



THE IMPACT OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN CLIL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has emerged as an innovative approach in education, combining content teaching with language learning. This study investigates the impact of authentic materials in CLIL classrooms on students' language proficiency and content knowledge. Using a mixed-methods approach, we analyzed data from various CLIL settings, highlighting the effectiveness of authentic materials in enhancing both language and content acquisition.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), authentic materials, language proficiency, content knowledge, student engagement, mixed-methods approach, secondary education, real-world relevance, educational outcomes, curriculum integration.

INTRODUCTION

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach where subjects are taught through a foreign language, fostering simultaneous content and language learning. The use of authentic materials—resources not specifically designed for language teaching but for real-life use—has been proposed to enhance the learning experience in CLIL classrooms. Authentic materials can range from news articles and videos to scientific reports and literature. This study aims to explore how the integration of such materials affects student engagement, language proficiency, and content understanding in CLIL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of authentic materials in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classrooms has garnered significant interest in educational research due to its potential to enhance both language proficiency and content knowledge. Authentic materials refer to texts and resources created for native speakers and used in real-world contexts, as opposed to materials specifically designed for language learning (Guariento & Morley, 2001).

Several studies have demonstrated the advantages of using authentic materials for language acquisition. Gilmore (2007) argues that authentic materials expose learners to natural language use, which helps improve their communicative competence. Similarly, Berardo (2006) emphasizes that authentic texts present learners with real-life language structures and vocabulary, which can significantly enhance their reading and comprehension skills.

Despite the fact that the development and adaptation of materials takes a lot of time, in the context of CLIL, one of the effective approaches in classrooms is the use of authentic materials. As mentioned earlier,

authentic materials are real-world resources created for native speakers of the target language, such as newspapers, videos, podcasts, articles, and academic texts. The integration of authentic materials offers many advantages and opens up opportunities for material development in CLIL settings:

- Authentic materials introduce students to the use of natural language, including colloquial expressions and idiomatic phrases, enhancing their language skills.
- Authentic materials provide context-rich content, allowing students to simultaneously learn language and subject-specific knowledge, improving comprehension and retention.
- Authentic materials offer insights into the culture, customs, and social aspects of native speakers, fostering cultural understanding.
- By working with authentic materials, students encounter language as it is used in real-life situations, preparing them for practical language use outside the classroom.
- The use of authentic materials makes learning more engaging and relevant, as students interact with real-world content.

The table below provides examples of how authentic materials can be effectively integrated into CLIL classes in universities (Table 1):

Table 1. Methods of Using Authentic Materials in CLIL Classes

Authentic Material	Method of Use in CLIL Class
Articles from Scientific Journals	In biology classes taught in English, students can analyze and discuss articles from scientific journals written by experts. This not only introduces them to advanced language but also immerses them in the scientific discourse of the studied field.
Historical Documents	In a history lesson conducted in a foreign language, students can analyze primary sources, such as letters, diaries, or government documents from the historical period they are studying. This provides firsthand historical insights while simultaneously improving language skills.
News Broadcasts	In journalism lessons with a language component, students can watch news broadcasts in the studied language. They then summarize, discuss, and analyze the news, developing their ability to understand and report on current events.
Case Studies	In business management classes, students can work with authentic examples from international companies. They analyze problems and propose solutions in the target language, enhancing both their business knowledge and language proficiency.
Excerpts from Literary Works	In a foreign language literature course, students can read excerpts from famous literary works. They discuss themes, character development, and symbolism, deepening their literary analysis skills in the target language.
TED Talks	In psychology classes, students can watch TED Talks on relevant topics presented in the studied language. They then participate in group discussions, presentations, and debates, improving their fluency and understanding of psychological concepts.
Academic Lectures	In a linguistics class taught in a foreign language, students can attend or watch online lectures delivered by linguists. They engage in critical discussions about linguistic theories and methodologies, improving both academic engagement and language competence.
Art Exhibitions	In art history classes, students can study authentic art exhibitions, videos, and interviews related to the artists and movements being studied. They then write critical essays and discuss artistic trends in the target language.
Documentary Films	In social science classes, students can watch documentary films about significant social issues, such as climate change or globalization. They engage in debates, write analytical essays, and give presentations on the topics and impact of the

documentaries.

