

## State of the art report on CLIL implementation in Polish vocational schools

### Zastosowanie metody CLIL w polskich szkołach zawodowych

**Key words:** Content and Language Integrated Learning, vocational school, teacher training, foreign language teaching

**Słowa kluczowe:** Zintegrowane Kształcenie Przedmiotowo-Językowe, szkoła zawodowa, doskonalenie zawodowe nauczycieli, nauczanie języka obcego

**Streszczenie.** Poniższy Raport zestawia informacje o aktualnym stanie wdrożenia metodologii CLIL w polskich szkołach zawodowych. Informacje te zostały zebrane za pomocą ankiet internetowych przeprowadzonych wśród nauczycieli przedmiotów zawodowych. Raport jednoznacznie dowodzi, że aktualnie dostępne formy doskonalenia zawodowego nauczycieli nie dostarczyły im niezbędnej wiedzy na temat metodologii CLIL, oraz wskazuje, że większość nauczycieli szkół zawodowych jest mocno zainteresowanych taką formą szkoleń.

**Introduction.** Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been a tremendous success story and its influence on teaching practice is currently expanding quickly across Europe and beyond. One of the available definitions describes CLIL as: “a dual- focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (Mehisto and Marsh, 2008: 9). More generally, we could say that it is the integration of learning a foreign language with learning some other content. Moreover, students are expected to focus on the content or information rather than on a linguistic syllabus (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 137).

Research carried out over the past years has shown that knowledge of foreign languages is recognized as a key competency in the labor market. It is therefore obvious that vocational schools should focus on improving pupils' language skills in order to meet the obligation to prepare young people for work, especially in the context of the globalization process. This should apply not only to individual professions or professional fields, but also to professions in the field of healthcare, social services, hospitality, industry, technology, business or administration. Content and Language Integrated Learning enables vocational schools to meet the needs of the

economy by improving general and specialist language skills of employees, as well as by increasing the competences of professionally active people.

It should also be noted that the British Council organised four Regional Policy Dialogues in Europe between May 2013 and March 2014. The Dialogues examined the contribution of languages to vocational education and training (VET). The institutions participating considered the relationship between content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and VET and concluded that the two are compatible in their shared concern for promoting an ability to use language in real life situations. The talk basically suggested that CLIL is the natural ally of vocationally-oriented education, with regard to both its hands-on approach and to its facilitation of multilingualism. It also compared and contrasted CLIL with Vocational English, and suggested that CLIL's focus on procedural knowledge makes it the ideal vehicle to fulfill the aims of the EU's strategic *Europe 2020* initiative (Borg, 2014: 14).

Considering these facts, the following *Report* collects information on current experience and state of the art in using *CLIL* methodology in Polish vocational schools. This information has been collected using desk research and online surveys conducted among teachers of vocational subjects.

**The provision for foreign language teaching at the vocational school level in Poland?** In Poland, qualifications to pursue the teaching profession are set out in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 17 January 2012 on the standards of education preparing to practice as a teacher (Dz.U. 2012 poz. 131). The provisions of the Regulation apply to both teachers of non-linguistic subjects and foreign language teachers. It was assumed that the teacher should have preparation in the subject content, psychological, pedagogical as well as didactic scope.

Foreign languages have become an indispensable element of education at all levels of education. It may also be noticed that more frequently learning a foreign language is associated with vocational training, which is certainly demonstrated by a broader offer of specialized language courses with a vocational inclination (Sowa 2016: 12). Language education is also already present in public education, which is aimed at preparing students for future professional activity. Pursuant to the Ordinance of the Minister of National Education on the core curriculum of education for future professions of 31 March 2017 (Dz.U. 2017 poz. 860), foreign language learning has become a mandatory and integral part of vocational education. According to the Regulation, a vocational school student:

- applies language items (lexical, grammatical, spelling and phonetic) enabling the implementation of professional tasks;
- interprets sentences and phrases related to typical professional activities, expressed slowly and clearly, in a standard language variation;
- analyzes and interprets short written texts related to typical professional activities;
- formulates short and understandable statements and written texts enabling communication in the work environment;
- uses foreign-language sources of information.

