations in Kazakh, Russian and English based on the participants' preferences. The type of observation employed was non-participant, which involved the researcher sitting in the back of the room out of the direct line of vision of the students. Given the purpose to develop a holistic and detailed understanding of the implementation of CLIL, the technique of thick description, described as "deep, dense, detailed accounts" (Denzin, 1989, p. 83) of the practices observed was used. In this study, thick descriptions involved using an observation protocol which allowed the researcher to watch the lessons as taught, and to take detailed observation notes. Flexible as it was, the observation protocol framework highlighted important aspects, such as integration techniques, comprehension support strategies, classroom interaction and the use of languages.

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Based on teachers' preferences, classroom observations were protocolled without videotaping. The data were analyzed

through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). The reason for choosing thematic analysis is its flexibility in defining themes in various ways.

Teacher	Ainur	Aisha	Zhadyra	Kuralay	Paul
<b>L1</b>	Kazakh	Russian	Russian	Kazakh	English
<b>Degree/ Country</b>	BA and MA in History/ Kazakhstan	Specialist Diploma in History/ Kazakhstan	Specialist Diploma in Chemistry/ Kazakhstan	BA in Geography/ Kazakhstan	Postgraduate Diploma in Physics/ United Kingdom
<b>Teaching experience</b>	10 years	20 years	15 years	10 years	17 years
<b>NIS teaching experience</b>	3,5 years	3,5 years	3 years	3 years	2 years
<b>Subject taught</b>	History of Kazakhstan	World History	Chemistry	Geography	Physics
<b>Language of instruction</b>	Kazakh	Russian	Kazakh-English Russian-English	Kazakh	English
<b>CLIL training</b>	with an international trainer 2 workshops	with an international trainer	with an international trainer	with a school colleague	none

Table 1. Participants` Profile (the names are pseudonyms)

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1 “CLIL or just teaching through another language”

The analysis of data from interviews, observations and teachers' documents across cases indicated that the general design of the observed L2 or L3 lessons, basically, did not differ from traditional non-CLIL classes. Teachers admitted that they had the same lesson plan for two different cohorts who received instruction in L1 and L2. For instance, the Kazakh history teacher taught in both Kazakh L1 and Kazakh L2 classes. The same is was true for the world history teacher.

The course of the lesson and learning was determined by content topics indicated in the curriculum which was the same for both streams divided by the language of instruction. The review of lesson plans showed that all the participating teachers followed a similar outline of lesson planning, and had specific content learning objectives, which could be defined as measurable, specific and time-bound. For instance, in Aisha`s (RMI)<sup>1</sup> revision lesson of world history, the learning objectives included “summarizing the impact of historical process on people’s mind, understanding the patterns of historical process and evaluating the role of an individual in history” (Lesson Plan, Aisha, May 14, 2016).

Although, in practice, the observed lessons did not differ from traditional content lessons, the teachers’ lesson plans were different from the ones used in mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. Within their detailed lesson plans, which had to be approved by the subject leader, the participating teachers designated a separate line to lesson aims which

practically repeated the learning objectives. Success criteria were another interesting component of lesson plan which was sometimes shared with students in relation to assessment. In addition, teachers indicated cross-curricular links, the ICT skills development and prior learning determined by the theme of the lesson. During the interviews, Ainur (KMI)<sup>2</sup>, Aisha (RMI) and Kuralay (KMI) who instructed in both L1 and L2 classes, mentioned that they prepared one lesson plan for both cohorts since the curriculum content, assessment requirements and tasks were the same for CLIL and non-CLIL classes, despite CLIL students' having language deficiencies. According to the teachers, both CLIL and L1 teachers in the school had the same lesson plan form.

Notwithstanding rigorous content planning, teachers did not tend to equally emphasize language learning objectives. During the observations, no language learning objectives were shared with the students. In general, Ainur (KMI), Aisha (RMI), Zhadyra (EMI)<sup>3</sup> and Kuralay (KMI), who had attended some CLIL workshops, seemed to know what language learning objectives were, and how to include them in their lesson plans. In a pre-observation interview, while discussing the Grade 7 lesson about the development of the Kazakh music arts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ainur generically mentioned the development of listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills as language objectives to be pursued in the upcoming class. However, in her lesson plan, she indicated different language aspects, which stipulated the use of subject-specific vocabulary and phrases for communication and writing (Lesson Plan, Ainur, May 10, 2016). In the actual lesson, yet nonetheless, none of the planned language aspects received explicit attention.

