CLIL at the Faculty of Informatics and Management

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Abstract

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) means that students use English medium to study subjects such as geography, history, arts, or mathematics that were originally taught in the native language. This is also true for one of the optional subjects - Culture and Literature of Great Britain - taught at the Faculty of Informatics and Management of the University of Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic. The article outlines the course structure, materials and assessments. Moreover, it demonstrates how students are building intercultural knowledge and understanding while they are developing their language knowledge and skills. The article also shows how students are involved in the decision-making process, which, on the other hand, makes students responsible for their own decisions and learning.

Keywords: CLIL, language skills, English, students;

1. Introduction

The article describes a course of Culture and Literature of Great Britain taught within the framework of CLIL at the Faculty of Informatics and Management (FIM) of the University of Hradec Kralove (UHK) in the Czech Republic. The course is aimed at students of Travel and Tourism Management in their first year of study. The classes are run only in English, which sometimes causes slight problems because although all students have passed the university entrance examination in the English language, their level of English still varies. Ideally, their level of English should correspond to level B2 of the Common European Reference Framework for languages; this corresponds to a TOEIC score of between 541-700 or an IELTS score of 5-6.

2. Course structure and materials

This optional course is taught over one academic year which consists of two semesters: winter (September - December) and summer (February – May). One semester usually comprises 26 lessons (1 lesson=45min). However, per week students have one joint 90-minute lesson. The topics of the first and the second semester are as follows:

**Winter term**

1. Pre-historic, Celtic and Roman periods (4,000 B.C.-500 A.N.)
2. Anglo-Saxon period (500-1066); Feudal period - the Early Middle Ages (1066-1290)
3. Feudal period - the Latter Middle Ages (1290-1485)
4. Seminar I

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5. Renaissance period (1485-1616)
6. Seminar II
7. 17th century – The Age of Revolutions (1616-1700)
8. Seminar III
9. 18th century – The Age of Reason (1700-1789)
10. Seminar IV
11. Romanticism (1789-1837)
12. Seminar V
13. Writing essays

**Summer term**
1. The Victorian Era (1837-1900)
2. Seminar VI
3. Presentations 1 (their structure, language, a video)
4. Presentations 2 (basic guide to PowerPoint, evaluation, a written summary form, some tips on how to write bibliographies in English)
5.-12. Students’ Presentations
1. Final Consolidation

As outlined above, there are seven lectures on British history and culture and five seminars on British literature in the winter semester, for which students have to prepare at home. During the seminar they discuss the literature issues within the historical context with the help of notes they have taken in class or made at home. The seminars are always connected to the historical period discussed in the lecture of the previous lesson/s (see Appendix 1). Students have abundant access to ample study materials for the subject, either to books in the library or the Internet sources. However, the Internet sources need careful consideration since not all of them are reliable enough. In addition to these materials, their studies are supported on-line with a reference eLearning course.

3. **Course assessments and evaluation**

**A) Theory**

The winter semester ends with a credit. To obtain the credit, students have to write an essay. The pass mark is 75%. The essay is evaluated for its content, accuracy, layout, references and bibliography. In fact, students should possess knowledge of academic writing, which is also taught at the faculty as an optional subject. Furthermore, the content of the essay reflects their critical thinking regarding both the British history and literature with reference to the study materials of the winter semester. Moreover, students are provided with a simple essay framework (Appendix 2) which enhances their thinking skills (see Bloom 1956; Fisher 2006). Sample essay topics are as follows:

**Civil War and John Milton**

(Discuss John Milton’s attitude to the Civil War of 1642-49. Demonstrate some aspects of the influence of the war on Milton’s Paradise Lost.)

**The 18th Century Literature in England**

(Discuss one of the literary works written within this historical period. Show the effect of some political, economic or social conditions on the work’s heroes and their activities.)

**B) Practice**

Originally, in the winter term of 2011/12 64 students, 30 full-time and 34 part-time, were enrolled in the course. However, only half of them in fact attended the course. 32 students then decided to sit for a credit test, i.e. an essay. Out of these students 25 (78%) passed the test. That means, more than ¾ of them. Those who did not pass had difficulties with grammar (e.g. word order, articles and tenses), writing bibliographies and references, or they did not answer the topic fully. Generally, one can say that at the beginning of the course students almost had no knowledge of the subject matter, skills of formal writing and they were scared to debate about them. But the seminars and the essays proved that they had learned how to do it.

**A) Theory**
In the summer semester students are involved in the creation of the course content as they are asked to prepare a presentation on issues of modern British history or British identity with some reflection on their own national history and culture. At the beginning of the summer semester students are taught how to make the presentation in the English language together with its written summary. The oral part of the presentation is worth 60% and the written part is worth 40%. Altogether students must obtain 75%. These are the requirements for the credit in the summer semester. Moreover, the course is finished with an oral exam, which covers the materials of both semesters.

B) Practice
At the beginning of the summer term students decide on the topics from the area of modern British history or British identity with some reflection on their own national history and culture, for example British identity versus the European Union or Czech and British political and cultural relations in the first half of the 20th century. In this way they form a syllabus out of these topics in a chronological or thematic order for the summer term. Each of the students has to make a 20-minute presentation on the selected topic in front of his peers and write a short summary (100-150 words) of his/her topic. Thus, students enhance both their oral and written skills of English. If they agree, their presentation is videotaped and implemented into the reference on-line course. Furthermore, the teacher can discuss with them what to improve in their presentation skills by pointing it out in the video recording.

4. Conclusion
As demonstrated in the article, students are led not only to acquire and learn some new facts about British cultural history but also to carry out critical thinking and reflection on them. Moreover, they develop both productive and receptive language skills, such as speaking, writing, listening and reading. Finally, they are involved in the decision-making process, which, on the other hand, also makes students responsible for their own decisions and learning.

Students’s comments on the course:
This subject can extend general scope and facts of every well-educated person. It is always appealing to gain some new information and in this subject you can also debate about it . . . .

I appreciated the exercises, which we did and which helped us to learn how to logically structure the presentation . . . .

References

Appendix 1
Seminar 1
Topics to be discussed:
1. Arthurian legends – a) symbols in King Arthur
   b) the role of the Arthurian legends nowadays
2. Geoffrey Chaucer - a) his life
   b) his work [reading and analyzing The Canterbury Tales]
   c) his style of writing
   d) the role of philosophy in his work
   e) his contribution to literature

Appendix 2
An essay framework
1. knowledge – what have we learned and read about the history and literature of a
particular period?
2. **comprehension** – tell the others about the history of that period and the fiction book connected to this period you have read;
3. **application** – how can you use/apply the knowledge of the history in describing the literary work you read?
4. **analysis** – which historical facts do you consider important in the story, in the lives of the main characters . . . ?
5. **synthesis** – develop your arguments for and against.
6. **evaluation** – express your own point of view.