The CLIL Method in the Teaching of Language for Specific Business Purposes in Polish University. Developing Soft Skills in a Dynamic Reality

Małgorzata Wideł-Ignaszczak

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Abstract
The article presents a didactic proposal aimed at the parallel development of content-related, linguistic and soft competencies in the course of teaching a Language for Specific Business Purposes. The aim of the article is to present quantitative and qualitative research into the implementation of a business communication project based on the CLIL method and to present practical pedagogical implications. 79 projects carried out by 172 students of Slavic Philology and Applied Linguistics at one Polish university between 2014 and 2023 were researched. Soft skills developed at the tertiary education stage, which were modeled during the preparation of project work, were explored in detail. The implementation of the projects has a positive impact on the adequate preparation of students for the various roles undertaken in the labor market in a dynamically changing reality.
Key words: CLIL, Content and Language Integrated Learning, Teaching Business Language, Business Communication, Language for Specific Business Purposes, soft skills, project method

1. Introduction

Reality and the professional world are constantly changing, and professionals need to adapt to new conditions, improving not only skills related to the theoretical foundations of specialization, but also shaping skills relevant in the 21st century. The contemporary pace of life and social change requires a range of skills and competencies, especially if one wants to achieve one's goals and be successful. There is time to develop these competencies at different stages of education: both systemic education and education are conceived more broadly as lifelong learning. In this article, attention is focused on a slice of this complex reality, namely the soft competencies developed at the higher education stage. These competencies are always modeled during the preparation of project work.

Based on the assumption that the aim of academic training in philological studies is to adequately prepare students for the various roles undertaken in the labor market in a dynamically changing reality, educators invariably ask how to develop linguistic competencies in an academic setting in parallel with other key competencies. The didactic proposal presented here is oriented towards the simultaneous modeling of substantive, linguistic and soft competencies in philological studies. The aim of the discussion is to present the project-led CLIL method as a concrete teaching solution that can be used in practice. The presented discussion of the project method in Russian language teaching includes information of a theoretical nature and, moreover, shows the practical possibilities of using this method in higher education in specialized classes. The theoretical considerations are illustrated with a description of the projects carried out in the course Russian Economic Terminology carried out by students of Slavic Philology and Applied Linguistics at the Catholic University of Lublin in 2014−2023.

2. Method. Theoretical Framework

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is an approach to the educational process that has long been explored by both theorists and didactic practitioners, which sets two goals for the learner: simultaneous learning of subject content and mastery of

the foreign language in which the learning takes place (e.g., Bentley, 2010, Coyle et al., 2010; Perez-Canado, 2012; Pawlak, 2010, Ball, 2015 et al.). The notion of subject-integrated language education is primarily combined with bilingual education (Muszyńska & Papaja, 2019: 7). The Russian term is: предметно-языковое интегрированное обучение (Иванова & Поленова, 2023; Халяпина, 2017). Three types of teaching in this convention were distinguished: 'hard' CLIL, 'soft' CLIL and modular CLIL (cf. Muszyńska & Papaja, 2019:15−17). The first supports language education in non-linguistic subject lessons, where activities are taught by the subject teacher. The second is to support the learning of subject content in foreign language lessons, where the language teacher weaves in subject-specific educational content. In the case of the third concept, the teacher teaches in the foreign language only selected elements of specialized knowledge.

Filipovich (Филипович, 2015) states that the general objectives of an inclusive approach can be broad, but should obligatorily include the following elements:

– development of intercultural communication skills;
– preparation for international communication;
– providing opportunities to study subject disciplines from different perspectives;
– learning specialist terminology in the target language;
– improving general competence in the target language;
– adding variety to teaching methods and forms;
– increasing learner motivation.

These goals are often referred to as the well-known 4C in the literature: Content, Cognition, Communication, Culture (Coyle, 2010: 41). Content refers to the integration of the content component of a particular field of knowledge within a language education program; cognition is related to creativity, a certain broader way of thinking and a way of processing knowledge, while communication implies the communication of ideas, thoughts, beliefs and values (Zaparucha, 2017: 8).

