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## **Teaching a foreign language to primary school students and CLIL technology**

The present article, within the framework of the updated content of education, alongside emphasizing the importance of close-knit teaching of receptive and productive skills that form the core of an English lesson for primary school students, focuses on theoretical and practical issues of using the technology of content and language integrated learning (CLIL). The didactic features of two learning and educational sets: “Smile”, recommended for general use in schools of Kazakhstan, and “Family and friends”, being often used in the educational process, are identified. In the context of CLIL, the object of analysis is four components of textbooks: content, communication, cognition, and culture. The views of experienced English language teachers as an expert have been evaluated, and the advantages of compiling textbooks in the field of foreign language education based on CLIL technology have also been described.

*Keywords:* primary school students, English lesson, CLIL technology, learning and educational sets, receptive and productive skills, content, communication, cognition, culture.

### *Introduction*

The modern world and globalization require learning English in early childhood. In the context of modern language policy, the primary school education system dictates using a Communicative Approach that aims broadly to establish communicative competence as the aim of teaching a foreign language.

One of our favorite depictions of teaching English as a foreign language is that of the classroom mosaic. The classroom mosaic is woven from many strands, such as the characteristics of the teacher (e.g., personality, teaching style, beliefs about language learning, and prior experience), the learner (e.g., personality, learning style, language learning beliefs, and prior experience), the setting (e.g., available resources, institutional values, and cultural background), and the relevant languages (e.g., ESL or EFL, as well as the native language of the learner and that of the teacher). All of them together assemble a huge, powerful, attractive, and colorful mosaic; the just-mentioned strands must be interwoven in beneficial ways. For instance, the instructor’s teaching style must direct the learning style of the student, the learner must be involved in the learning process as well as motivated, and the setting must supply resources and values that strongly strengthen the language teaching. However, if the strands are not connected together efficiently, the instructional loom is likely to produce something small, feeble, tattered, pale, and not perceptible as a mosaic at all. Apart from the four strands mentioned above — teacher, learner, setting, and relevant languages, there are other crucial strands that exist in the mosaic. In a practical meaning, one of the most essential of these strands consists of the four main skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The strand also includes bound or related skills, such as knowledge of vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, syntax, meaning and usage. Optimum EFL communication is possible when all the skills are interwoven during instruction. The “skill strand” of the mosaic carries prime EFL communication when the skills are interjoined with each other during teaching guidance. This is recognized as the integrated-skill approach. We support a blend of task-based and theme-based instruction in which tasks are united by coherent themes. Moreover, it is becoming trendy in EFL instruction today. In contrast to the purely segregated-skill approach, the integrated-skill approach exposes EFL learners to authentic language and triggers them to interact naturalistically in the language. In the integrated-skill approach, learners quickly acquire a real illustration of the richness and complexity of the English language as employed for communication. Furthermore, the approach emphasizes that English is not just an object of academic interest nor merely a main tool for passing a test or an examination; instead, English becomes a real means of interaction and distribution between teachers and students. This approach allows teachers to monitor students’ progress in several skills simultaneously. Integrating the language skills also stimulates the learning of real content, not just the dissection of language forms. Finally, the integrated-skill approach (whether found in content-based or task-based language instruction or some hybrid form) can be

strongly motivating, especially to junior students. In order to integrate the language skills in EFL teaching, teachers should regard these steps as knowing more about the different ways to establish language skills in the classroom (e.g., content-based, task-based, or a combination), reflecting on their existing approach and assessing the stage to which the skills are integrated, choosing instructional materials, textbooks and technologies that facilitate the unification of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, as well as the associated skills of syntax, vocabulary and so on. Teachers should not only remember that it is possible to integrate the other language skills through suitable tasks even if the given course is labeled according to just one skill, but also they ought to teach language learning strategies and emphasize that a given strategy can often support performance in multiple skills. With careful reflection and detailed planning, any teacher can strengthen the mosaic of language teaching and woven well, learners can use English effectively for communication [1].

For the effective implementation of the above-mentioned issues, a foreign language teacher needs to have a carefully developed learning and educational sets. Integration of the modern educational space, convergence and interpenetration of national cultures, renewal and adaptation to the challenges of the global world leads to fundamental reorganization of the educational process, to a reevaluation of the main aims and objectives of teaching a foreign language, to the use of innovative methodological and pedagogical technologies, as well as the revision of learning and educational facilities, textbooks, books, standard curricula, and programs.

Therefore, a great deal of learning and educational sets have been published of late to respond to the demand of the society we live in. Teachers can face some problems during an arduous teaching process related to choosing a suitable manual for performing their professional activity, which will correspond to all the latest innovations and technologies in the educational process. Moreover, modern English textbooks are expected to accomplish cross-subject integration, have tools for developing individuals, carry out a cultural function; in addition, the most crucial requirement is implementing principles of communicative language teaching. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is one of the modern technologies that was previously utilized in teaching English to high school and university students and is now widely used in teaching primary school children. An efficient approach for learning another language in and after primary school age is the integration of a foreign language into a non-linguistic subject. Meanwhile, the knowledge learned in other non-linguistic lessons is reinforced in a foreign language lesson [2].

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) was proposed by the European Commission as part of the European Action Plan for Multilingual Education 2004–2006. This method is designed to implement the mastery of languages and subjects in other languages, which is one of the signs of the competitiveness of school students in an era of constantly changing globalization [3].

The CLIL method was introduced by multilingual education researcher David Marsh in 1994 as part of coordinating research on the state of language education in Europe [4].

The CLIL method was defined by international experts as follows:

- “a method that considers language as a tool to be prepared for intercultural understanding, international thinking and improving education in general”.
- “a method aimed at learning a subject and learning a language through a subject” [5].
- “the study of subjects through a second or third language and the improvement of language skills through the study of subject areas, i.e. achievement of subject and linguistic goals at the same time” [6].

CLIL technology impacts beneficially on the establishment of communication skills and reveals how captivating and amazing the educational process can be at the same time. Today, the most of acquired educational sets have already carried out the CLIL methodology in their educational curriculum, and part of them are completely based on the principle of introducing all components of this technology into the educational process. This is called 4 “C”. Four main closely interrelated principles are:

1. Content. Students study the language not for the purpose of the language itself but for the sake of acquiring certain knowledge. Language skills are developed not only in language classes but also in other subject fields. The curricular disciplines such as art, citizenship, classics, design and technology (DT), economics, environmental studies, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), literacy, mathematics, music, physical education (PE), philosophy, politics, religious studies (RE), science, social science and technology can be taught with CLIL technology.

2. Communication. With the development of four types of speech activity, teachers need to create an active, communicative environment. Conscious communication develops while learning a language through subject areas. Students must improve their communication skills to express thoughts about the content of the subject and to work well together. They need to express and interpret functions (facts, data, thoughts, and

feelings) both in written and oral form. Communication skills are crucial. Consequently, CLIL is intended for STT (student talking time) and lessens TTT (teacher talking time). There are significant strategies that are used by teachers to develop meaningful communication:

- brainstorming to start or finish a topic of study;
- open questions;
- discussions;
- peer feedback;
- group feedback;
- sharing ideas with a partner before and after writing;
- report back on information found on the Internet;
- preparing posters or PowerPoint presentations;
- project work;
- role-plays.

3. Cognition. The integration of subjects can be used as one of the means of increasing the cognitive operation of students. The study of subject areas in the second and third languages contributes to the development of metacognitive and metalinguistic skills, which corresponds to cognitive or critical skills, such as reasoning, abstract thinking, hypothesising, creative thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluating and so on.

4. Culture. An integral part of subject-language integrated learning is a comprehension of the value of the culture of the native country and respect for the culture of countries whose language is being studied [7]. Culture is at the core of CLIL methodology (Coyle, 2007). CLIL gives an opportunity to present an extensive range of cultural contexts to assist students in improving positive attitudes and becoming aware of the responsibilities of global and local citizenship [8].

#### *Experimental*

A special feature of the CLIL methodology is that proficiency in a foreign language is transformed into a means of studying a particular subject. The key principles of the approach under discussion are focused on two main concepts of language and integration. CLIL is conventionally divided into hard CLIL and soft CLIL. Hard CLIL means that any school subject can be taught in English. During a lesson, students explore geography, literature, biology, maths, music, or even sports games in a foreign language. The task of English teachers who use soft CLIL is the opposite. It is to teach topics and materials from other subjects in the foreign language lesson. Meanwhile, attention is concentrated not only on the contents of the tasks themselves but also on the necessary vocabulary elements associated with the topic being addressed. This benefits from well-thought-out textbooks that teach the language as a whole, not only within the framework of a specific subject but also by using various grammatical structures and lexical units, specific types of skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading). The stages of working with pictures, visual materials can contain various creative and individual assignments, such as describing given pictures, comparing given information, asking questions, doing a project, etc. Thus, we will conduct a comparative analysis of learning and educational sets in English for younger schoolchildren within-subject and language integrated learning framework by coping with the concept of CLIL technology.

A large selection of teaching materials for teaching primary school English is presented these days. However, in our educational system, Kazakhstan edition textbooks entitled 'Smiles' by Virginia Evans and Jenny Booley and 'Family and Friends' by Tamzin Thompson and Naomi Simmons are widely used. We have reviewed and analyzed these books.

A 'Smiles' textbook by Jenny Dooley, containing four levels, is designed for primary-aged students. The learning and the educational set consists of Pupil's Book, Activity Book, Teacher's Book, Pupil's Multi-ROM (Pupil's CD/DVD), Picture Flashcards, Vocabulary & Grammar Practice and is suitable both for individual lessons at home and for group lessons at the primary stage of instruction. This course focuses on teaching children correct pronunciation, vocabulary, some structures of English grammar, and the development of listening and speaking skills. We conclude that the textbook 'Smiles' is fully accomplished in all aspects of CLIL methodology (cognition, communication, content, and culture) after analyzing the textbook, which is aimed to recognize the implementation of CLIL technology in it. The textbook fully corresponds to the cognition point, as it could be a complex of different formative assignments pointed at the all-around advancement of the child. There are plenty of tasks with matching information, filling in the blanks, answering multiple-choice questions for enriching vocabulary and teaching grammar. As for the content of

the textbook, we can outline that the design of the textbook corresponds to the psychological characteristics of the age group under discussion. For the primary school, the page of the textbook is divided into four parts and one turn is a whole lesson. So, the schoolchild is not distracted by classes from turning the page. The book corresponds fully to the graphics, which is appropriate for the modern generation as they are visual learners mostly. Vocabulary bank harmoniously combined with images; moreover, graphic elements are used actively. Along with the pictures, photographs are used so that the student can adequately correlate information from the textbook with the surrounding animals and the floral world. The vital case that students need to learn is to respect and regard with reverence the diversity of cultures and opinions. Also, there is a necessity to improve students' interpersonal and intercultural competencies, basic forms of speech behavior embraced in Kazakhstan and in the countries of the language being studied as part of the educational process in the classroom. Moreover, the textbook includes a national component in the form of visual and meaningful information, which affects positively to evoke patriotic feelings of the students, respect for the Motherland and home cultural heritage. Also, this component helps to form awareness about Kazakhstan at the level of intersubject relations (natural science, art, science, literature, etc.) and aids in learning English. Nevertheless, there is no denying that the application degree of 'communication' and 'culture' depends mostly on the teacher, too, on his professional knowledge, skills, and communicative competence in general. A teacher is able to use new additional materials to enrich the knowledge of students and expand interdisciplinary connections in the field of regional studies. The textbook is compiled with the view of forming an image of the English language in the child's mind through numerous listening activities, singing, grammatical structures, and various everyday conversational formulas. As a result, students are able to choose appropriate language and speech tools for the successful solution of a basic communicative task. Most lessons are held in a musical and game-like format during which learning takes place. Moreover, the textbook complies with the aspect of 'cognition' as students predict the content of the text by title, illustrations, and hints given before the reading. There are various methods of revealing the meaning of a word. They can improve skills of independent performance of tasks due to understanding of the given instructions to them, including tasks using a computer (a smart board, an electronic textbook) and to perform creative tasks with English language instructions for working in a pattern of individual learning, pair work and group work.

'Family and friends' is a colorful six-level course with many illustrations. For students it comprises Class Book with Online Play, Workbook with or without Online Practice, Grammar Friends, Readers, Oxford Primary Skills: Reading and Writing. At teacher's disposal are Teacher's Book Plus with Fluency DVD, Online Practice and Teacher's Resource Center, Classroom Presentation Tool, Class Audio CDs, Teacher's Resource Pack with Story Posters, Phonics Cards and Flashcards. The course contains many different tasks, such as reading comprehension with various stories, fairytales and stories of kids, dialogues, songs, games, and videos. The course is structured in such a way that it allows an English teacher to immerse the child in the language environment due to genuine circumstances which are similar in interests and life experiences of children of this age category. The course authors declare that the textbook is fully developed according to the principles of CLIL methodology since teaching and learning English is carried out in a cross-subject context. All games, exercises, role-playing tasks and video are in English. The student uses language as a mean of communication and it is the significant purpose of this educational resources course. All activities and exercises are intended for the diversified development of school students. School students understand their own culture and the culture of another country due to the acquaintance of children with the main characters from England and the further integration of the curriculum with the discipline of "regional studies". All four components of CLIL techniques fully reflected in multilevel resources 'Family and friends' are shown certainly in the analysis. The course is aimed at an animated story with texts, videos and cartoons with their storyline which attract children's attention. Many additional informational colorful materials are carried out in this educational resource. Schoolchildren are involved in educational process due to playing games, singing songs, watching videos, warm-ups, drawing and making up their own stories using crafts and handmade materials. The textbook offers children useful age-appropriate vocabulary, basic simple speech patterns, and provides the chance to the improvement of reading and writing skills. We agree with expert assessments and the professional opinion of the pedagogical professional society that an educational resources 'Family and friends' at hand is a good example of the implementation of the CLIL methodology in teaching and learning process. Relations between studies subjects help children master the material in the most efficient mean, games of all kind; funny characters are fascinated by their integrity and show students an exciting world of the English language. This is one of the motivations for learning a foreign language.

Results and Discussion

We conducted a survey among primary school teachers to identify objective opinion of teachers — experts who teach English in primary grades about the proper presence of educational material in integrated teaching of four types of speech activity, as well as the presence in the content of textbooks of all components of CLIL technology called “4 C” — “content”, “communication”, “cognition”, and “culture”.

The first question, “Does the content of the coursebook correspond to the age and psychological characteristics of primary school students?”, is answered that the educational set “Family and Friends” corresponds fully only by 50 % of teachers, the remaining 50 % of respondents answered that it corresponded sufficiently. Regarding “Smiles”, responders agreed that it fully corresponded to the age and psychological characteristics of primary school students (Figure 1).

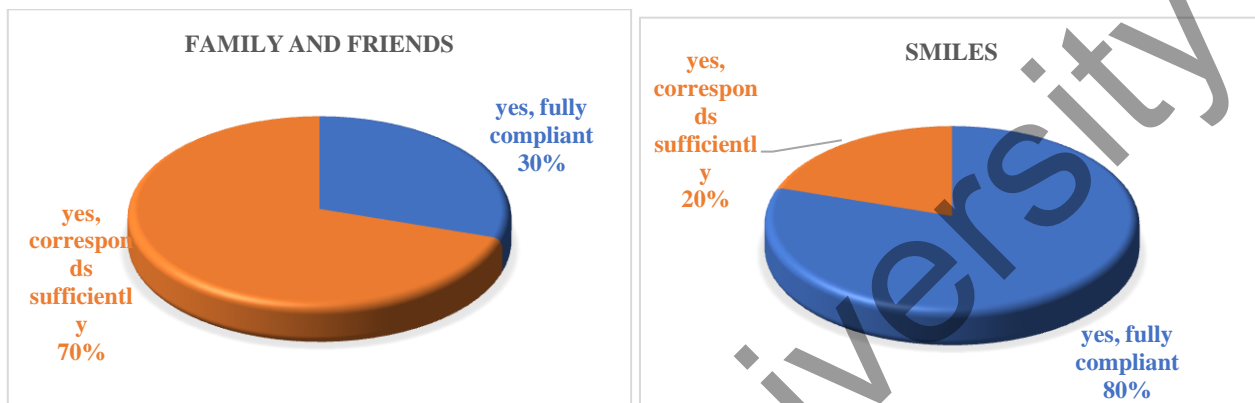


Figure 1. The results of the first question

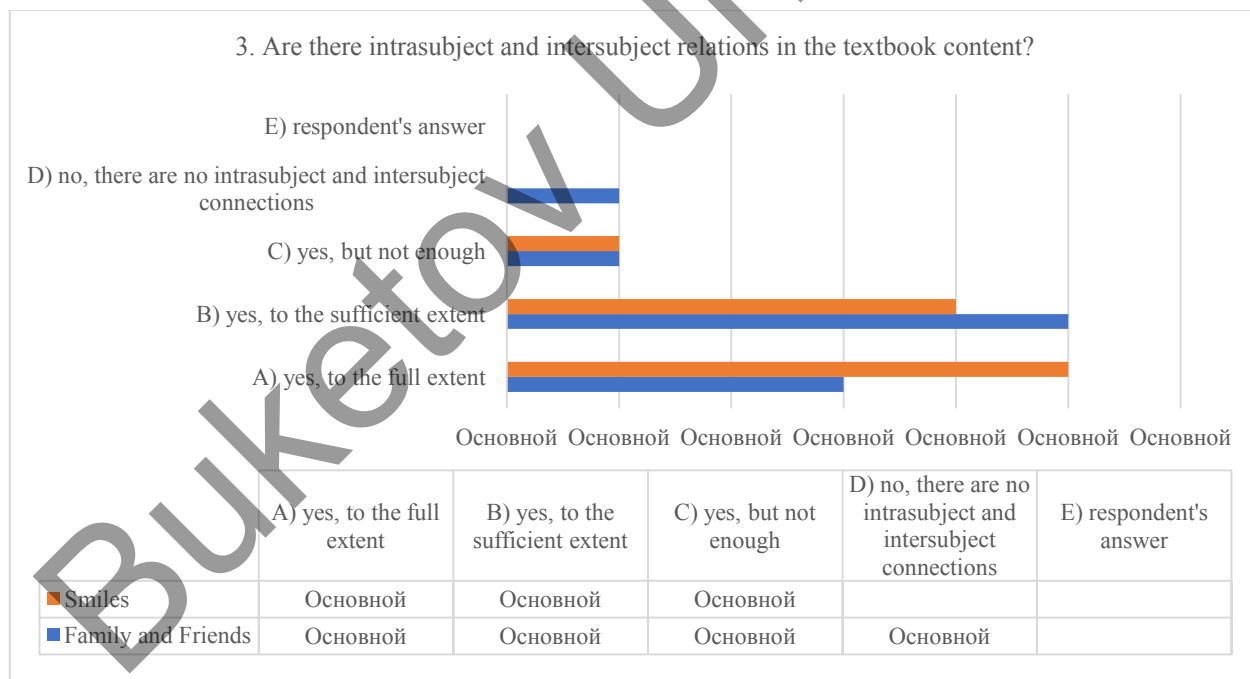


Figure 2. The results of the third question

The second question to be considered was “Is the gender approach reflected in the texts of different genres and the illustrations of the textbook?”. 30 % of respondents answered that the interests and hobbies of boys and girls are clearly observed in the textbook, they are represented proportionally in various life situations. The majority, at 70 %, is of the opinion that there is a balanced ratio of characters of different ages and gender in the textbook.

Figure 2 represents the results of the third question.

According to fourth and fifth questions, most teachers argue that the style of the material presentation is consistent sufficiently with the age group for which the textbook is intended, the design of the textbook is colorful, the illustrations are of high quality, which allow students to realize, comprehend and learn the educational material, moreover, there is a variety of visual and illustrative material.

Figure 3 demonstrates the results of sixth question “How much does the information in the textbook enable schoolchildren at the primary stage of instruction to develop cross-culture awareness?”.

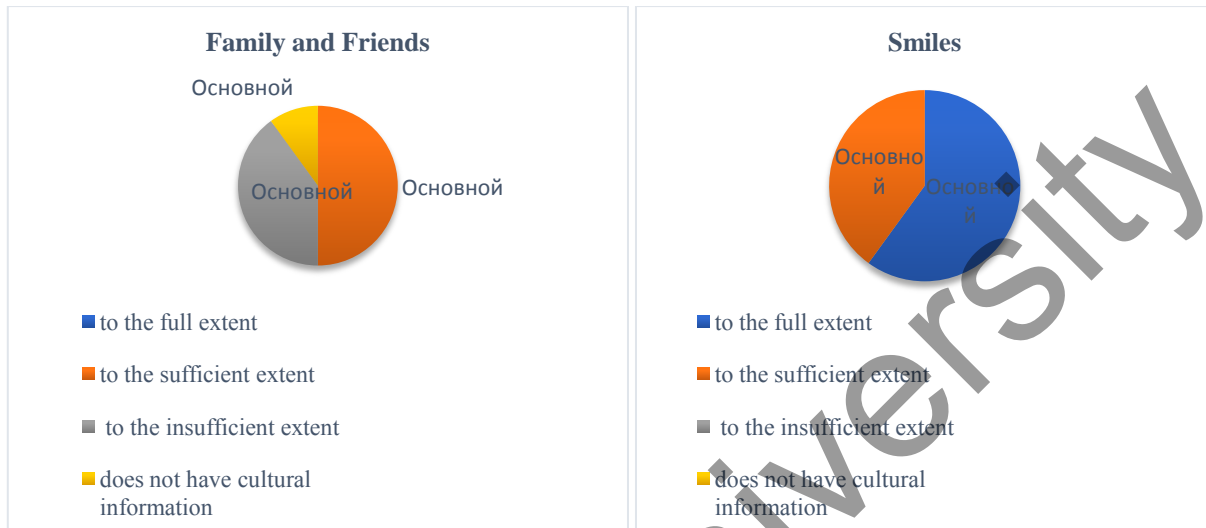


Figure 3. The results of the sixth question

To the next question “How much does the information in the course book help pupils look at their own worldview from a different perspective? (empathy and tolerance)”, the majority, 40 %, claimed that it does not develop fairly the individual intercultural experience of the student, 30 % — helps to sufficiently see the similarities and differences between cultures, 20 % — the socio-cultural information in the textbook contributes to the familiarization of the individual with the culture of the country of the target language, and also allows the student to gain new knowledge about his unique ethno-culture, 10 % — the textbook does not reflect someone else’s linguistic culture.

Concerning eighth and ninth questions, the major expert teachers claim that critical thinking develops at a sufficient level (as a result, students with the assistance of a teacher can comprehend the content, search for an appropriate answer to a situational task) and the textbook contains tasks that allow students to acquire certain strategies for working with the English language, as well as the section “Revise” is included with tasks for consolidating the material covered to develop skills and abilities.

According to the tenth question of the questionnaire “How far are the activities for speaking (monologue, dialogue) covered in the course book?” opinions were divided between “speech exercises used on a sufficient level (there is a tangible result)” and “exercises are not targeted enough and motivated (revision is needed)”.

After analysis of eleventh and twelfth questions, it was noted that students could adequately (partially) use words, phrases, and speech patterns from the textbook in the classroom and in real communication, and that the passages contribute sufficiently to improve students’ vocabulary, but additional work with students is needed.

Figure 4 illustrates the results of thirteenth question “How widely are exercises used in the textbook for the development of all four types of speech activity (Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening)?”.

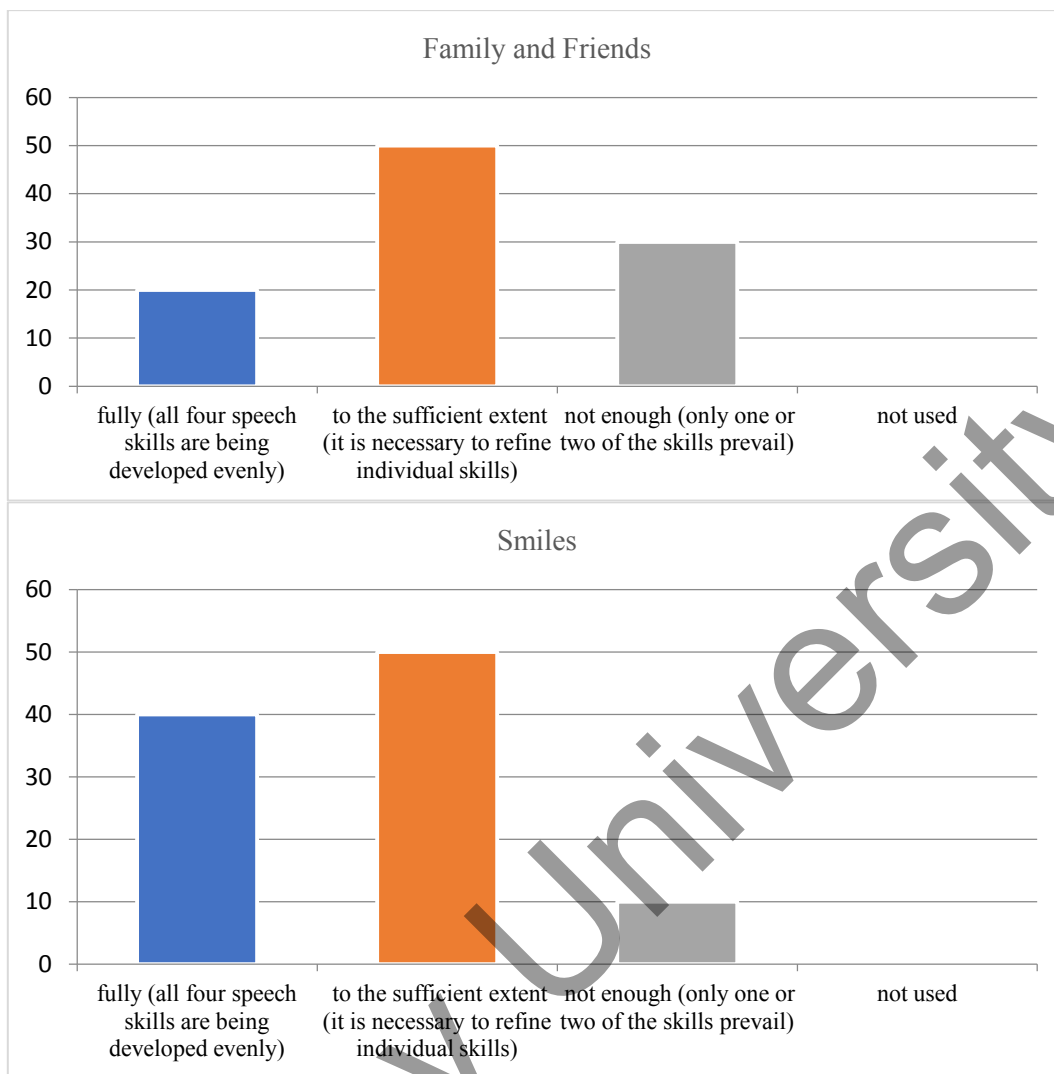


Figure 4. The results of the thirteenth question

During the survey, we decided to clarify whether, at the end of each unit, the goal of foreign language education is achieved — the development of all four types of skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) on an interconnected basis. 50 % of teachers answered that it was achieved insufficiently, the result is a low level of proficiency in 4 types of speech activity on the topic covered (50–60 % of students). One-third of expert teachers, on the contrary, are sure that it is fully achieved, the result is that students are fluent in 4 types of speech activity on the topic covered (90–100 % of students). One-tenth of respondents answered that it was achieved to a sufficient extent, the result is that the students have a good command of 4 types of speech activity on the topic covered (70–80 % of students). The rest of the respondents, 10 %, answered that it was almost not achieved (less than 50 % of students).

Teachers — experts in the survey could express their opinions about what addition they would make to the content of this textbook. In their opinion, it is necessary to include educational material that reflects the national and cultural specifics of Kazakhstan, as well as customs and traditions, modern attributes of the country of the studied language (it is crucial to boost the level of cultural awareness), especially in such class books as “Family and Friends”. By contrast, “Smiles” is an adapted version for our educational system, where we can notice the cultural information of our country.

The results of the survey indicate that the refinement and detailing of each component of the CLIL technology, in particular, the development of cultural knowledge, speech skills (monologue, dialogue), the achievement and implementation of the main aim of foreign language teaching is the improvement of all four skills on an interrelated basis.

### Conclusions

The content of integrated skills is to combine one language skill with another one. According to language and methodology experts, skills integration has five advantages: firstly, it provides continuity in teaching/program learning due to appropriate tasks are closely related to one another in this approach; secondly, tasks in the integrated skills approach can be aimed to distribute input before output; thirdly, it provides realistic learning because skills integration allows for the improvement of four skills in addition to the connected skills of syntax, vocabulary and so on within a realistic communicative framework; fourthly, it provides opportunities for pupils to know and redeploy the language they have acquired in the various contexts and modes. It can also be beneficial and meaningful because it can assist with the recycling and revision of languages that have already been taught; fifthly, skills integration can boost the confidence of a weaker or less confident student.

In the process of teaching a foreign language, the modern educational paradigm is aimed at intra- and interdisciplinary orientation, integration, and widespread use of CLIL technology. Specific attention ought to be paid to determining the correspondence of textbooks used in our country with the programs of the updated content of education, as well as the quality level of didactic materials presented in the analyzed educational and methodological resources for teaching language and culture within the foreign language education framework.

The advantage of compiling learning and educational sets based on CLIL technology is the reliance on the main 4 “C”: content, communication, cognition, and culture. All these components are in uninterrupted ties with each other. These sets promote the expansion of the intercultural knowledge of students. The development of communication skills in a foreign language, the improvement of communicative competence, and their use in different spheres of life are thought to be of key interest.

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### Бастауыш мектеп оқушыларына шетел тілін оқыту және CLIL технологиясы

Мақалада жаңартылған білім беру мазмұны аясында ағылшын тілі сабағының негізін құрайтын сөйлеу әрекетінің рецептивті және өнімді түрлерін өзара байланысты оқытуды негіздеудің маңыздылығымен қатар, бастауыш мектепте мазмұн мен тілді интеграцияланған оқыту технологиясын (CLIL) қолданудың теориялық және практикалық мәселелері қарастырылған. Қазақстан мектептеріне арналып құрастырылған «Smile» және білім беру үдерісінде жиі пайдаланылатын «Family and friends»

атты екі оқу-әдістемелік кешеннің дидактикалық ерекшеліктері айқындалып, ұсынылған. CLIL тұрғысынан оқулықтың мазмұн, коммуникация, таным, мәдениет сияқты төрт компоненті де талдау нысаны болып табылады. Тәжірибелі ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің сарапшы ретіндегі пікірлері сарапталып, сонымен қатар, CLIL технологиясы негізінде шет тілдерін оқыту саласындағы оқулықтарды жасаудың тиімді жақтары баяндалған.

*Кілт сөздер:* бастауыш мектеп, ағылшын тілі сабағы, сөйлеу әрекетінің рецептивті және өнімді түрлері, CLIL технологиясы, оқу-әдістемелік кешендер, мазмұны, қатысым, таным, мәдениет.

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### **Преподавание иностранного языка учащимся начальной школы и CLIL технологии**

В статье, наряду с важностью обоснования взаимосвязанного обучения рецептивным и продуктивным видам речевой деятельности, которые составляют основу урока английского языка в рамках обновленного содержания образования, рассмотрены теоретические и практические проблемы использования технологии интегрированного обучения содержанию и языку (CLIL) в начальной школе. Выявлены дидактические особенности двух учебно-методических комплексов: «Smile», рекомендованного для широкого использования в школах Казахстана, и «Family and friends», который часто находит применение в учебном процессе. В контексте CLIL объектом анализа являются четыре компонента учебников: содержание, коммуникация, познание и культура. Были проанализированы мнения опытных учителей английского языка как экспертов, а также описаны преимущества создания учебников в области обучения иностранным языкам на основе технологии CLIL.

*Ключевые слова:* начальная школа, урок английского языка, рецептивные и продуктивные виды речевой деятельности, технология CLIL, учебно-методические комплексы, содержание, коммуникация, познание, культура.

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