

UZBEK PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS` REACTION TOWARDS THE USE OF CLIL METHODOLOGY IN ART CLASSES

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Abstract

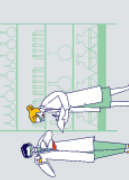
The current paper is aimed at the determination of primary school students` attitudes towards the use of CLIL methodology and is a part of longitudinal research oriented on the effectiveness of CLIL methodology in Uzbek primary schools. Previously, there has been done research to study the school teachers` views on the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology in primary schools of Uzbekistan. The research results were not strong enough to decide whether to teach content and language in integration or not. Some teachers showed a strong disagreement with the idea, whereas the others were interested in the new approach to teaching the language (however, they were also not sure how well it might succeed in Uzbek schools). Therefore, the current research was done with the purpose to identify the primary schoolers` attitudes towards CLIL classes. The research is not about the effectiveness of the method yet, it will only focus on the reaction of primary school students to the subject being taught through the second language.

Keywords: CLIL, Uzbek primary school, attitude, young learners.

Introduction

The importance of the English language has been increasing in Uzbekistan rapidly, and today every student is required to have at least B1 English to enter the university and every working professional should be able to communicate in English. Recent developments in learning English in Uzbekistan initiated many alterations in all spheres of the educational system as well as in primary education. It has been ten years now since governmental policy on teaching/learning English starting from primary school was applied into practice. Now, English is taught as a foreign language from the first grade, and children are supposed to have an A1 level of English by the time they graduate from primary school (CMRU, 2021). Today, English teachers of Uzbek primary schools need effective methods for teaching English to children who do not have an opportunity to use the language outside the classroom.

CLIL, being one of the most spread language teaching methodologies in European schools, promotes the use of diverse learning strategies while focusing on both subject content and language (Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlou, 2011). CLIL does not have much popularity among Uzbek educators;but, it might have effective results if applied from the early stages of learning the language.This is the main reason the researcher is planning to conduct action research on the implementation of this methodology in the school program. However, before planning



CLIL lesson materials it was decided to study the student`s attitudes towards CLIL lessons. So, it can be said that current research is the part of a longitudinal study. *The main purpose of this research* is to identify Uzbek primary schoolers` reaction toward the use of English as a language of instruction in Art classes.

Student reflection on the use of CLIL in European context

The previous researches done on students` attitude toward CLIL show various results. Some studies reveal that learners hold a positive attitude (Denman, et al., 2013; Lasagabaster and Doiz, 2016; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2009; Vazquez, et al., 2014), even claiming it as an opportunity for better language learning. However, other researchers conclude that students hold both positive and negative attitudes (Coyle, 2013; Finardi, et al., 2016). Also, some researchers link students` negative perceptions to the language factors – learners with low language skills have a negative view (Vazquez, et al., 2014; Yassin et al., 2009); while the others claim that students` positive or negative reactions mostly depend on teaching approaches and methods the teachers use (Finardi, et al., 2016; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2009).

These are some positive responses from the questionnaires and interviews with the students from a different context and background knowledge did:

- “intense exposure and authentic situations”;
- “opportunity for better future career and education”;
- “more enjoyable” and “meaningful”;
- “a good way to practice English, more interesting”;
- “better organization of lessons”

(Herrera, 2015; Czura&Papaja, 2013; Hunt, 2011; Lasagabaster& Sierra, 2009; cited in Syzdykbayeva, 2017, p.13-14).

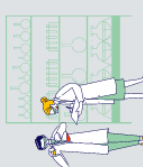
Those who reflected negatively made the following comments:

- “too difficult”, “boring” and “no use”;
- “confusing”, “unpleasant” and “more challenging”;
- “difficult, unpleasant, and illogical”;
- “English complicated already difficult subject”;
- “little understanding”

(Coyle, 2013; Finardi et al., 2016; Massler, 2012; cited in Syzdykbayeva, 2017, p.14-15).