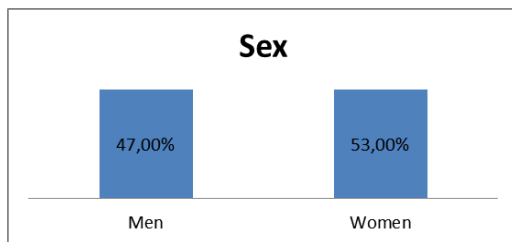
The elements enumerated present the role of a foreign language as a crucial competence which allows to perform specific professional tasks, however, the text of the Regulation lacks clear recommendations on how to develop this competence.

The prototype model of an educational program in the field of specialist (professional) language consists of several stages, among which we can mention: needs analysis and motivation of students, obtaining source data and their analysis, development of exercises and teaching materials and their further incorporation into the course (Mangiante and Perpette 2004: 31). Therefore, often, if not always, developing a program for learning a foreign language at a vocational school goes beyond the traditional preparation of foreign language classes. A foreign language teacher in a vocational school is often forced to look for sources of information and inspiration among people associated with a given profession, which may help him/her to understand specialist issues (linguistic, professional or cultural). Therefore, a language teacher in a vocational school becomes the author and creator of not only the curriculum but also didactic materials.

Consequently, one of the biggest problems is the fact that a foreign language teacher is not a teacher of a vocational subject to which a foreign language is to be closely related. Thus, on the one hand we have a foreign language teacher and on the other hand, we expect him to be equally familiar with a given profession. Therefore, one should consider whether the existing model of teaching a foreign language in vocational schools is the only solution, and whether it would not be more beneficial to propose a different model that could be successively implemented and improved. For years, effective CLIL practices have been observed in Polish schools. The transfer of this teaching model also to vocational schools seems to be justified and perhaps necessary in a long-term perspective.

**The results of the survey for teachers in vocational schools. The methodology of the study.** The research has been conducted among 50 Polish teachers of vocational subjects in 25 schools. All of the teachers participating in the study were asked to answer twenty one online questions. A five-point Likert scale has been applied for the majority of the questions. The remaining questions were either „open” or „yes/no” questions.

**Respondents’ profiles.** The first section of the survey was devoted to information about demographic characteristics of the respondents, namely about their age, sex, their experience in teaching and subjects they teach. The data gathered in the survey indicated that more than fifty percent (53%) of respondents were women and 47% were men.



More than a half of the responding teachers (53%) were between 36-45 years old. 32% of them were between 46-60 years old and 13% of teachers belonged to the youngest group of respondents aged 25-35. Only 2% of the teachers were over 60 years old.

When asked to state their teaching experience, 34% of teachers declared that they have been teaching for 10-15 years. The same number of teachers (16%) opted for the periods: 6-10 years and 16-20 years, while 24% of respondents have been teaching for more than 20 years and only 10% of them admitted that they have between 1-5 years of teaching experience.

As for the vocational subjects they teach, the respondents enumerated a great variety of subjects e.g. IT subjects, gastronomy, technical documentation, economy, power engineering, material processing, landscape architecture, logistics, entrepreneurship, mechanics, vehicle repair technologies, electrical engineering or installation of renewable energy devices and system.

**Results of the section related to CLIL.** Further in the survey, participants were asked to specify their personal experiences with CLIL and its possible implementation. The teachers were asked to answer the questions by choosing one of the options offered.

**1. Do you know the concept of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)?**

Almost 70% of teachers in vocational schools surveyed answered positively to the first question in the second part of the questionnaire, while 30% of respondents claim that they are not familiar with CLIL.

**2. Have you ever applied CLIL during your classes?**

In the case of the second question the vast majority of the respondents (92%) admitted that they have never applied CLIL and only 8% stated that they have used CLIL methodology during their classes.

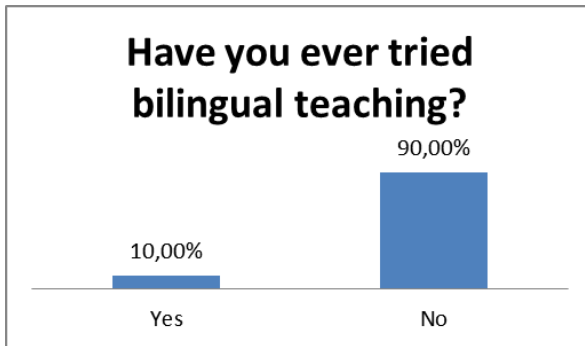
**3. Do you know the term “bilingual teaching”?**

The third research question in the currently discussed section was composed in order to investigate whether the teachers differentiate between the terms “CLIL” and “bilingual teaching”. In the Polish educational system CLIL functions under the name “bilingual education” (Profile Report, 2008), however, not all teachers are aware of this fact and sometimes perceive these terms as completely distinct.