The cultural component present in specialized foreign language classes includes understanding the meaning of language use in specific socio-cultural conditions. Muszyńska and Papaja (2019: 44−48) emphasize that the concept of content includes not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also their personal use and creation by the student. Based on research in foreign language classes conducted with this method, it appears that thinking in this view is a combination of the learning and processing components, since both activities require students to be supported by language. Furthermore, in order for the assimilation of educational content through language to be effective, the communication code itself does not have to be understood by the student one hundred percent, but to the extent necessary for the achievement of the chosen goals. To interpret the substantive content, students also need to be aware of intercultural connections, which are reflected in both foreign and native languages. The use of professional language presupposes knowledge of sociocultural and strategic elements, and depends on many factors: national, professional and organizational culture (Gajewska & Sowa, 2014: 154−155). It should be emphasized that students perceive them through the prism not only of their own culture and related experiences, but, thanks to familiarization with authentic materials, also through the prism of the conditions of the cultural area of the studied language.

CLIL strengthens the effects of teaching a foreign language, because the intensity and form of contact with the language, with authentic texts positively affects the growth of students' skills in the area of speaking and writing proficiency, contributes to the use of more complex grammatical structures, as well as a rich vocabulary, results in breaking the communication barrier in language teaching (cf. Handzel, 2014: 151).
In this article, attention is focused exclusively on the so-called 'soft' CLIL. This is an approach to the learning process, which puts before the student two goals implemented

simultaneously: learning the substantive content of a specific field (in the described material, it is economics) and learning a foreign language in which their acquisition takes place.

The use of the discussed CLIL method in the implementation of the subject Russian Economic Terminology allowed the use of a wide set of topics and issues, as in the course of work the elements of knowledge in the field of economics were integrated with the teaching of the Russian language. The objectives of introducing elements of the CLIL method in the Russian Economic Terminology class were:

− to introduce and consolidate Russian economic terminology and familiarize students with the functioning of the economy in the Russian-speaking cultural area;

− to increase students' motivation to learn and develop competence in the area of specialized Russian language;

− formation of key competencies, including soft competencies necessary in the labor market.

3. Implementation of the CLIL Project in the Framework of Classes *Russian Economic Terminology*

By way of introduction, it should be specified that the prerequisites for participation in the subject Russian Economic Terminology include the need for students to have the knowledge and skills acquired in the course Practical Russian Language Teaching, as well as to have general knowledge of economics, which students have acquired, among other things, in the compulsory courses such as Entrepreneurship and Economic Systems of the Former Soviet Union countries conducted in Polish. The primary goal of the classes was to familiarize the student with Russian economic terminology and to activate the learned terminology in appropriate communication situations. Thus, at the knowledge level, students developed hard competencies by gaining in-depth knowledge of Russian economic and legal terminology and of the Russian official style (business language). Students also learned about the functioning of the free market economy in Russia (now, in the current political situation, also in Kazakhstan or the Baltic countries). At the level of skills, the implementation of the subject assumed the correct use of Russian economic lexis, but also the adequate use in Russian of elements of oral communication etiquette characteristic of the business sphere. Considering the learning outcomes at the level of social competence, it is necessary to emphasize the modeling of readiness for engaged participation in social life, for critical evaluation of the knowledge possessed, the ability to work as a team, and observance of professional ethics in the sector related to business communication.

Within the framework of such profiled classes, the students prepared projects, which consisted of creating and describing a proposal for their own business activity, taking into account the comprehensive conditions associated with conducting such activity in the Russian-speaking market. Their aim was also to deepen individual issues, in line with the following subject contents: organizational and legal forms of company operation on the Polish and Russian markets; the market for goods and services, company personnel policy, finance, advertising and marketing, logistics. Russian Economic Terminology classes were conducted for the most part on materials prepared by the instructor; these were mainly appropriately selected authentic materials from the field of economics (texts, recordings, infographics, etc.). All linguistic skills were developed successively, taking into account the needs and interests of students in the field of specialized language (cf. Gajewska & Sowa, 2014: 117−119; Kic-Drgas, 2017: 215, Borek 2017: 42).

The research material in this article consists of 79 projects completed by 172 students. They were prepared in groups of 2 to 4 people. Statistics by year are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of projects

YEAR	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	NUMBER OF PROJECTS
2014/2015	19	8
2015/2016	10	5
2016/2017	10	5
2017/2018	18	7
2018/2019	4	2
2019/2020	22	9
2020/2021	33	15
2021/2022	28	12
2022/2023	28	16
Total:	172	79

Implementation of the project took place over one semester (30 academic hours and 60 team hours). Students used only authentic materials in Russian − both in class and in group work outside of class. The work proceeded in several phases − correlated with the curricular content discussed in class, which only became the canvas for the final presentation. The phases of work are the following:

1) Selecting the type of business, creating a name and deciding on the organizational and legal form of the company;
2) Preparing description of the industry;
3) Building a company's structure;
4) Building personnel policy of the company;
5) Analyzing and presenting the company's finances;
6) Assessing market position and competition;
7) Developing a marketing strategy;
8) Planning the company's exit to the international market.