Most of those comments provided above are made after a short term teaching period; however, Lasagabaster et al. (2014), who compared the students` perception of CLIL methodology at the beginning and the end of the teaching period came to the conclusion that the more learners are taught through this approach, the more they find it effective and interesting. Herrera (2015), who investigated the students` attitude towards the use of CLIL methodology in the classroom before and after attending the classes promoted the same idea. The students who were absolutely in a negative position about the method, changed their opinion about CLIL after they were exposed to this methodology.

Having done a literature review of background research about students` reaction towards the use of CLIL methodology, it can be concluded that:



- Majority of students find this methodology advantageous and claim it is the best way to practice the language;
- Most learners find it challenging only at the beginning, or before starting to be taught through this method;
- The main reason why some students have a negative perception of CLIL due to language barrier;
- When CLIL is taught longer period, students find it effective for both language skills and content knowledge;
- Approach the teachers use also might influence students` perception.

Considering the studies conducted in different contexts – Spain, Turkey, and Brazil; it seems that students` positive attitudes towards the use of CLIL methodology outweighs the negative viewpoints.

Student reflection on the use of CLIL in the Central Asian context

One study which was conducted among Kazakhstani students that is close to the Uzbek context found out that both countries are based on trilingual education, where Russian prevails over English being taught and used as a second language in both post-soviet countries. However, English is used only for educational and professional purposes; consequently, gaining less interest to learn the language. Syzdykbayeva`s (2017) research shows that students who were exposed to CLIL methodology despite having linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties reflected positively on the approach.

The studies about Uzbek learners` attitude towards CLIL methodology have not been found; however, small scale research conducted by Rskhulova (2021) among primary school teachers shows that language barrier is the only factor that might be an issue. According to that research, most teachers believe that it might be challenging for both students and teachers; but at the same time, they believe the use of this new and unique approach could result in a considerable rise in students` linguistic skills.

Research question

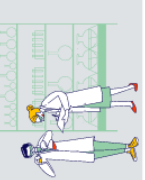
This study is a part of longitudinal research that focuses on the effectiveness of CLIL methodology in Uzbek primary schools; and, the current paper looks in more details at the way students react towards the use of English for teaching the subject material. So, the research tries to answer the following question:

- What is primary schoolers` attitude towards the use of CLIL methodology?

Methodology

Participants.

The study was conducted in one of the public schools of Tashkent region. Participants are 7-8-year-old primary school students in the second grade who have been learning English for more than a year. Twenty five school pupils, their subject teacher (as an observer), and children`s parents contributed to the research which took about two months (one term).



Materials

The data collection was processed in the third term of the academic year – February and March, in one of the primary schools in Tashkent. The research was based on a qualitative method taking into account the fact that the participants are too young. Tools used for the research included:

- class observations – it was necessary to learn how instructions are delivered in subject classes;
- face-to-face interviews with young learners – since participants are primary school students, the interview was an effective way of obtaining more reliable and clear responses;
- informal conversations with parents and the teacher – to check whether students were honest during the interview (they were asked to talk to students about CLIL lesson experience).

Ethics

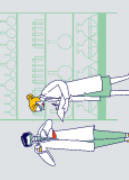
Finding the participants was not an issue, as the participant-school and the university, where the researchers function, had a cooperation agreement. After a subject teacher agreed to collaborate on the current study, consent forms from the school's director, the teacher, and students' parents were obtained.

The consent form informed the participants about the purpose of the research, what would be their role in the current study, and what tools and methodologies would be used in the research. It was stated that the data collected during this research would be used for academic purposes only and would be saved in a password-protected computer; only researchers can access it. Participants were explained that taking part in the current study is voluntary, and they could refuse to be involved in it at any stage of the research procedure.

The school director and the researchers agreed that the research paper would be shared upon completion; so the school and its teachers might benefit from it – maybe even incorporate the CLIL methodology in their curriculum in the future.

