

Subject Teachers' Perception of the Changing Role of Language in the Curriculum of Secondary Education

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Abstract : Alongside the implementation of trilingual education in schools, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan innovated the school curriculum in 2013 to include a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. In this regard, some transition issues have arisen, such as unprepared teachers, a need for more awareness of the CLIL approach, and teaching resources. Some teachers view it as a challenge due to its combination of both content and language. This often creates anxiety among teachers who are knowledgeable about their subject areas in Kazakh or Russian but are deficient in delivering the subject's content in English. Thus, with this new teaching approach, teachers encounter to choose the role of language and answer how language works in the CLIL classroom. This study aimed to explore how teachers experience the changing role of language in the curriculum and to find out what challenges teachers face related to CLIL implementation and how their language proficiency influences their teaching practices. A qualitative comparative case study was conducted in an X Lyceum and a mainstream school piloting CLIL. Data collection procedures were conducted via semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Eight content teachers were chosen from these two schools as the target group of this study. Subject teachers, rather than language teachers, were chosen as the target group to grasp how the language-related issues in the new curriculum are interpreted by educators who do not necessarily identify themselves as language experts at the outset. The findings showed that mainstream teachers prioritize content over language because, as content teachers, the knowledge of content is more essential for them rather than the language. In contrast, most X Lyceum teachers balance language and content and additionally showed their preferences to support the 'English language only' policy among 10-11 graders. Moreover, due to the low-level English proficiency, mainstream teachers did highlight the necessity of CLIL training and further collaboration with language teachers. This study will be beneficial for teachers and policy-makers to enable them to solve the issues mentioned above related to the implementation of CLIL. Larger-scale research conducted in the future would further inform its successful deployment country-wide.

Keywords : role of language, trilingual education, updated curriculum, teacher practices

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