In class and/or group consultations, there was an evaluation of the implementation of the various stages of the project. The evaluation was oral or written in the form of discussing the successive completion of the form – 'company-dossier' (99.7% of students took part in the evaluation). During the following assignments, students worked on a template that was developed for this project based on the studies included in the *Russian Business Language textbook* (Martyniuk & Wideł-Ignaszczak, 2015).

Table 2. Visual of the evaluation tool. Template company dossier.

No.	STAGE OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	MATERIALS USED FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	COMMENTS ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
1.	The company name – history, mission, image, company structure		
2.	Legal status of the company, form of ownership		
3.	Time of formation		
4.	Type of business activity, industry of the company		
5.	Share of the market		
6.	Target audiences		
7.	Competitive advantages products		
8.	Price positioning of the main product line		
9.	Suppliers of raw materials		
10.	Marketing strategy product promotion		
11.	Strengths and Weaknesses		
12.	Distribution channel		
13.	Financial position and credit history		
14.	International Cooperation		
15.	Exit of the company to the foreign market		

The final result of the project participants' work was to prepare a presentation in groups and present it during a specially arranged simulated "international fair" (Russian: '*международная ярмарка*'), held at the end of the semester.

Aiming to significantly expand the vocabulary not only in the field of economics, but also specialized vocabulary related to the students' interests, they were allowed to choose any field of economic activity within the topic being developed. It should be noted that the industries chosen by the students were characterized by great diversity (detailed data is presented in Table 3). The analysis of the bibliography of completed projects also showed that the most diverse authentic materials were used by the students precisely to describe the chosen field of economy. They also acquired additional materials, expanding the framework of the project, both in the part describing the industry and in enriching the structure of the presentation by adding other economic issues, such as the question of the company's future, logistics and shipping, etc.

Table 3. Evaluation. Classification according to the branches of the economy, chosen by students.

LP.	BRANCH	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	PERCENT
1.	Food industry	12	15,19%
2.	Apparel and fashion	12	15,19%
3.	Construction (including design)	8	10,13%
4.	Cosmetology	7	8,86%
5.	Tourism sector	6	7,59%
6.	Companies related to philology (linguistics)	5	6,33%
7.	Florist industry	5	6,33%
8.	Commerce	5	6,33%
9.	The automotive industry	3	3,80%
10.	Manufacturing and sales	3	3,80%
11.	Companies related to arts and culture	3	3,80%
12	Printing and graphic arts	2	2,53%
13	Law companies	2	2.53%
14.	Other (retirement home, cleaning company hotel, courier company, advertising company transportation company)	6	7,59 %

Over the years considered, students' preferences for industry choice did not generally change. What is puzzling is the fact that only a small percentage of students chose to discuss a topic circle related to an industry consistent with their study profile, and the motivation for creating and presenting their own business tended to be the private interests of project participants: floristry, the automotive industry, fashion, cosmetics, culinary and others (see Table 3).

A cross-sectional analysis of the completed projects further indicated that, over the years, the business ideas presented were more mature, thoughtful and elaborate. This may support the thesis that students' knowledge of the functioning of the labor market has increased, and they are more ready to consciously enter this market in the future (cf. Sowa et al., 2015).

One of the aims of project work, according to the CLIL method, is to implement language knowledge related to business topics. The screenshots below of the students' projects show a high level of knowledge of business-related terminology. Using source texts in Russian and recordings, and accessing authentic source materials describing real-life companies, students created projects of their own companies, in which they practically applied vocabulary and advanced grammatical constructions related to the topic of creating and managing a company.

Below are screenshots showing the implementation and practical use of business terminology in the students' final presentation:

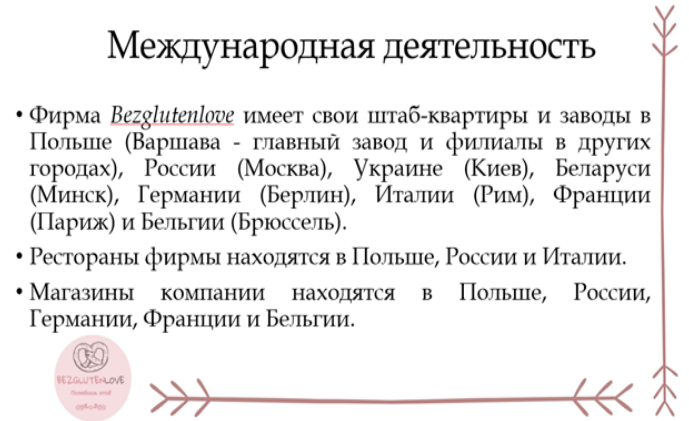


Figure 1: Project 2022.



