

# Content and Language Integrated Learning Methodology in Optional Humanities Courses for First-Year University Students: A Case Study

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**Abstract.** The article analyzes using Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) for teaching one of the optional humanities disciplines to Ukrainian university students of different majors. The discipline discussed in the article as an example of using CLIL methodology is “The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy” and it is in the list of optional humanities subjects for the first-year students of Alfred Nobel University in Dnipro, Ukraine. However, unlike the other optional humanities disciplines, the methodology underlying this course is based on teaching the subject in English, instead of Ukrainian, following the CLIL approach widely used in the European education but still little known in Ukraine. The purpose of the paper is to expose and analyze the original methodology developed that conditioned the specific structure of the relevant course, and the specific learning activities used in it. The essence of the developed CLIL theory-based methodology and its practical application are manifested through learning activities that include students’ mini-lectures/workshop-type presentations, brainstorming, case-studies, discussions, and a learning project with its results summarized in students’ essays, abstracts, and summaries written in English. The students collect the information required for completing their tasks not only from the teacher’s lectures and the recommended literature but also (and mostly) by way of doing extensive Internet-search on psychological and pedagogical sites in English. All this makes CLIL in the case under discussion *experiential-interactive* (through personal experience in extra-linguistic subject-related activities gained in interaction with other students), *blended* (with the organic combination of traditional in-class learning and out-of-class online information search), *autonomous* (students’ autonomous learning activities-centered), and *cooperative* (with those activities being done in students’ cooperative interaction). As the result, students mostly *self-construct* their knowledge of the discipline by way of using the target language as the tool for such self-construction. This makes the elaborated course a clear-cut case of *constructivism* in CLIL pedagogy.

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## Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning – CLIL [1,2] – means teaching and learning a foreign language by way of using it as the language of instruction in courses of other (non-linguistic) subjects of the curriculum, thereby providing for students’ conscious learning of those subjects by means of the target language, while the learners’ command of that language is involuntarily (subconsciously) improved and developed through constantly practicing it in the teaching/learning process. CLIL is one of the most cutting-edge approaches to teaching some second/foreign language in an integrated manner with teaching a certain non-linguistic discipline. This approach, elaborated in Europe and used there widely enough, is still undeservedly little known and practically not used in Ukraine.

However, the time has come for its introduction and development in that country, those introduction and development being an integral part of the country’s progress towards achieving the European standards in education. The specific necessity of introducing *English-based* CLIL courses

into Ukrainian tertiary education is reinforced by the fact that, at present, more and more students enter Ukrainian universities with better command of English (up to B1+ or even B2 levels) than even several years before. This creates an opportunity of organizing for those students (even in the first year of their university studies) CLIL courses taught and learned exclusively in English. Our questionings conducted among all the students enrolled in our optional CLIL course discussed further in this article have invariably demonstrated that in all the years of the course functioning, the first place among learners' motives stimulating them to opt for it has been occupied by the wish to enjoy an opportunity of having good and continuous practice in English communication in the framework of the course.

It should be strongly emphasized that the introduction and development of CLIL programs in Ukraine must necessarily be adapted to the specific educational conditions of the country and instructional and learning conditions in its different educational institutions. Therefore, the objective of this article is to discuss one of the first attempts in Ukraine to develop a specific CLIL methodology adapted to teaching optional humanities disciplines in the first year of students' studies at one of the Ukrainian universities (Alfred Nobel University in the city of Dnipro). This methodology elaborated by the authors and analyzed in the article has been successfully functioning for 9 years already when teaching the first-year students an optional course on "Fundamentals of Pedagogy and Psychology", and it is that course that will be used further for explaining and illustrating the methodology developed.