Analytical procedure

The first task for the researchers was to choose the subject for conducting CLIL classes. Having studied some works about the implementation of CLIL in the Asian context (Rohmah, I. I. T., et al., 2019; Yamano, 2013), it was initially decided to organize the study in math classes. As Rohmah (2019) claims it is much more beneficial for learners to study in English the subjects that are in great demand in the global market, such as science, or math. However, after analyzing studies made on students' reflection on CLIL methodology it was decided to choose a non-science subject. As it was obtained from the literature review, some students found CLIL methodology not effective as it makes difficult already complicated subject (Coyle, 2013; Finardi et al., 2016; Massler, 2012; cited in Syzdykbayeva, 2017, p.14-15). Therefore, the researchers decided to teach CLIL in art classes, as it does not contain any advanced



explanations and instructions can be provided by the help of simple words, showing and naming the objects, and using gestures. In addition, since participants are primary school students they do not have much knowledge of English; therefore, it was decided to choose art classes for the study.

Before beginning CLIL lessons, several subject classes had been observed to check the learners' subject knowledge; and, lesson plans had been studied to create on its basis the lesson plan for CLIL classes. Researchers made a four-week plan to introduce CLIL classes to primary schoolers. As it can be seen from Table 1, the lesson's topics remained the same while apart from subject objectives there were added language objectives as well.

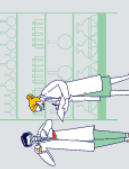
Table 1

Week №	Theme	Subject objectives	Language objectives
I Lesson 1 (Drawing)	Drawing a lorry using different geometric figures	Practicing the use of geometric figures in drawing	Understanding basic vocabulary used for the course instructions. Learning the names of geometric figures
	Lesson 2 (Handiwork)	Mosaic Fairytale heroes	Using the mosaic style in artworks
II Lesson 1 (Drawing)	Drawing a bird	Practice working with paints	Revising color vocabulary. Learning the names of different birds.
	Lesson 2 (Handiwork)	Making an application of toys from plasticine	Creating figures working with plasticine
III Lesson 1 (Drawing)	Copying the templates of ornament compositions	Understanding the term 'ornament' and creating one with the help of copy paper, or layout template	Using basic phrases used in everyday life and for classroom interaction.
	Lesson 2 (Handiwork)	Making a card for Mother's Day	Creating cards with the help of colored papers
IV Lesson 1 (Drawing)	Holiday Navruz	Drawing real-life events (how I spend my Navruz holidays)	Understanding the "Navruz vocabulary". Using basic phrases used in everyday life and for classroom interaction.
	Lesson 2 (Handiwork)	Making an application from plasticine "Spring bouquet"	Creating figures working with plasticine

During the first two weeks, classes were mostly conducted by TPR, Audio Lingual, and Drilling approaches since the learners knew basic vocabulary, but did not have the practice of using it in real-life situations. The next two weeks were focused on the creation of an interactive atmosphere – encouraging the learners to use the language, communicate without fearing making mistakes, elicit the answers, and facilitate asking questions.

Subject objectives remained the same, while language objectives aimed at achieving the creation of English speaking atmosphere in the classroom. Extra activities that are used to prepare young learners for the CLIL lesson were used:

- Children were required to watch video lessons: teaching subject vocabulary and 'how to make', or 'how to draw' videos (for example,



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1gh50C1Rr0>,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5Xm8UXTzHI>).

Sometimes, the researchers did it at the beginning of the lesson; sometimes, they had to rely on parents` support in this part of the study: parents were asked to watch the video together with their children and help them understand and memorize the new words. This approach helps facilitate the students` participation in the classroom since it provides basic knowledge and vocabulary to understand the teacher`s instructions. In addition, the use of technology (of any form: video materials, clips, warm-up songs) in the process of learning influences student performance positively (Orlanda-Ventayen, 2021).

The process of the lesson

Classes never started with immediate instructions which are normally done in subject classes to manage time. Every lesson began with a 5-10 minute warm-up to create an English-speaking atmosphere for learners. It was important to organize this stage of the lesson with more fun, music, and interaction.

In the main part of the lesson, the CLIL teacher provided instructions showing items necessary for application or drawing, using gestures to help children understand used action verbs.

Here is the sample instruction:

T: *“Pick your mother`s favorite color (teacher holds two different colored papers in her hand). My mother loves green one, so I`m choosing a green color (now, she held only green paper). What color likes YOUR mother S1?”*

S1: (student with better linguistic skills) *“White”*

T: *“and your mother S2?”*

S2: *“red and pink”*

T: *“S3, what color does your mother like?”*

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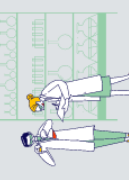
T: *“Ok, then. S1, you take your white paper; S2, you take red or pink paper...”* (And teacher quickly walks through the class and helps students to pick the paper of their mothers` favorite color). *“Now, everybody, fold your papers”* (teacher raises the paper so everyone can see it and folds the colored paper into two) *“Fold it into two”....*

So, children despite having poor English never struggled to understand the instructions. The use of realia and constant use of hand gestures aided the teacher in delivering the information easier and facilitating the learners in speaking.

Post-teaching interview

After four-week teaching young learners were interviewed by asking three basic questions:

1. Did you like the lessons being taught in English?
2. Did you struggle to understand the instructions in the classroom?
3. Do you think you did better when the class was taught in Uzbek, or it does not matter?



There were 25 participants and each researcher had to work with five students. Interviews were conducted in convivial atmosphere so that learners could freely express their ideas.

In addition, parents were asked to have a conversation with their children to learn their perception of the CLIL methodology. It was done with the purpose to find more precise and reliable results; because the researchers assumed that the cultural behavior of Uzbek young learners might influence the answers they are making. It is very common for Uzbek students to make the responses that teachers are expecting to receive. In a special group, that was created on Telegram App for parents, there was organized a poll containing two items – “*My child has a positive perception of CLIL*”, and “*My child has a negative perception of CLIL*”.

Findings

The major findings were summarized in three graphs. The first is to show how well students were engaged in the lesson. The subject teacher and two researchers, who were observers during the teaching process provided the number of active and passive students in CLIL lessons. As we can see from *Figure 1*, in all lessons, student participation was higher than 70%; in the last two weeks, it was about 90% for both subjects. The subject teacher noted that the same result could be found when the subject is taught in L1.

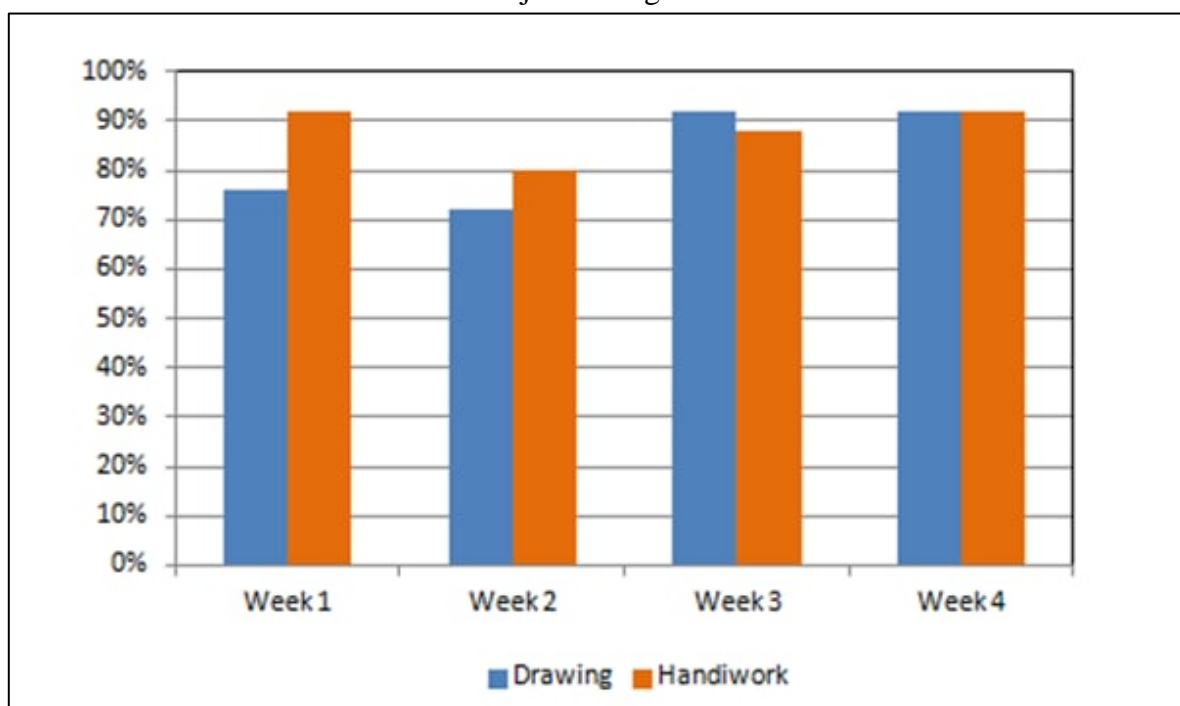


Figure 1. Percentage of Students Who Were Actively Involved in CLIL Lessons

The CLIL lessons might have been challenging at the beginning – it is not easy to adapt to an atmosphere where a new teacher delivers instructions in a foreign language. Therefore, we can see comparatively lower involvement during the first two weeks. However, the results of observation show that student involvement in both CLIL classes and subject classes is the same.

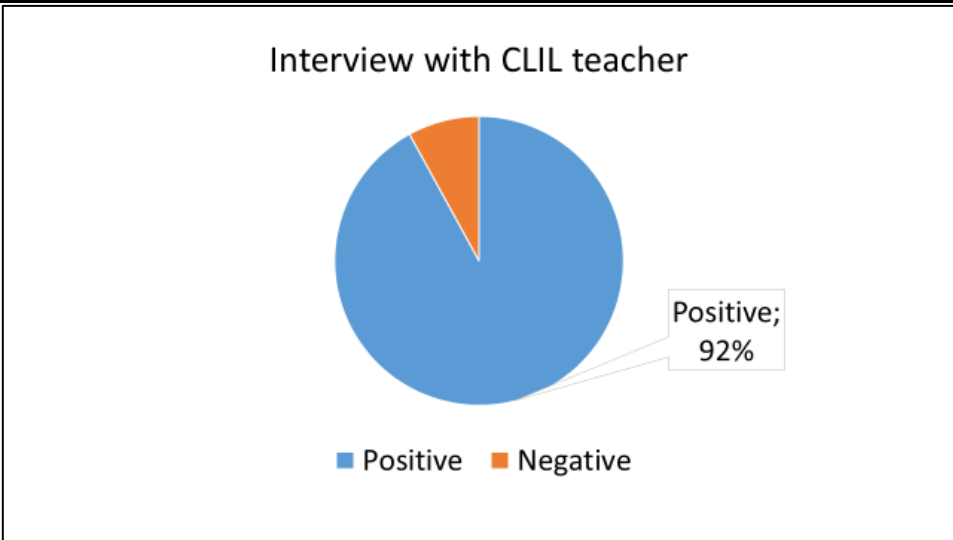


Figure 2. Results of an interview with CLIL teacher aimed at identifying students` attitudes towards the use of CLIL methodology

Another two graphs illustrate the primary school students` reflection on the subject being taught in English. *Figure 2* shows the result of an interview conducted with students, where the interviewer was a researcher; *Figure 3* shows the result of informal conversations between students and their parents. In both interview and informal conversations, students were asked the same three questions mentioned above which are generally aimed at discovering students` attitudes toward the use of CLIL methodology.

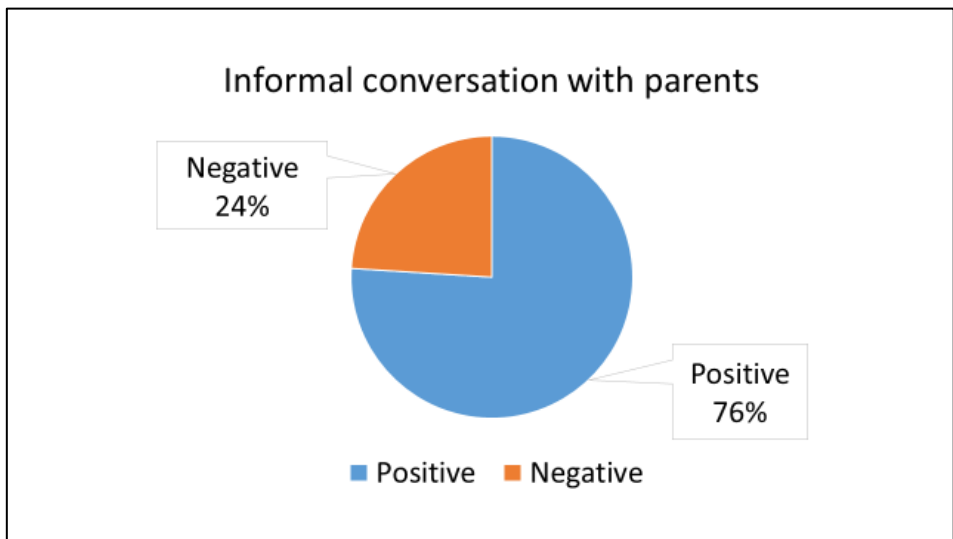
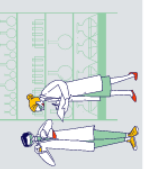


Figure 3. Results of informal conversation aimed at identifying students` attitudes towards the use of CLIL methodology

In both situations, the number of students who has a positive perception of CLIL methodology was higher. According to *Figure 2* majority (92%) of young learners had a positive perception



of CLIL; however, the results of *Figure 3* show that not all students were honest during the interview with the researcher – resulting in 76% of positive responses.

Discussions and Conclusion

The main aim of the research was to identify the primary schooler`s reflection on the use of CLIL methodology in art classes in the Uzbek context. Summarizing the findings, it could be concluded that most students have a positive view of the use on CLIL methodology in art classes. Not only students but their teacher and parents expressed a positive attitude towards this methodology, finding it useful for children`s communicative and linguistic competencies. The results of the interview and informal conversations varied, but in both cases, the results were positive showing 92% and 76% respectively. The potential reason for such a difference might be the influence of culture. As the researchers expected, not all students could allow themselves to say some negative points about the new methodology. It is generally accepted in Uzbek content that students should have respect towards the teacher and accept everything the teacher doing as beneficial and essential. So, maybe when the young learners were being interviewed, they might have felt uncomfortable telling how they felt about the new methodology openly.

Future Research and Limitations

This small-scale research is going to be a foundation for further studies on the effective implementation of the CLIL methodology in Uzbek primary education. The researcher`s intention in conducting this study was to learn what would be the young learner`s reaction to the use of CLIL in the classroom. The positive results derived from the finding analysis become a key factor for continuing the study in this area, and there is a high possibility this method might be favored by young learners. However, the current study has limitations due to its small number of participants. The study occurred in one school and was limited to one class only, so its findings are less generalizable to other schools of Uzbekistan. Moreover, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as the research participants were young learners; and, they might not be able to identify their thoughts well and articulate them clearly, or there might be other cultural influences.

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