Figure 2: Project 2023.

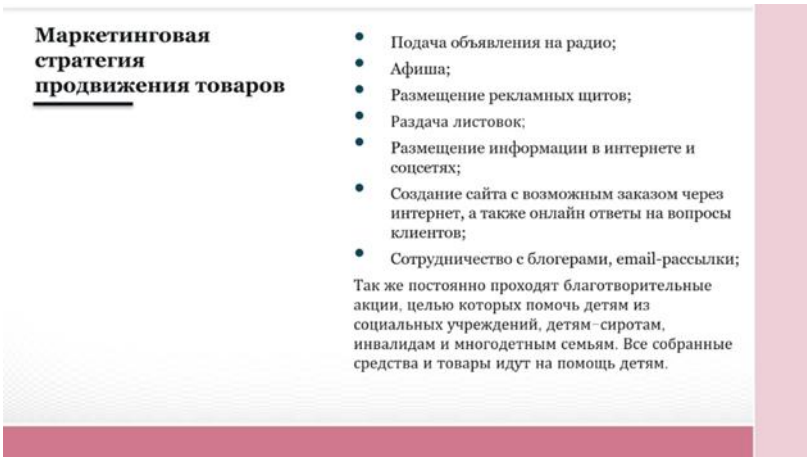


Figure 3: Project 2023

The project integrated receptive and productive skills. In addition to developing linguistic competence, which was based on mastering specialized vocabulary and developing the ability to use appropriate linguistic responses in official situations, it was also necessary to deepen knowledge of issues relating to the cultural area in which the companies were to operate. In the course of the work, this goal was pursued by, among other things:
– pointing out the differences in the system of organizational and legal forms of economic activity in Poland and the countries of the former USSR; (e.g. Latvia, Kazakhstan) - 'общество с ограниченной ответственностью (ООО), акционерное общество (АО), некоммерческая организация (НКО), индивидуальное предприятие (ИП), совместное предприятие (СП) etc.'



Figure 3: Project 2020.

– learning and using in practice specific communication etiquette in the business sphere (e.g., use of paternal names, etc.);

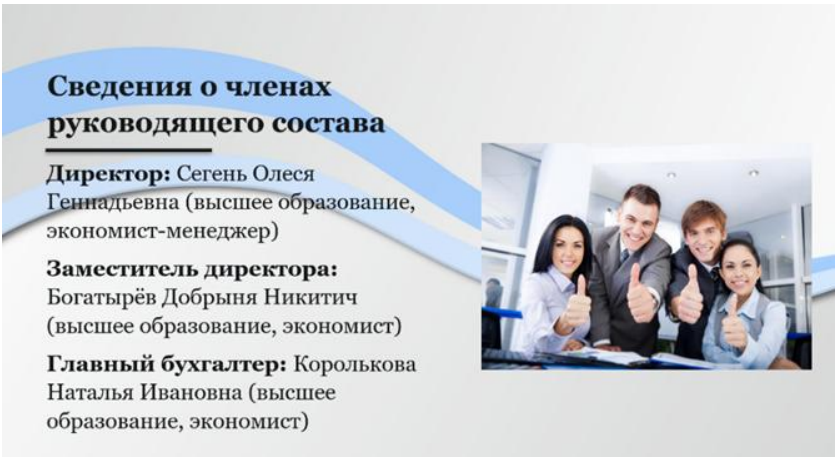


Figure 4: Project 2023.

– application of the principles of formal communication during public speaking;
– application of knowledge and skills in non-verbal communication (during talks at 'international fairs');
– maintaining dress code during 'international fairs', etc.

It should be noted that in the case of classes conducted using the 'soft' CLIL method, there was a dominance of content (content-driven) (Zaparucha, 2017: 16). Russian was the tool used to work on professional content. Students were evaluated not only on their knowledge of the language itself, but also on the quality of the materials they acquired, the creative use of these materials in their projects, and the way they conveyed the content.