### **Theory (CLIL in Teaching and Learning a Foreign Language and Other Disciplines)**

CLIL with English as both the target language and the language of instruction in courses of different non-linguistic subjects, such as Mathematics, Chemistry, History, etc., has been recently spreading throughout Europe in secondary, high, and higher school education [3,4,5]. It is very close to the so called *content-based instruction* (CBI) in second/foreign language (English) teaching/learning that was developed in the USA. Brinton et al [6] elaborated CBI as the one that is based on parallel acquisition by students of knowledge related to a certain non-linguistic discipline(s) and target language communication skills. In this way, the learning of content helps in learning the language while the language mastery facilitates students' access to content in their "vocational or occupational areas" [7, p. 59]. To achieve such parallelism in content and language acquisition, CBI classes taught in English (as a foreign language – EFL) may be designed as modeling classes on non-linguistic disciplines. For instance, the target language curriculum may be based on the curriculum of one or several non-linguistic disciplines so that the sequence of acquiring the language/communication content follows the requirement of acquiring the content of non-linguistic subjects. Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) may be considered as a specifically European version of CBI. According to Marsch [2, p.15], every kind of language learning in which a target language is also used for teaching students non-linguistic content can be called CLIL, so that CLIL is an umbrella term for all such dual-focused educational contexts [1]. It is this broad interpretation that determines the peculiarities of CLIL as compared with CBI.

The principal peculiarity is that CLIL includes a much broader complex of various approaches than CBI does because it is not specifically oriented at teaching English for professional purposes and adult education, as the latter one mostly is; it is no less, and even more, oriented at secondary schools and the language education of adolescents [8]. It may be said that CLIL embraces CBI – as a narrower (oriented only at teaching languages for professional purposes and adult education) version of CLIL. They both (CLIL and CBI as a narrower and specific part of it) share the same advantages that were formulated by Coyle [1, pp.104-105] who has shown that CLIL (and correspondingly, CBI) can:

- "Raise learner linguistic competence and confidence;
- Raise teacher and learner expectations;
- Develop risk-taking and problem-solving skills in the learners;
- Increase vocabulary learning skills and grammatical awareness;
- Motivate and encourage student independence;

- 
- Take students beyond ‘reductive’ foreign language topics;
  - Improve L1 literacy;
  - Encourage linguistic spontaneity (talk) if students are enabled to learn through the language rather than in the language;
  - Develop study skills, concentration – learning how to learn through the foreign language is fundamental to CLIL;
  - Generate positive attitudes and address gender issues in motivation;
  - Embed cultural awareness and intercultural issues into the curriculum.”

These advantages of English-based CLIL should necessary be used for teaching university students in non-English-speaking countries (such as Ukraine), and, in particular, when teaching them optional humanities disciplines in the first year of their university studies. The reasons for such a specific focus are as follows:

1. As it has been said, CLIL is to a great extent oriented at the teaching/learning process at secondary and high schools, i.e. at the education of adolescents for which it is best adapted. That is why, if the approach in question is introduced into the higher education process, it would be best to do it at the early stages of university education, when the majority of learners are still adolescents in what concerns the age category to which they belong, while their studies in the first year at university are still more or less close to what learners have got used to during their school years.
2. The disciplines to be taught via CLIL methodology in the first year of tertiary studies should better be humanities because their courses in that year are aimed at forming learners’ “general knowledge,” i.e. based on their training at secondary and high school and not requiring the command of any professional information or expertise. As a result, the difficulty of having insufficient initial (basic) informational preparation will not be superimposed on the difficulty of being taught not in the students’ mother tongue (L1) but in their target language (L2).
3. Finally, the disciplines to be taught via CLIL methodology should best be optional so that only the students with the basic command of English (not lower than the B1+ or even B2 level according to the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” [9]) get enrolled for it. Otherwise, if the course is made mandatory, those students in the class whose level of English is lower than the required minimum, will not be able to cope with the learning tasks, thereby seriously slowing down the progress of all the other students and even sometimes causing the failure of the course as a whole.

It is due to these reasons that the optional course “The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy” was designed for all the first-year students of Alfred Nobel University in Dnipro, Ukraine, irrespective of their major. It should also be emphasized that this CLIL course designed by us was expected to promote the four key factors in every kind of learning, and language learning in particular: content, communication, cognition, and culture. This is why the goals of the course, its content, structure, and the learning activities in it were designed to: a) improve the acquisition of the course content (both the psychological and pedagogical content and the involuntarily acquired language content) through active and intensive learning activities; b) intensively develop target language communication skills through active communication in English permeating the entire course; c) develop students’ cognitive skills by way of introducing as many creative learning activities as possible; d) draw students’ attention to all cultural peculiarities that become apparent when exposing the learning content of the course and communicating on that content. How this was achieved in practice and the justification of that practice is discussed in the following parts of the article that analyze the course in what concerns its goals, structure, content, and the learning activities in it – in fact, the major aspects of its underlying methodology.

## Materials and Methods

The optional humanities course “The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy,” the process of teaching it, and students’ learning in it served as the materials for our study. The principal methods were observations of the teaching/learning process and developing improvements in the contents and methodology of those teaching and learning. The elaborated improvements were then introduced into the course and tested in the teaching/learning practice. Such a continuous manner of improving that practice has been followed from the inception of the course, i.e. for nine years until this academic year 2019-2020 when the final structure of the course and the final methodology of teaching it has been arrived at, and those structure and methodology are discussed below as the results of our study.

## Results

The results of our practical study were embodied in the finally formulated goals and structure of the course and the learning activities that formed the methodology underlying it. All those are analyzed below.

### The goals, structure, and content of the course

The goals of the optional course “The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy” are to teach students: 1) the basic psychological notions and ideas concerning human teaching and learning (to help them develop their own psychological approaches to successful learning activities); 2) the basic psychological notions and ideas concerning human activities, communication, and relationship-building (to help them develop their own psychological approaches to ensuring successful activities, communication, and relationships with other people); 3) the basic pedagogical notions and ideas concerning teaching and learning that are important for students’ own successes in their university studies and their success in teaching if after graduation they become engaged in teaching activities; 4) English communication skills developed and improved by learners involuntarily through continuously practicing them while studying in the course. As it can be seen, these are the goals that make the optional course useful for students of every major taught at Alfred Nobel University: future economists and lawyers, philologists-future specialists in foreign languages, psychologists and social workers, politologists and future specialists in marketing and management. To meet these goals, the following topics were included into the course:

1. Psychology as a science and its subject, branches of psychology, and its principal modern theories
2. Psychology of thinking, consciousness and subconsciousness, psychological settings, psychology of creativity
3. Psychology of memory, retention and forgetting
4. Psychology of emotions and feelings, motivation
5. Psychology of human activities and human learning, attention, perception and imagination
6. Psychological laws of structuring one’s personal relationships with the environment and people around to attain one’s personal goals
7. Pedagogy as a science and its subject, branches of pedagogy and its principal modern theories
8. Principles of didactics
9. Organizing one’s own learning to achieve the best results.

The course is designed for one semester (the second semester of the first year of students’ university studies) with 14 two-hour lectures and 14 two-hour practical classes held in the form of seminars. A written test paper is included at the very end of the course as an end-piece to it.

The course was started in 2011-12 academic year, so that it is soon going to be the 10<sup>th</sup> year since its first introduction into the teaching practice of the university in question.

From the first days of its existence, the optional course has been quite popular with no less (sometimes more) than 40 students enrolled for it every academic year, which makes about 8% of all the students in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of their university studies. There have been no drop-outs all through the period of the course existence. The students of all majors are enrolled as a rule, except those having Psychology as their major, who do not need that particular course being engaged in a number of courses on Psychology from their first semester at the university.

### **Learning activities in the course**

As it has already been said, teaching and learning in the course is implemented in two principal organizational forms: *lectures*, or *lecture class periods*, and *practical classes* structured as *seminars*.

The principal activities in both of these forms are:

- lectures-introductions by the teacher (in lecture class periods)
- students' mini-lectures (in lecture class periods)
- students' workshop-type presentation (in lecture class periods)
- students' out-of-class online information search (before practical classes and lecture class periods)
- students' in-class pair work, brainstorming, case studies, discussions (in practical classes)
- essay writing by students (after practical classes).

### **Lectures (lecture class periods)**

The difference in designing the course from the traditional approaches starts with the lectures. The first difference is the fact that no more than one (the first) lecture in the course is delivered by the teacher only, who starts it at the beginning of the two-hour first lecture class period and finishes it with the end of that period. All the other teacher's lectures starting with the second one are not longer than half an hour or forty minutes in duration, i.e. no longer than half of the standard two academic hours (80 minutes) lecture class period. They are called *lectures-introductions* into the topics of the course or *lectures-orientations* in them. The teacher gives the students only the outlines of this or that topic, the most important information and ideas concerning it, as well as the directions for finding more detailed information, some particular facts and interpretations concerning the topic. Actually, the principal points elucidated in each of the teacher's lectures can be reduced to the basic facts and notions listed in the "The Notes of Lectures" on the course [10]. For instance, the topic *Psychology of memory, retention and forgetting* is planned for two lecture class periods of two academic hours each: 1) *Memory and its kinds* and 2) *Retention and forgetting*. The first part discussed in half an hour or forty-minute teacher's lecture focuses on the points given in the above-mentioned "Notes ..." [10, p.15]:

#### *1. Memory and its kinds*

*Memory is an ability to acquire, store and reproduce life experiences. Animals have only genetic and mechanical memories, while humans also possess voluntary, logical and intermediated memories. Memories functions are retention, storage and reproduction of information. The process opposite to retention is forgetting.*

*The kinds of memory are:*

1. *Momentary, or iconic memory (retaining the full picture of what has just been perceived during 0.1-0.5 seconds without any processing);*
2. *Short-term memory (storing information for a very short period of time – as a rule, not longer than 20 seconds – without repeating it and without conscious intention to remember it; the volume of the short-term memory is 5-9 units of information and it retains only the most important features of what has been perceived but not the full image);*
3. *Operative memory with the volume of  $7 \pm 2$  units is used to store information for its processing while solving a given task; the term of storage is determined by the task and can last from several seconds to several days (no longer); after solving the task the information is erased from the operative memory;*

4. *Long-term memory stores information for an indefinite period of time – which is the longer the more often the information is retrieved from the long-term memory and reproduced;*
5. *Genetic memory is the information stored in genotype which is transmitted and reproduced through hereditary mechanisms.*

*We can also speak about kinds of memory connected with human senses:*

1. *Visual memory,*
2. *Auditory memory,*
3. *Kinesthetic memory,*
4. *Emotional memory,*
5. *Memories of touch, smell, and taste.*

The teacher in the oral lecture, though expanding on the points above, does not go beyond them and never prolongs the lecture beyond the 40-minute limit, always giving at the end the list of sources (primarily the Internet sources in English) where students can find much more information on the topic. It should also be noted here that the second point of difference in the teacher's lectures delivered in the analyzed course from the traditional lectures is their strongly interactive nature. The teacher always intersperses the lecture being delivered with questions trying to elicit students' background knowledge on the topic under discussion. For instance, in the lecture on *Memory and its kinds* the questions the teacher asks students in the interactive lecturing process can be:

*What kinds of memory do both humans and animals have?  
Do you know any kinds of specifically human memory?  
Have you ever heard of iconic memory? What is it?, etc.*

Students ideas are listened to during the teacher's lecture, prompted, and discussed which takes a substantial part of the 30-40 minutes allocated to it not allowing the teacher to expand far beyond what is said in the "Notes ..." (see the example above).