The results of the survey present these differences in CLIL recognition, since 76% of teachers stated that they know the term “bilingual teaching”, which is a different result than in the case of CLIL (see question 1). 24% of the respondents were not familiar with this term.

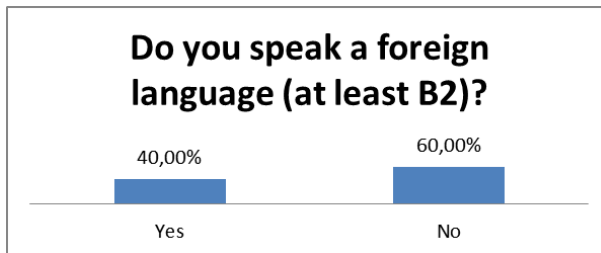
**4. Have you ever tried bilingual teaching?**

Similarly, different number of the teachers answered the fourth research question positively than in the case of question two. Bilingual teaching have been applied by only 10% of the respondents, whilst 90% of teachers have never practiced this form of education.



**5. Do you speak a foreign language (at least B2)?**

Most of the teachers admitted that they know a foreign language (60%), however, 40% of the vocational subject teachers informed that they do not know a foreign language at the B2 level.

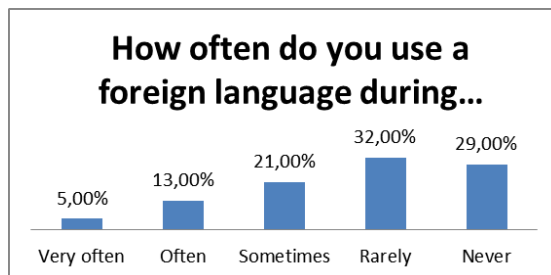


**6. If yes, what language?**

The respondents enumerated three languages: 76% of the teachers know English, 12% opted for German and 12% mentioned Russian.

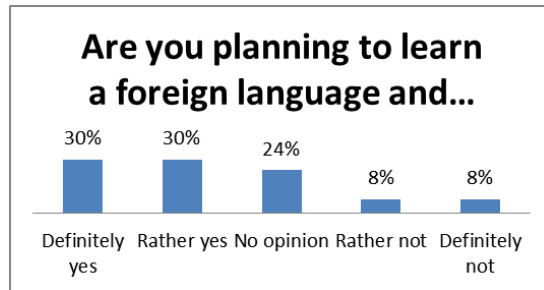
**7. How often do you use a foreign language during your classes?**

This time, the teachers were asked to choose one of the five options suggested. The results are as follows: only 5% of the teachers introduce a foreign language during their lessons very often, 13% use it often, 21% opted for “sometimes”, 32% of the respondents chose “rarely” as their answer and 29% of them indicated that they never use a foreign language in their classrooms.



**8. Are you planning to learn a foreign language and improve your professional qualifications as a teacher?**

As for the eighth question, 30% of the teachers surveyed responded that they are definitely planning to start learning a foreign language, and another 30% opted for “rather yes” as their reply. 24% of the teachers have no opinion on this issue, while 8% clearly indicated they are definitely not planning to learn foreign languages. Another 8% of the respondents answered “rather not”.

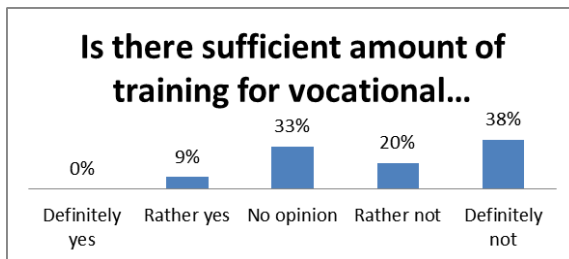


**9. If yes, what language?**

The preferable foreign languages that the teachers would like to start learning were: English (72%), Russian (12%) and German (16%).

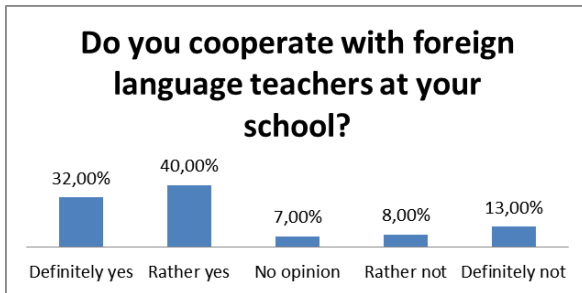
**10. Is there sufficient amount of training for vocational schools' teachers who would like to start teaching their subject through a foreign language?**

According to 38% of the participants, definitely there is not sufficient amount of such training and 20% of them decided to choose “rather not” as their answer. On the other hand, 33% of the respondents had no opinion on this issue. Only 9% of the teachers believe that the amount of training is “rather” sufficient.



**11. Do you cooperate with foreign language teachers at your school?**

It is noticeable that the majority of the teachers admitted to having cooperated with foreign language teachers at their schools. 32% of them claimed that they “definitely” cooperate, while 40% stated that they “rather” cooperate. 13% of the teachers indicated that they “definitely not” cooperate with foreign language teachers and 8% opted for “rather not” as far as cooperation is concerned. 7% of the respondents did not state any opinion in relation to this matter.

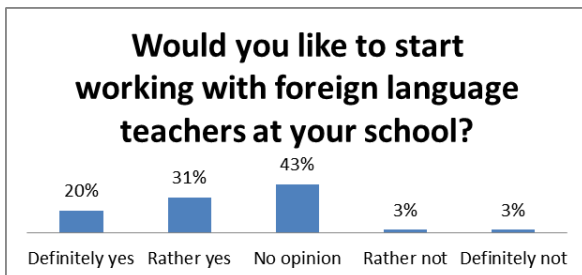


**12. If yes, which languages?**

The most frequently indicated language was English (74%), the second position was given to German (19%) and some of the teachers opted for Russian (7%).

**13. Would you like to start working with foreign language teachers at your school?**

About half of the teachers declared that they are willing to start cooperating with foreign language teachers at their schools. 20% chose “definitely yes”, while 31% indicated to “rather yes”. At the same time, more that 40% of teachers (43%) stated no opinion on this question. Only 3% of them were definitely not willing to cooperate and another 3% opted for “rather not”.

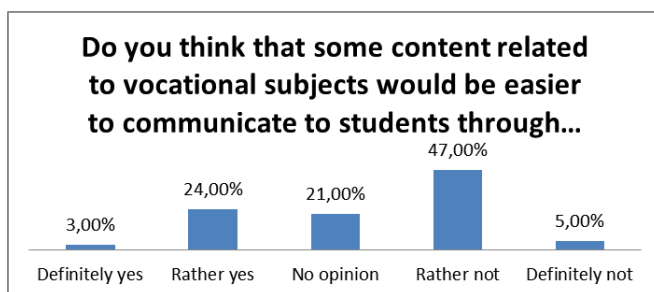


**14. If yes, which language?**

This time only two languages have been mentioned: English by 70% of the respondents and German by 30% of them.

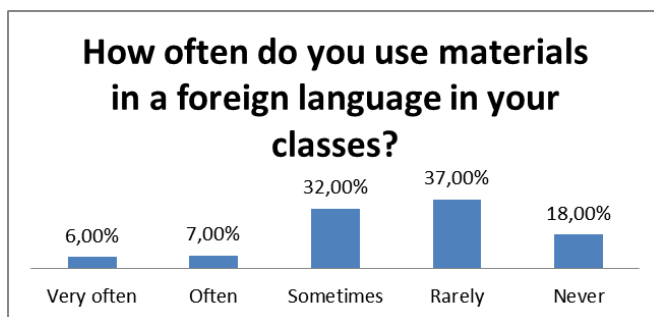
**15. Do you think that some content related to vocational subjects would be easier to communicate to students through a foreign language (e.g. English)?**

Nearly half of the responding teachers decided to choose “rather not” as their answer while 24% opted for “rather yes”. 21% of the teachers have no opinion and only 3% stated that it would be definitely easier to communicate some content in a foreign language. 5% of the participants definitely have negative opinion on this issue.



**16. How often do you use materials in a foreign language in your classes?**

Most of the teachers (82%) declared that they use materials in a foreign language during vocational subject classes. 6% of them use the materials very often, 7% use such materials often, 32% opted for “sometimes and 37% indicated to “rarely”. Only 18% of the teachers never use materials in a foreign language.



**17. Would you like to take part in the CLIL (Learning Content Language) training course for teachers?**

Most of the teachers are interested in taking part in a CLIL training course. 21% of them would definitely like to participate in such a course, while 45% of the respondents decided to choose “rather yes” as they final answer. Only 18% of the teacher indicated to “rather not” and 8% of them would definitely not attend a CLIL course. Another 8% have no opinion on the question.

**Data analysis and conclusions (Poland).** The survey applied in the research discussed has been divided into two parts. The first part was intended to present the respondents’ profiles. The data collected indicate that almost the same number of men and women participated in the study and the most frequently chosen age group was between 36–45 years old. The biggest number of teachers declared that they have been teaching for 10–15 years.

The second part of the survey was related to CLIL implementation. Its main aim was to assess whether vocational subject teachers in Poland are familiar with CLIL and if they are interested in taking part in CLIL training. The results clearly



demonstrate that most of the respondents were familiar with the term CLIL, which is a very positive finding. Nevertheless, only 8% of the teachers have applied CLIL during their classes, which proves that this approach is still scarcely used in Polish vocational schools.

Given that one of the aims was also to evaluate if the teachers associate the term “bilingual teaching” with CLIL, further questions were devoted to this relation. Higher values were found in the case of question 3 and 4 (bilingual education) with respect to the questions related to CLIL (question 1 and 2). This implies that teachers are not always aware that in Poland CLIL functions under the term “bilingual education”. Similarly, the results again reveal that a small minority of teachers in vocational schools (10%) have implemented bilingual teaching in their classrooms.

Furthermore, 60% of those interviewed reported that they know a foreign language (mostly English) and about more than half of them declared that they use the language during their classes. Also, most of the teacher (82%) stated that they use didactic material in a foreign language during their lessons. Given that only 10% of teachers admitted to having taught bilingually in question 4, such results are surprising and it may be assumed that the teachers are not confident about the definition of “bilingual teaching”.

Interestingly, one of the most remarkable results to emerge from the data is related to those teachers who stated that they do not know any foreign language at the B2 level. Many of these teachers were between 36–45 years old, which may suggest that there might have been problems with learning foreign languages at the stage of preparation for the teaching profession, during the studies.

Further analysis showed that about 60% of those questioned are planning to start learning a foreign language. 24% have not decided whether to start learning foreign languages and only 8% of the teachers were not planning to start learning foreign languages at all. It should be added, though, that this was the group of the oldest respondents, either 46–60 years old or more than 60 years old. Also, the most frequently declared language to be learnt was English.

Over half of those who responded felt that there is not sufficient amount of CLIL training for teachers, which is a significant result in the context of the justification for the CLIL-VET project.

The overall response to question 12 was unexpectedly very positive, more than 70% of the respondents stated that they cooperate with foreign language teachers at their schools, mostly teacher of English. Most of the teachers are also willing to start the cooperation with English language teachers, which is of crucial importance.

It is also interesting to note that about 50% of the teachers do not believe that some content might be easier to be communicated to students through a foreign language, while 24% of those questioned believe that applying such teaching strategies is justified. This fact may imply that although some teachers are not fully familiar with bilingual teaching, they also recognize the potential this method has.

Finally, 60% of those surveyed reported that they would like to take part in CLIL training and those who indicated “definitely not” as their response to the final question belonged to the group of the oldest teachers, nearly or over sixty years old.

In conclusion, the finding of this report constitute vital implications for the CLIL-VET course development. Both desk research and the survey results indicated that the opportunities for CLIL training are rather scarce in Poland and the majority of vocational schools teachers are strongly interested in this form of training and are willing to collaborate with foreign language teachers. The report clearly proves that the teachers' pre-service and in-service training did not equip them with the necessary information about CLIL. Furthermore, both parts of the research confirmed the need to develop a course for vocational subject teachers on CLIL methodology and lesson plans that might be applied at vocational schools on a regular basis.

Having analysed the report data, it appears to be advisable for both vocational subject and language teachers to consider implementing CLIL into their classrooms. There is a great need for teachers to share their experiences and conclusions about possible improvements in the future. To accomplish these goals, all the attempts at introducing CLIL into classrooms should be valued.

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