Aisha's lesson plan briefly mentioned language objectives in the following way: "terms and concepts covered during the term" (Lesson Plan, Aisha, May 10, 2016). Paul, who did not have any CLIL training, did not share his lesson plan, and no language learning objectives were made explicit to students during the class. Similar to her colleague Ainur, Kuaralay highlighted specific phrases and chunks of sentences as language focus of her geography lesson in Grade 10. However, explicit focus on language skills was not evident during the lesson observed. The chemistry teacher, Zhadyra, who planned and taught lessons in a team with Elaine<sup>4</sup>, a foreign teacher partner, had more detailed language learning objectives in her lesson plan. However, as the observations revealed, Zhadyra and Elaine did not draw their students' attention to language objectives, and did not reflect on their achievement, despite the fact that success criteria for content learning were clearly articulated and discussed during classes.

## 5.2 "Incidental focus on subject-specific vocabulary"

The analysis of teachers' lesson plans, interviews and lesson observations revealed that the most common way of integration that the participating teachers adopted was attention to language through incidental focus on subject-specific vocabulary. The integration of content and language was not systematically planned. The language received the teachers' attention only when they wanted to ensure that students understood the meaning of key words important for learning a new topic, to check that students mastered previously learned terms, and when they corrected language errors in their students' speech. Ainur (KMI) and Aisha (RMI) placed a focus on language through verbal scaffolding, although it tended to be incidental. In her class of Kazakh history, announcing the topic of the lesson, Ainur discussed the meaning of several key words with the class, since they were central to the new content to be learned. While individual students read the content learning objectives aloud as she requested, Ainur drew students' attention to the meaning of



unknown words and key words in Kazakh such as *bai* (prosperous man) and *zhyrau* (poet): “Gys, what does the word *bai* mean? Who is a *zhyrau*?” However, those words were not practiced or consolidated any further (Observation, May 10, 2016).

In Aisha’s class of world history in Grade 8, the language focus involved emphasizing the correct usage of words through rectifying incorrect words or word stress. She recognized that her students had a good proficiency of Russian L2 already, and she required them to speak as accurately as possible. While checking a task with the class, Aisha tried to correct language errors or elicit correct answers from the students:

Aisha: Let’s check. So, Group 1, what is your heading? (R)<sup>5</sup>

Group 1: The heading of our text is “The history of the origins [proishojdeniya] X-rays” (R)

Aisha: Not the origins, but discovering [otkrytiya](R) (Observation, May 15, 2016).

Science teachers, Zhadyra (EMI) and Paul (EMI) focused on the use of previously learned subject terms through asking questions and giving definitions of terms. For instance, in Zhadyra’s class of chemistry, taught in English, language received attention in the following way:

Zhadyra: What is carbohydrate? (E)<sup>6</sup>

Class: A molecule consisting of carbon (C), hydrogen (H) and oxygen (O) (E)

Zhadyra: What is hydrolysis? (E)

Class: Breaking chemical bonds by adding water. (E) (Observation, May 11, 2017).

Similar to his colleague, Zhadyra, Paul also tried to check the knowledge of subject terms. He directed questions to individual students in English:

Paul: Alina, what is this? [points to the formula] (E)

Alina: Isotope stability. (E)

Paul: Askar, what is isotope stability? (E)

Askar: Can you repeat? (E)

Paul: What is isotope stability? (E) [speaks a little more slowly]

Askar: An isotope is stable if the ratio of protons to neutrons in the nucleus is right. (E) (Observation, May 18, 2016)

Kuralay, who seemed to plan a lesson with some language aspects in mind, was the exception among her colleagues, as she did not pay any explicit attention to subject vocabulary during the observed classes.

While speaking was evident in all the observed classes, it was mostly limited to providing short information as a response to the teacher’s questions. While in interviews teachers mentioned that students’ speaking and the ability to express ideas were the most important language skills in subject classes, no cases were observed in which students were explicitly taught how to communicate and demonstrate their knowledge in the target language. Writing in the target language found place in all the observed classes. However, the teachers did not put emphasis on developing writing skills or the usage of important subject-specific words, indicated in their lesson plans. Thus, writing tasks served as a way of taking notes in a preparation for presentation or providing answers to questions posted by the teacher.

Interestingly, activities aimed at developing reading and listening skills were also featured in some observed classes. For instance, Aisha tried to strategically direct students at working with a text. In her class, students worked in groups and with different texts distributed at random by Aisha. Reading included two types of strategies, such as while-reading and after-reading tasks. During the while-reading task, students were to formulate a heading for the text, and give it to their group. After reading, students were asked to

formulate six types of question for the text: simple questions, specifying questions, interpretation questions, creative questions, practical questions, and evaluative questions.

An attempt to develop students' listening skills was observed in Ainur's class. The listening activity involved watching a video about a horse in the target language. The video was played in the YouTube channel, and was apparently meant for wide Kazakh-speaking audience. Students were divided into groups and each group was given a question about the type of horse to be answered while listening to the information: Group 1: What is *zhaby*?; Group 2: What is *argymak*?; and Group 3: What is *kazan at*? The video was played only once. The questions required lower-order thinking skills, and straightforward answers. Each group managed to answer the questions, and when asked, students estimated that they had comprehended the material between 40% and 60%. However, the listening material was not processed or elaborated any further.

### 5.3 "CLIL or just good teaching?"

While the integration of language was always implicit, the participating teachers implemented practices and strategies intended to support students' comprehension of content material provided in the target language. Activating students' prior knowledge was one of the strategies that all the participating teachers implemented at the beginning of the lesson. In her lesson about Service sectors in Kazakhstan, Kuralay set to tap into students' prior knowledge on the topic through getting them to discuss cover pages of newspapers and magazines she displayed on the interactive board. She asked short questions directed at individual students, allowing adequate "think time" between asking a question in Kazakh and speaking for a second time:

- Kuralay: Aizhan, what are the pictures about? (K)<sup>7</sup>  
Aizhan: Newspapers and magazines. (K)  
Kuralay: Alibek, what are newspapers and magazines for? (K)  
Alibek: We receive information. (K)  
Kuralay: Roumissa, what kind of information do you receive? (K)  
Roumissa: About products and services. (K)  
Kuralay: Assyl, what are the 2 branches of industry? (K)  
Students: Production and manufacture. (K)  
Kuralay: Does the service sector produce goods? (K)  
Students (in chorus): No, no. (K) (Observation, May 10, 2016)

Lesson observations revealed that social science teachers used a range of various strategies in order to elicit from students their existing knowledge and build knowledge needed for accessing upcoming content. These strategies included discussing pictures, listening to music, eliciting ideas about the upcoming activity and asking questions. Science teachers in this study tended to use less varied activities, since they mainly asked short questions at the activating stage. However, during pre-observation and post-observation classes, none of the teachers mentioned activating prior knowledge as a CLIL-related strategy and its role in CLIL classes.

In the class observations, spoken input by means of teacher explanation was the most common mode of lesson input. Moreover, taken together, the participating teachers exploited varied and multimodal input, including spoken, written, visual, and hands-on materials. All of these materials were in the target language, and included pictures, cards, diagrams, audio and video materials, realia, and experiment equipment and tools. During

the observed classes, social science teachers (Ainur, Aisha and Kuralay) used more pictures, diagrams, video and audio materials. Among the three, Ainur was more skillful at supporting students' comprehension, as she made use of several visual materials, including video and audio materials, pictures and posters. In her chemistry class, Zhadyra used models of chemical bonds, experiment equipment, and materials for demonstrating chemical reactions, including consumables, such as margarine, water and ethanol. In his revision lesson, Paul mostly relied on spoken material in the form of teacher explanations with PowerPoint slides although his subject, Physics would allow more space for contextual support.

Moreover, to sustain students' comprehension in L2 or L3, the participating teachers tried to make some adjustment to the questions they asked, although they did not recognize it as a special approach. During the observed lessons, they mainly asked short questions and reiterated them when needed. These questions were essentially aimed at checking quick facts and students' prior knowledge, as well as assessing how well the students understood the instructions for a particular task. Ainur (history) was the exception in this respect as she also used questions that encouraged opinions, feelings, and prompted learners to support their arguments. However, in the observed classes, the particularities of learning content in L2 were not always taken into consideration. For instance, while Kuralay, Aisha, and Paul tried to ask personalized questions, students answering often answered the teacher's questions as a whole class in Ainur and Zhadyra's lessons. Besides, Ainur, Kuralay, and Zhadyra often forgot to allow students adequate "think time" for answering before moving to the next question. In addition, Kuralay, Aisha, and Paul seemed to adjust their speaking pace to the level of their students to support them as L2 learners, although Ainur and Zhadyra tended to speak faster.

#### **5.4 "One teacher-one language"**

All the participating teachers tried to encourage interaction in the learning context through providing opportunities for more pair and group work. In all the classes observed, students mostly worked in pairs or groups, and teacher talking to the whole class was also prevalent. In the observed classes, there were almost no individual tasks.

While students relied on each other's help during the group work, the history teachers Ainur (KMI) and Aisha (RMI) tried to ensure the participation of each student in discussions and poster presentations. Yet, the instructional approaches observed can generally be described as teacher-led, and focused on content input, which provided little opportunity for students to talk. During group presentations, students seemed to present their work to the teacher rather than to their peers, and they did not always listen to each other. Sometimes, problems with classroom management seem to happen since the students were noisy and did not listen to one another during group presentations. For instance, in Ainur's class, group activities sometimes created disorder and chaos. In a mingling activity, Ainur distributed three different sets of texts containing information about the topic of the lesson, to three groups. Each group read only its own set, and then was invited to the centre of the classroom to share its information with the class. However, as the space of the class was small, and the students did not receive clear instructions on how to share, the task caused some chaotic movements around the classroom instead of leading to maximized interaction among students.

As to approaches to classroom learning, it can be said that in most cases, classroom remained orderly and teachers had traditional roles. While Ainur (KMI), Zhadyra (EMI) and

Paul (EMI) tried to give more autonomy to students and let them make their own decisions, Aisha (RMI) and Kuralay (KMI) tended to retain full control of the classroom and directed all activities. Aisha (RMI), on the other hand, could say "Stop!" to students in case of giving incorrect answers to her questions, and immediately turn to other students without giving the former a chance to come up with another answer. She could also prevent other students answering questions while she was eliciting answers from individual students. For Kuralay freedom of expression among students appeared to be a norm, and while being asked about her students during the pre-observation interview, she said: "There is a student named Abilmansur, he is very free and easy, he can express himself without any confusion and hesitation" (Kuralay, Pre-O, May 10, 2016).

In all the classes, except for Zhadyra (EMI), who taught in a team, the target language was exclusively used as a language of instruction. Classroom observations showed the adherence of Ainur (KMI), Kuralay (KMI), and Paul (EMI) to the "one teacher-one language" principle. Unexpectedly, these teachers used only the target language while providing subject input and talking to students, although code-switching was a commonly occurring phenomenon among students. The exceptional use of the target language by teachers was explained by their belief in the necessity of exclusive use of the target language, and the fact that the language in which they delivered instruction was their own first or strongest language. During the lessons observed, students kept switching to their L1 while talking to their peers or asking them for clarifications. Although Ainur and Kuralay (both KMI) tried to avoid code-switching by reminding their students of the necessity to speak Kazakh L2, students naturally switched codes between L1 and L2. In Zhadyra's class taught in a team with her international colleague, switching to students' L1 was a norm. For instance, when the international teacher, Elaine has had an activity in English, Zhadyra translated some of the information covered by Elaine, into Russian. Zhadyra also checked her students' conceptual understanding through asking questions in L1, Russian, and highlighting certain aspects of content material.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that consistent with the prior theory (Coyle, 2005; Dalton-Puffer, 2008), in the present study, CLIL was content-driven and the thematic content which was at the heart of teaching, determined the course of lessons. Unlike typical CLIL programs implemented in mainstream education, at NIS, CLIL was implemented through the highly demanding curriculum. Thus, the learning was organized around enquiry-based learning and critical thinking. Moreover, teachers always had specific and measurable content learning objectives which they always shared with students. Given the importance of fulfilling content-learning objectives, teachers always bore assessment in their mind through discussing success criteria and reflecting on them at the end of the lesson.

The findings support the results of previous research conducted in other CLIL contexts, which concluded that in practice, didactic design, and teaching structure of CLIL lessons did not differ from traditional L1 lessons which focused on teaching content without any focus on language (Dalton-Puffer, Huttner, Jexenflicker, Schindelegger & Smit, 2008; Nikula, 2010). At the same time, lesson planning in the present study slightly differed from traditional L1 classes, since language focus was indicated in almost all cases. In other words, teachers who received some CLIL training, seemed to generally know what language learning objectives were, although they were limited to be a formal requirement of lesson planning.

Unlike rigorous content planning, in the observed CLIL lessons, language focus of CLIL was implemented incidentally. The most common way of integration that the participating teachers adopted was attention to language through focus on subject-specific vocabulary. However, the integration of content and language was not systematically speech.

Furthermore, all tasks and activities used the planned, and language received the teachers' attention incidentally. In general, the study revealed differences across subject areas in relation to teaching subject-specific language. Science teachers focused on subject terms through asking direct questions, whereas social science teachers tried to focus on the meaning of key words and corrected language errors in their students' observed classes, were in the target language and teachers tried to get their students to practice speaking in the target language. Paradoxically, the potential of students' L1 was not recognized and exploited as a valid pedagogic tool. Teachers tended to prevent students from switching to their L1, even though code-switching among students, especially during group discussions, was a norm. While teachers emphasized the importance of students' ability to communicate ideas, speaking skills were not explicitly taught in the observed classes. Writing skills did not receive special attention, whereas there were episodes to teach reading skills and listening skills.

