

Приложение 4 към Наредба за развитието на академичния състав на НБУ

REVIEW

by **Prof. Ekaterina Nedelcheva Sofronieva, PhD**

Department of Preschool and Media Education

Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts

“St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia

professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching... (Methodology of foreign language teaching –
preschool and primary school level)

of a **doctoral thesis**

submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a PhD degree

PhD Programme: “*The Methodology of Teaching Modern Languages*”

area of higher education: *1. Education Sciences*

professional field: *1.3. The pedagogy of teaching...*

scientific specialty: “*The Methodology of Teaching Modern Languages*”

PhD candidate: **Eda Cauli**

topic of thesis: “**Implementing a CLIL Approach to Teaching English for Special Purposes in
Academic Contexts**”

thesis supervisor: **Assoc. Prof. Svetlana Dimitrova-Gjuzeleva, PhD**

This review has been written in accordance with the requirements of the existing Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, the Regulations for its Application and the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff of the NBU.

1. Scientific and applied significance of the research.

Content and Language Integrated Learning is undoubtedly an important approach in foreign language teaching methodology. The application of this approach in teaching English for special purposes in academic contexts is relevant both in scientific and applied terms. Moreover, it is an approach which is still to be trialed and implemented on a large scale in Albania, as stated by the author. “To date,



CLIL has not been integrated into the Albanian public schools, particularly into higher education and English for Special Purposes.” (p.5). Hence, the research is related to the implementation of the CLIL approach in the Albanian higher education system. The proposed theoretical model, which meets the needs of such a study, has been tested among students, studying Business English at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Tirana.

2. Display of clearly stated research aims and objectives.

The aims and objectives of the research have been properly and precisely formulated. They are specified in the introductory part of the PhD thesis, along with the main thesis statement, and have been logically and consistently developed in the different parts of the work.

The main aim of the research is to improve the communicative competence of university students at the University of Tirana and more specifically, the quality of their communication in English when using English language for special purposes in academic contexts. To fulfill this aim, the PhD candidate proposes the implementation of CLIL approach in the ESP classes, specially for Business English.

The research objectives and tasks are grouped into two main groups. The first group is related to the development of a detailed, comprehensive overview of relevant scientific sources which focus on the implementation of current EFL teaching methodologies and the benefits of applying the CLIL approach in ESP contexts. The second group of tasks are related to the conducted study and have theoretical and applied value.

In her research, the author achieves the set aims and objectives and successfully supports her thesis statement.

3. Assessment of the extent to which the PhD candidate is familiar with the research problem and the relevant existing literature.

The PhD thesis, entitled “Implementing a CLIL Approach to Teaching English for Special Purposes in Academic Contexts” has a volume of 246 pages in total. It includes a main text body (196 pages) and 16 appendices (50 pages). The bibliography lists more than 150 literary sources, which represent



both publications by eminent authors and researchers in the field, and many contemporary studies, conducted in the last 5-10 years.

On the basis of this thesis, it will be fair to conclude that the author has sufficient knowledge of the researched issues and questions. Eda Cauili shows skills to attentively use and interpret the available literary scientific sources in her research. Furthermore, she manages to successfully develop a convincing argument, introduce her opinion and share her scientific views.

4. Correctness in citing a representative number of authors.

The literary sources in the PhD thesis are cited correctly. The number of sources included in the bibliography is over 150. They correspond to the content of the research area of the PhD thesis. Many of these are contemporary studies published in recent years.

5. Development of a sound and well-justified theoretical model of the research.

The theoretical model is built upon existing techniques and principals of teaching English for Special Purposes, and the CLIL approach, in particular. On the one hand, it reflects the international achievements in this research field, registered in countries like Canada, Australia, UK, Spain and France. On the other hand, it takes into account the specific characteristics of language education in Albania and the needs of the students who participated in the exploratory training. The lack of an established tradition and practice of using a CLIL approach in the language teaching of students and school pupils in Albania is a prerequisite of the development of such a model by the author.

6. Compliance of the research methodology and research methods with the set aims and objectives.

The research methodology fully complies with the set research aims and objectives. The PhD candidate has managed to skilfully combine reliable and valid quantitative and qualitative methods. The research design encompassed an experimental group and a control group. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted in both groups. Exploratory training was offered to the experimental group of students. During the intervention observation was employed as a research tool to collect evidence and data about the students' improvement in language acquisition of specific/profession-related language terminology and communicative skills.