It should be emphasized that group work did not always proceed without conflict, which determined the need for a little mediation on the part of the instructor regarding the division of tasks or the project concept itself. In every academic year, there was a person or persons in the group who would prefer to prepare the project independently. These situations explicitly indicated the need for this type of project and the need to create conditions for the formation of not only hard, but also soft competencies. The proposed method was based on group work, so that students, in the safe conditions of the classroom, could form such competencies as conflict resolution, mediation skills and others. In the following part of the article, the issue of modeling soft competencies, useful in the labor market, will be discussed in more detail in the context of CLIL projects.

As can be seen from the examples above, the interdisciplinarity of the projects involved students of Slavonic Philology and Applied Linguistics delving into authentic texts in the language studied (websites of real companies, presentations on the You Tube channel), analyzing infographics and statistical data of business organizations, viewing job interview advice to plan recruitment for their companies. There was an integration of linguistic competence with substantive knowledge of economics.

3. Project Results. Soft Skills Useful on the Labor Market Modeled during Project Work

Trends in the labor market are changing and, as research indicates, soft competencies are now important for career development and success, although many lecturers are sceptical about the concept of improving and developing them. Based on a comprehensive research report on employer demand for soft competencies, researchers make the recommendation that their development can be an essential asset to facilitate young graduates' entry into the labor market. To this end, they should be developed during the course of studies according to available ways (Keller, Dernózy-Polyák, 2026: 67–69; Medvedeva 2021,). According to Jedrzejczyk, competencies useful in the labor market are: "peculiarities and qualities that, supported by (...) knowledge and experience, as well as behavior and attitudes, supplemented by the limit of discretion, provide, together with the appropriate instruments, a platform for making decisions to improve the overall efficiency of the enterprises" (Jedrzejczyk, 2014: 69).

Thus, competencies that are useful in the labor market should be understood as abilities and skills necessary to perform professional duties. They are a component of personal qualities, motivation and acquired knowledge and experience. Thus, these competencies are developed as an integrated structure of knowledge, skills and attitudes. 'Soft' (behavioral) competencies are therefore related to the psyche and social skills. They focus on a person's behavior and attitudes in various situations. They can include personal skills, such as motivation, time management, stress resistance, as well as social and interpersonal skills, such as communication skills (Konieczna-Kucharska, 2015, Żukowska, 2023). Syrina and Pomerantseva (Сырина, Померанцева, 2021) also note that these are directly related to language skills, as the ability to communicate and interact socially is considered crucial today. In this context, Janicka (2019: 31–32) states that the labor market and the demands placed on employees are changing rapidly today. "Currently, experts identify six soft competencies necessary to find a job. These include:

- Willingness to learn, which is expressed in the willingness to constantly develop and deepen one's knowledge;
- Openness to the needs of others, the ability to propose solutions to meet those needs;
- Adaptability, the ability to cope with a changing environment;
- Communication and interpersonal skills;
- Respect for the ideas of others, ability to take constructive criticism;
- Organizational skills, which include proper goal setting, planning of activities and use of available resources." (Janicka, 2019: 31–32).

According to Malova (Малова, 2019: 151), university education does not have universal technologies for shaping students' personal and professional qualities. Instead, the need to model them is dictated by the conditions of the modern labor market, the increase in competition and the rapid development of information technologies that affect all spheres of human life. The formation and development of these competencies takes place most effectively within the framework of teamwork (cf. Scrimieri, Patrizi, Pastore, 2024: 189–190).

The above-discussed language training of students in business specialization is considered an important part of their preparation for future professional life. It should be emphasized that the work in classes and at the above-described project conducted by the CLIL method engages students in a holistic way, as it activates their cognitive and emotional spheres (see Table 4 and Table 5), while during the presentation at the simulated "international fair", the predisposition of individual speakers to public speaking was also perfectly manifested. On the other hand, the speech involved for the speakers the need to overcome stress, as it was held in the forum of the teacher and the class (possibly year) group. Giving a speech allowed the participants to show their strengths (cf. Jurkowicz, 2019: 5–9, Makowska, 2017: 170). It should be noted that

there were individuals who, precisely during the speech, were able to reveal hitherto hidden (not presented during the classes) public speaking skills.

Awareness of the fact that not only linguistic competence is subject to evaluation, but above all the content value of the speech counts, fostered the activation of linguistically weaker students.

Table 4. Results of the research. Soft skills modeled during the implementation of the described project related to teamwork – qualitative conclusions

TYPE OF SOFT SKILL	STUDENT PERFORMANCE
Willingness to learn from others Readiness for continuous development	Adopt an attitude of openness to new knowledge, to new experiences, a willingness to test themselves in a new situation.
Cooperation in the team	Being active and committed to supporting team activities and taking responsibility for the team task.
Good organization of own work	Timely implementation of tasks in accordance with the evaluation plan, skillful use of their own competence to improve their work.
High motivation to work	Instilling a willingness to undertake the work at each stage of the project. Consistently striving to achieve the goal.
Systematicity, accuracy, reliability	Each time a decision was made to carry out the next stage of the work, efforts were made to ensure that the work was carried out with the utmost accuracy and care, using the tools, knowledge and skills available.
Commitment to the work being done	The determination and drive to succeed, to achieve a result, involved the effective use of available internal resources (qualities of the person) and external resources (available materials and tools).
The ability to resolve conflicts	Adopt an attitude of openness to feedback from other team members.
Consistency in action	Targeting the completion of a task.

Source: own research (based on methodology: Jeruszka, 2016).

Table 5. Results of the research. Soft skills modeled during the implementation of the described project in terms of personality traits – qualitative conclusions:

TYPE OF SOFT SKILL	STUDENT PERFORMANCE
Interpersonal skills	Conducting dialogue, finding compromises, distributing tasks in a group, taking on team leadership roles.
Self-confidence	Belief in oneself, in one's ability to do the activities set by the project framework, belief in oneself as a person able to meet the challenges set for oneself, which consequently transforms into thinking of oneself as a professional.
Stress resistance	Dealing effectively with both high emotional tension and the stress of a new situation (both during the current evaluation and the final presentation).
High level of personal culture	Application of current customs, knowledge and application of the rules of business etiquette in Russian.
Emotional intelligence	Comprehending one's own emotions and the emotions of others, showing empathy towards team members, especially in conflict situations or situations that require overcoming one's own limitations.
Critical thinking	Selection of the material necessary for the preparation of the final work, reflection and possible revision of the work.
Communicativeness	Ability to express oneself accurately and clearly and understand the statements of different types of people (a big role in the projects of videos related to the presentation of the company).

Source: own research (based on methodology: Jeruszka, 2016).

The list of modeled soft skills presented above confirms that, thanks to the implementation of the project, students developed the qualities needed in the labor market due to organization, management and the formation of interpersonal relationships. The ability to adapt to changes that occur in the surrounding reality was shaped in parallel with the ability to establish and maintain relationships with other project participants. They conditioned the successful implementation of tasks in selected areas of project activities.

4. Conclusion

In terms of pedagogical implications, the article presents a proposal for classes in specialized foreign language combining substantive, linguistic and soft competencies formed as a result of the use of the CLIL method and the project method. In summary, it should be emphasized that the use of authentic materials and the introduction of issues exclusively in a foreign language in classes, which result in the preparation by groups of students of an interdisciplinary project, allow the development of soft competencies needed in the labor market: readiness for continuous development, the ability to efficiently acquire information and select it, and also shape the ability to cooperate, communicate and develop interpersonal skills. Students also learn to respect the ideas of others. An additional advantage is that the method also creates space for

independence, critical thinking and creativity. During the preparation of projects, students have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to critically analyze or question the validity of developing certain ideas, as well as to look for new innovative solutions. Interdisciplinary projects involve activities of a productive and creative nature.

The proposal of classes in this form, moreover, allows the formation of the ability to behave adequately in certain professional situations and affects the growth of the ability to manage oneself (i.e., the efficiency of planning, anticipation, time management, as well as the ability to motivate oneself. The second area relates to preparation for functioning in society through conscious modeling of competencies such as teamwork skills and management of others, i.e., motivating, setting goals, inspiring or persuading one's own reasons, as well as resolving conflicts that have arisen.

Globalization and labor market conditions require higher education to use action-based language learning methods and student motivation in specific learning situations. In addition, it is postulated to increase the number of student work hours without increasing the number of auditorium hours (cf. Филипович, 2015). These goals can be achieved, among other things, through the use of the project method and the CLIL method.

Declaration of AI Use

The author declares that AI-based language tools were used only for language proofreading and stylistic refinement. The conceptual structure, argumentation, and interpretation remain the author's original work. All references and in-text citations were manually verified during the editorial process; AI tools were not used as an autonomous source of bibliographic information.

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Małgorzata Wideł-Ignaszczak
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
Al. Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin
Poland
malgorzata.widel-ignaszczak@kul.pl
ORCID: 0000-0001-9250-1774