As observations revealed, teachers in this study implemented strategies and activities aimed at supporting their students' comprehension in L2 or L3 instruction. However, during post-observation interviews, teachers did not always realize they were using them, or did not attribute those techniques to CLIL. This may be due to the fact that most of the strategies and methods recommended for quality CLIL implementation are common to good teaching practices not necessarily specific to CLIL. As Mehisto (2012) suggested that the complexities of "trilingual education cannot be fully disentangled from the complexities of education in general" (p. 1) and best practices in pedagogy should be applied in order to provide support to students in CLIL.

Coyle (2005) suggested that in CLIL, the learning process is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding, but rather it enables learners to construct knowledge by themselves. In the classes observed, the cognitive demand of tasks was not reduced for CLIL students because of language issues, even though the curriculum was highly demanding. Moreover, collaboration among students was fostered through a lot of pair and group work, leaving little space for individual work (Coonan, 2007). Yet, in some cases, students were in a more receptive or more passive learning mode, while the teacher was more active and speaking most of the time. Teachers mainly directed all classroom activities with very few exceptions. However, instructional approaches could not be entirely described as non-interactive, teacher-led, and content-based, providing little opportunity for students to talk.

In this study, any notable language-related differences were not found in CLIL classroom practice. Yet, the study suggests that teachers of social sciences who taught through Kazakh L2 or Russian L2 were implementing more CLIL-supportive strategies than science teachers who taught through English L3, even though diversity was observed among the social science teachers in terms of the strategies they employed. This may be because the social science teachers attended several trainings in general teaching practice when joining the NIS network, and familiarized themselves with new approaches in teaching. This finding is in line with Savikj's (2013) conclusions, who found that teachers of social sciences were more mindful of the language focus of CLIL than science teachers were. The disparity between social science teachers' CLIL-orientation and that of Science teachers can be explained by the fact that the former attended a CLIL workshop at the

beginning of their career at Parassat NIS. This might point out the fact that they are less resistant to the idea of integration, and learned how to implement some CLIL strategies, although they might not always be consistent in implementing them.

The findings from this study suggest some implications for policy, practice, research and theory of CLIL. It is well-known that the rationale for adopting CLIL is improving students' language competences and the ability to use language for meaningful purposes through placing equal focus on both content and language. Moreover, learning subjects through another language brings with it challenges for students. Thus, it is important for teachers to support students' comprehension, simultaneously developing their language skills. Teachers should be able to plan clear language learning objectives for each lesson and make them explicit to students. Despite CLIL being a new pedagogical approach for NIS teachers, the study revealed that the participating teachers have not been properly trained to implement this new form of pedagogy. This points to the need of a more systematic approach to CLIL teacher training.

This study contributes to the theory of CLIL through revealing the "incidental" nature of applying CLIL strategies. While CLIL literature suggests that subject teachers systematically plan and implement strategies aimed at sustaining students' comprehension and developing language skills, the findings indicate that in practice, teachers implement CLIL incidentally. The "incidental" nature of implementation was manifested in the fact that teachers did not systematically plan to achieve specific language learning objectives and share them with their students. Even if they did implement practices that fit in with quality CLIL implementation, they were not aware of them, or did not attribute them to CLIL.

Incidental implementation of CLIL may be explained by two factors. As this study has revealed, not all teachers were provided with adequate CLIL training. Thus, they may be implementing specific strategies they learned during short workshops. Second, most of the strategies outlined as practices of CLIL are part of general "good pedagogy." Every new teacher joining the NIS network receives substantial training in innovative teaching approaches and generally good practices. Given the fact that CLIL "synthesizes and provides a flexible way of applying the knowledge learnt from these various approaches" (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008, p. 12), could the implication be that CLIL, in substance, constitutes general good pedagogy, and that the strategies which are specific to CLIL make CLIL stand out as a distinctive approach.

Given that the data for this study were collected at the end of the school year, any students were not observed who were left behind the class due to limited language proficiency, although it was difficult to assess the students' language proficiency based on one or two lesson observations. It would be more appropriate to conduct longitudinal studies, observing students throughout their schooling at NIS: from Grade 7 students' experience of L2 and L3 instruction when they join the NIS for the first time to their graduation in Grade 12, in order to see their progress and its relation to CLIL.

## NOTES

- 1 Russian is a medium of instruction
- 2 Kazakh is a medium of instruction
- 3 English is a medium of instruction
- 4 Pseudonym
- 5 Russian
- 6 English

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