To verify the effectiveness of the approach, a battery of questionnaires, language tests, assessment and



self-assessment materials were used. Part of the tests are well-known international tests like The Oxford English Placement Test (OTE), and the self-assessment checklist grid for B1 level from the European Language Portfolio. Other materials are resources selected and adapted for the purposes of the study by the author. In addition, surveys were used to determine the needs of both university students and their lecturers. All materials are described in detail and samples of them are presented in the appendices.

The statistical method analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the collected data and compare variances across the group means.

7. Manifestation of author's own contribution to the collection and analysis of the empirical data.

I believe that the collection and analysis of the empirical data have been done by the author. Eda Cauli has had many years of professional experience in teaching students, which underlies the implementation of this research project and the subsequent data collection and data analysis. There is a tabular and graphical representation of the project results, which is easy for the readers to follow and comprehend.

Description of the contributions:

1. Brief description of the nature and assessment of the reliability of the materials on which the PhD thesis contributions are based.

I accept the main author's contributions outlined in the PhD thesis. The information communicated in relation to the conducted research is rich and comprehensive. It is based on the collected and analyzed data, which has been done with the necessary precision, accuracy and credibility. Some of the findings have been formerly announced in some of the PhD candidate's publications. The research question is topical and the conducted study could be viewed upon as a contribution to the introduction of the CLIL approach to the foreign language education of university students in Albania.

2. Description and classification of the PhD candidate's contributions.

The PhD thesis shows that the candidate has in-depth theoretical knowledge in the field of methodology of modern language teaching. Emphasis is placed on Teaching English Language for Special Purposes and Content and Language Integrated Learning.

Development of a language training model based on the CLIL approach and its implementation among



university students is designated as the main contribution of the PhD thesis by the author. CLIL is an innovative practice in the context of higher education in Albania. Other contribution points relevant to language education theory and practice can be outlined, amongst which:

- offering an extensive literature review of the implementation and effectiveness of teaching English for special purposes and, in particular, the CLIL approach;
- justifying the need to apply an experimental model in English language teaching and piloting such a training model among students;
- outlining the pedagogical applicability of the CLIL approach in the context of higher education in Albania;
- piloting a battery of tests for recording students' individual and group achievements in learning English for Special Purposes in academic contexts;
- using research instruments to account for the students' and their lecturers' needs.

The PhD candidate has the necessary abilities to conduct independent scientific research.

3. Assessment of the degree of personal participation of the author in the contributions.

As mentioned previously, I believe that Eda Cauli's professional experience as a university lecturer determines her interest in the research topic, her high motivation and skills for independently conducting experimental training and analyzing its results. In order to fully conduct her research, she steps on already established theories and practices in foreign language teaching by skilfully integrating appropriate CLIL techniques into the experimental teaching model that she implements among university students. This is an innovative model for language education of university students in Albania, and its implementation and verification is an indisputable contribution of the author.

4. Assessment of the PhD thesis summary and its compliance with the main points and contributions of the PhD thesis.

The PhD thesis summary corresponds to the PhD thesis and outlines its achievements. It is a detailed summary, 43 pages in total, which correctly reflects the main points and contributions of the PhD thesis.

Impact of the PhD thesis on other scientists and researchers.

1. Evaluation of the publications on the PhD thesis: number, type of journals in which they have been published.



The PhD candidate's publications on her work, listed in the PhD thesis summary, are five in number. One of them has been published in Albania, and the others in international editions of Romania, Greece and Austria.

Additionally, eleven scientific reports are recorded. Two of them were presented at scientific forums in Albania, and the rest at international scientific forums held in Greece, Bulgaria, Poland, and the UK.

All publications are in English language and have scientific and applied value.

2. References and citations by other authors; published scientific reviews, etc.

The PhD candidate has not made mention of any citations of her publications by other authors.

Author's personal qualities (if the reviewer knows the author).

I have not met the PhD candidate, Eda Cauli. My opinion is based on the submitted documents and the PhD thesis.

Opinions, recommendations and notes.

I believe that the PhD thesis meets all the necessary requirements. I hope that the PhD candidate Eda Cauli will continue her work in this field with the same enthusiasm and conviction in the effectiveness of the CLIL approach to foreign language education, as shown in this PhD thesis.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the PhD thesis presents an independent, topical and significant scientific study. It fully complies with the requirements of the existing Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Application and the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff of the NBU. Based on the mentioned merits and scientific contributions, I give my positive assessment of the PhD thesis and confidently suggest to the respected scientific jury to vote **positively** for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the area of higher education: *1. Education Sciences, professional field: 1.3. The pedagogy of teaching...*, scientific specialty: "*The Methodology of Teaching Modern Languages*", to the PhD candidate **Eda Cauli**.

Date: 23rd February, 2023

Signature: