

A Case for Geography and English Integrated Studies

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Abstract

Geography is one of most popular subjects taught through foreign languages (CLIL). However, it remains the task of the teacher to make sure the content is not neglected because of the language focus, or that the content delivered is not simplified too much so as to be digested through a foreign language. The article aims at presenting CLIL materials for teaching physical geography. It is prepared on the basis of the e-book by Professor Michael Pidwirny from Canada. Each chapter of the book starts with carefully selected illustrations and questions which are meant to be a stimulus for speaking activities, and which would draw students' attention to the topic. This is followed by a vocabulary list which also includes pronunciation and, in some cases, words' explanations and other tasks. The main part of each chapter is a reading exercise accompanied by language exercises, follow-up tasks and extra tasks in 'Think a while!' section. As a result, the book is going to deliver both the content and the language in the most user-friendly manner.

Key words: CLIL, Geography and English, subject integration, ELT, CLIL textbook, CLIL materials for Geography

Introduction

Integration of school subjects and foreign languages (CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning) is gaining popularity throughout Europe and other continents. Geography is one of the most frequently selected subjects to be taught in such a way. Geographical vocabulary is taught anyway during foreign language classes, as topics such as volcanoes or tourist destinations are popular themes (Zaparucha, 2007). Geography delivers a wide scope of interesting material available through different resources, especially electronic, which can be used for classes. However, teaching Geography through a foreign language is not an easy thing and it remains the task of the teacher to make sure the content is not neglected because of the language focus, or that the content is not simplified too much to be digested through the foreign language.

Tools for CLIL Geography

Teaching school subjects and languages separately needs specific tools, such as a well designed curriculum, specific teacher training, and experienced and dedicated teachers with expertise in modern methodology. Besides, skills practiced during classes, testing methods and the expected outcomes are specific for each study area. Last but not least, textbooks are diverse in both cases.

However, the integration of a subject and a foreign language, e.g. Geography and English, requires purposely designed tools which cannot simply copy what is specific for these subjects taught separately (see Table 1). First of all, it is required that the curriculum followed by CLIL classes is concordant with what the national Geography curriculum states, and not that of foreign languages. As a result, language skills acquired and practiced during CLIL classes are not built up in the same fluent manner that during language classes.

If it comes to CLIL teachers, in numerous cases these are subject teachers with a decent knowledge of the foreign language in use. In many countries there are no specific requirements in terms of such teachers' training (Szabóné, 2008). As a result, these people often lack language teaching skills and delivering lessons can become a serious issue. Thus, the training should be carefully designed so as to meet the specific needs of such teachers.

Table 1. Specificity of tools for CLIL Geography

Geography	CLIL Geography	English
Geography Curriculum	Following a National Geography Curriculum in a foreign language (no separate curriculum).	English Curriculum
Geography Teaching Methodology	Separate methods of teaching considering the language abilities and needs.	English Teaching Methodology
Geography Teacher Training	Teacher Training designed purposely for CLIL teachers in order to give insight into the specificity of the teaching environment.	English Teacher Training
Geographical Skills	Both Geography and language skills practiced.	English Language Skills
Geography Testing	Testing both the subject knowledge and the level of the language, but without hyper-correctness expected in terms of the language.	English Language Testing
Geography Textbooks	Specially designed Geography textbooks with language exercises.	English Textbooks

Other key problems connected with CLIL-style teaching of Geography include skills practiced during classes. Well-designed CLIL lessons should give the students opportunities to use and develop all language skills. As various studies prove, CLIL students generally outcome non-CLIL students in terms of all language skills (Zarobe, 2008; Loranc-Paszyk, 2009). However, this cannot mean geographical skills are neglected due to lack of time or other obstacles. For instance, the amount of time devoted to fieldwork or map-reading should be at least the same, if not larger due to language difficulties, as in non-CLIL classes. The same refers to lesson preparation, testing and other fields of teaching.

Physical World for Intermediate Students

Among the most difficult issues regarding CLIL-style teaching is how to obtain teaching resources, including textbooks. The simplest thing would be just taking a ready British or American Geography textbook, but the drawbacks of this include inadequate curriculum pattern (i.e. Polish curriculum does not include case studies which are found in British textbooks), inappropriate language level (in most cases too high), and no language-specific exercises which would let students practice both receptive and productive skills. Although using ready Geography material found throughout English textbooks would swiftly include language practice, selecting such material would often mean that the contents is simplified, inadequate or out-dated, while searching for Internet material is time-consuming. As a result, the amount of teacher-produced material can vary from 20 to as much as 70% (own study, unpublished).

All the above pushed the author into writing her own, professionally designed textbook for teaching Geography through CLIL. It is based on the e-book *Fundamentals of Physical Geography* by Michael Pidwirny (1999-2008). The ready texts, cordially made available by the author, were treated as the basis for the textbook. Following is a sample material from Chapter IV on The Universe, the Earth and the Natural Spheres. Part 2 of this paper deals with The Natural Spheres.

Speaking

Carefully selected photos are to deliver stimulus material for speaking and listening activities at the beginning of each lesson unit. Accompanying task (Describe...) and the questions will help practicing language skills, which in this form appear during an oral leaving high school exam for foreign languages. Moreover, the material is to draw students' attention to the topic covered in the section (Figure 1).

<p>Figure 1 The Baltic seacoast, Mielno, Poland.</p>	<p>Figure 2 Sandy cliff on the Baltic seacoast, Mielno, Poland.</p>
<p>B. Describe Figures 1 and 2.</p> <p>C. Talk to your partner and answer the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the study of the atmosphere? 2. What is the study of the hydrosphere? 3. What is the study of the lithosphere? 4. What is the study of the pedosphere? 5. What is the study of the biosphere? 	

Figure 1: An example of visual aids and speaking tasks.

Vocabulary

One of the difficulties in dealing with foreign texts is its complexity caused by specific language in use. Moreover, even a foreign language specialist will have problems in pointing at proper pronunciation in English, as it varies a lot. Thus, each unit is accompanied by pronunciation based on modern vocabularies and presented in the International Phonetic Alphabet (Figure 2). Moreover, some chapters would have definitions or even vocabulary tasks included.

<p>VOCABULARY</p>	
<p>Study the words, practice their pronunciation and find their equivalents in your native language.</p>	
<p>condensation /,kɒndən'seɪʃ(ə)n/ (n)</p>	<p>mineral /'mɪn(ə)rəl/ (n)</p>

element /'elɪmənt/ (n)	molten /'məʊltən/ (adj)
evaporation /ɪ,væpə'reɪʃ(ə)n/ (n)	organic /ɔ:(r)'gæni:k/ (adj)
glacier /'glæsiə(r)/ (n)	particle /'pɑ:(r)tɪk(ə)l/ (n)
groundwater /'graʊnd,wɔ:tə(r)/ (n)	pressure /'preʃə(r)/ (n)
hydrologic cycle /hɑ:'drɒlədʒɪk 'saɪk(ə)l/ (n)	rock /rɒk/ (n)
igneous /'ɪɡniəs/ (adj)	runoff /'rʌnɒf/ (n)
inorganic /,ɪnɔ:(r)'gæni:k/ (adj)	sedimentary /,sedɪ'mentəri/ (adj)
infiltration /,ɪnfɪl'treɪʃ(ə)n/ (n)	sphere /sfɪə(r)/ (n)
magma /'mægmə/ (n)	suspended /sə'spendɪd/ (adj)
metamorphic /,metə'mɔ:rʃɪk/ (adj)	

Figure 2. An example of vocabulary tasks and pronunciation

Reading

Reading poses a vital part of each chapter. Very often the reading passages would include more visuals and would pose a springboard for writing tasks. As the original text is at a much higher level, both linguistically and in terms of the contents, the initial task was to simplify it and adjust to the curriculum. However, as the book is not specially designed for one selected country, the content is more complex than it should be, for instance, for Poland only. This is done deliberately, as these are the teachers who should be able to pick up the parts which they assume important and necessary in their teaching. Figure 3 included a sample text.

<p>READING</p> <p>Read the text below and do the follow-up tasks.</p> <p>The Earth has five basic components called spheres.</p> <p>The Lithosphere is the solid inorganic outer part of the Earth built of rocks and minerals which consist of elements. On its surface the Earth is composed of three main types of rocks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ igneous – rocks formed by solidification of molten rocks called magma, ○ sedimentary – rocks formed by the deposition and burial of inorganic particles, such as sands, and organic sediments, ○ metamorphic – rocks formed by alteration of existing rocks by intense heat or pressure. <p>The atmosphere is the vast gaseous envelope of air that surrounds the Earth. Its limits are difficult to define. The atmosphere contains different gases and suspended particles.</p> <p>The hydrosphere includes the waters of the Earth in various stores, including the atmosphere, oceans, lakes, rivers, soils, glaciers, and groundwater.</p> <p>Water takes part in the hydrological cycle and moves from one store to another by evaporation, condensation, runoff, precipitation, infiltration and groundwater flow.</p> <p>The biosphere includes all living things, i.e. plants and animals.</p> <p>The pedosphere refers to the thin layer of soils. All of these five spheres are linked to each other. Dynamic interactions move and exchange both matter and energy between them.</p>

Figure 3: A sample of a reading passage

Follow-up tasks

All the units include various tasks which follow the main reading passage. They would often incorporate writing tasks or more speaking opportunities. Figure 4 shows an example of a follow-up task.

Summary

The number of schools delivering their classes through foreign languages is on the rise. Thus, it cannot go unnoticed among Geographers that their subject is being delivered in this way. Although CLIL is mostly advocated for by foreign language teachers as a way of enhancing students' progress in these terms, subject teachers not involved in CLIL should not treat this

methodology as totally marginal. There is no European now with no knowledge of foreign languages. Geography as a science is also under increasing stress of using English as a *lingua franca* of the field. As a result, any means leading to achieving this goal are worthwhile, including CLIL. It should remain all Geographers' goal, however, that once doing this CLIL teachers do not limit geographical knowledge among the population.

The presented samples of the textbook are to show both, the language competencies and the subject-specific skills and knowledge, can be achieved once we give CLIL teachers well-designed tools, including carefully designed textbooks.

FOLLOW-UP TASKS

A. Insert the following words into the scheme: animals, biosphere, elements, gases, glaciers, groundwater, lakes, lithosphere, minerals, oceans, particles, pedosphere, plants, rivers, soils, water.

Insert the words given below to the sentences. If necessary, refer to the previous unit.

atmosphere	expanding	light	Theory
4.6 billion	explosion	lithosphere	Universe
13.5 billion	linked	scientists	

The Big Bang (1) explains the origin, history, and future of the (2)
 Most (3) say matter, energy, space, and time in our Universe were created from a huge (4) about (5) years ago.
 Ever since this explosion the Universe has been (6) at the speed of (7)
 The Earth began forming about (8) years ago.
 The Earth is composed of four spheres: (9), biosphere, (10), and hydrosphere, which are (11) through biogeochemical recycling.

Figure 4: A sample of follow-up tasks

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