Interviews with Experts	In political science classes, students can listen to interviews with political experts, diplomats, or politicians discussing international relations. They analyze the discussions and participate in multilingual debates on global issues.
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Including these authentic materials in university CLIL classes allows educators to create a dynamic learning environment that promotes both subject knowledge and language skills. This approach not only prepares students for academic success but also equips them with the skills necessary for their future careers in a globalized world.

In the context of CLIL, authentic materials serve a dual purpose. They provide content-specific language input while also delivering subject matter knowledge. This dual exposure is crucial for developing both linguistic and cognitive skills simultaneously (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). According to Mehisto, Marsh, and Frigols (2008), authentic materials make learning more meaningful and relevant, thereby increasing student motivation and engagement.

Despite the benefits, the use of authentic materials in CLIL classrooms also presents certain challenges. One significant concern is the difficulty level of these materials. Authentic texts are often complex and may be challenging for learners, especially those with lower language proficiency (Field, 2008). Therefore, teachers must carefully select materials that are appropriate for their students' language levels and provide necessary scaffolding to support comprehension (Mishan, 2005).

Moreover, integrating authentic materials requires careful planning and alignment with the curriculum. Teachers need to ensure that the materials not only support language development but also align with the content objectives of the CLIL program (Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2015). This dual focus demands considerable effort and expertise from educators, highlighting the need for professional development and training in CLIL methodologies.

Empirical research supports the positive impact of authentic materials on learning outcomes in CLIL settings. A study by Pinner (2013) found that students exposed to authentic materials in a CLIL classroom showed significant improvements in both language proficiency and content understanding compared to those using traditional textbooks. The study also noted increased student motivation and engagement, attributing these gains to the real-world relevance of the materials.

In another study, Gierlinger (2017) examined the use of authentic materials in a science CLIL program and reported similar findings. The use of authentic scientific texts and multimedia resources not only enhanced students' understanding of scientific concepts but also improved their academic language skills. The study highlighted the importance of selecting materials that are closely related to the curriculum and providing appropriate support to help students navigate complex texts.

METHODS

The study involved 120 students from three institutions implementing CLIL programs in Uzbekistan. Participants were aged between 18 and 24 years, with varying levels of proficiency in the target language.

Authentic materials used in the study included newspaper articles, documentaries, scientific journals, historical documents, and multimedia content relevant to the subjects taught. These materials were selected to align with the curriculum and to ensure a realistic context for language use.

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to assess language proficiency and content knowledge. Additionally,

student surveys and interviews were conducted to gather insights into their engagement and perceptions of the materials used.

Quantitative data from tests were analyzed using paired t-tests to determine the statistical significance of the changes in students' language and content knowledge. Qualitative data from surveys and interviews were thematically analyzed to identify common patterns and themes related to student engagement and perceptions.

RESULTS

The pre- and post-test results indicated a significant improvement in students' language proficiency across all four schools ($p < 0.01$). Students demonstrated enhanced vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening skills, attributed to the exposure to varied and complex language forms in the authentic materials.

Students' content knowledge also showed notable improvement, particularly in understanding and applying subject-specific concepts. Authentic materials provided context-rich scenarios that facilitated deeper learning and retention of subject matter.

Survey and interview responses revealed that students found authentic materials more engaging and motivating compared to traditional textbooks. They appreciated the real-world relevance of the materials, which made the learning experience more meaningful and enjoyable. Many students reported an increased interest in both the subject matter and the language being learned.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the positive impact of authentic materials on both language proficiency and content knowledge in CLIL classrooms. Authentic materials provide a rich linguistic and contextual environment, promoting higher levels of student engagement and motivation. The study supports the integration of authentic materials in CLIL programs as a means to enhance educational outcomes.

Educators should consider incorporating a variety of authentic materials in their CLIL curricula to create a more dynamic and effective learning environment. Training and resources should be provided to help teachers select and utilize these materials effectively.

This study was limited to students of faculty of economics in Uzbekistan. Future research could explore the impact of authentic materials in different educational contexts and age groups, as well as investigate long-term effects on language proficiency and content retention.

CONCLUSION

The integration of authentic materials in CLIL classrooms significantly enhances students' language proficiency and content knowledge. By providing real-world contexts and engaging content, authentic materials contribute to a more effective and motivating learning experience. This study underscores the importance of utilizing authentic resources in educational settings to foster holistic and meaningful learning outcomes.

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