Such an expansion is achieved in another part of every (except the first one) lecture class period in what is called students' *mini-lectures* or *workshop-type presentations* which are the third, most important, difference of lecture class periods in the course under discussion from traditional lectures.

After the class where the teacher delivers a 30-40-minute lecture-introduction on a certain topic, the next one is devoted to the in-class practice (seminar) on that topic when the students are expected to achieve an in-depth penetration into it and its thorough understanding by way of doing various learning activities that will be discussed below in the second part of this section of the article. In the class after that seminar (the next lecture class) from three to five students are expected to deliver their own mini-lectures or workshop-type presentations of 10-minute duration each. The students-presenters are either volunteers or they may be appointed by the teachers. In both cases, the decision who will be the presenter in the following lecture class is taken at the end of the preceding seminar class on the topic, with the teacher taking care that all the students with no exception prepare and deliver at least two mini-lectures while studying the course on "The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy."

The lecture class where students deliver their mini-lectures/workshop-type presentations starts with them, so that at least the first forty, sometimes fifty, minutes of the eighty-minute lecture class are allocated to such learners' lectures/presentations devoted to the topic discussed in the preceding two classes (teacher's lecture and the seminar on the previous topic). Only after the learners' mini-lectures are finished, the teacher delivers the next 30-40-minute lecture-orientation on the following topic to be further discussed in the next practical class (seminar), again to be followed by students' mini-lectures/workshop-type presentations on the new topic in the lecture class after that seminar, etc.

All the students need to do some Internet search to prepare for each one of their practical classes (seminars), the activity which will be mentioned again further since just that learning activity makes all the teaching/learning process *blended* [11], i.e. organically combining the more traditional,

teacher-fronted in-class learning tasks with out-of-class online self-instruction. But the most detailed online research on sites in English is expected to be done by students preparing their mini-lectures/workshop-type presentations. They are required to go beyond the limits of what has been discussed in the teacher's lecture and even further expand on what has been said in the seminar. Such an expansion means finding a lot of additional information on the Internet to prepare one's mini-lecture/workshop-type presentation. To make the preparation and Internet-search more focused, each of the students' mini-lectures/workshop-type presentations embraces not the entire topic but only some aspects of it. For instance, the above-mentioned topic *Memory and its kinds* is divided into five smaller sub-topics, each of them being the task-topic for one individual student's mini-lecture (making five tasks-topics for five students to prepare their mini-lectures on):

1. *Memory as an ability and differences in animal and human memory.*
2. *Momentary, or iconic, and short-term memory.*
3. *Operative memory.*
4. *Long-term memory.*
5. *Kinds of memory connected with human senses.*

In the early stages of the course the mini-lectures are just students' 10-minute presentations in which presenters elaborate on their task-topic, especially focusing on the information that is new to listeners, i.e. on those facts and data that they have researched and that had not been discussed before – either in the teacher's lecture or during the preceding practical class (seminar). What is absolutely mandatory in every student's mini-lecture is the PowerPoint presentation illustrating it so as to facilitate the perception for listeners and make the information from the mini-lecture easier to be remembered.

However, such mini-lectures where only the presenters speak occupy only about one third of the lecture classes in the course. Gradually, following the teacher's instructions, students transform them into what has been called above *workshop-type presentations*. Workshops are "a type of interactive training where participants carry out a number of training activities rather than passively listen to a lecture or presentation" [12]. In foreign language education workshops are a specific kind of peer-teaching [13] when "one or several students organize and guide some meaningful extra-linguistic activities of their group-mates, those activities being done in the target language (in this way, students' workshops implicitly become language-learning oriented)" [14, p.19]. A standard workshop in foreign language classes starts with a short presentation by the workshop-organizer giving the general outline and the basic information on the topic to be discussed in the workshop, after which the organizer gives tasks to all the students-participants and time to complete them while providing prompts and help in the process of completion. The final stage is the discussion of the results of completion with drawing conclusions on the topic being elaborated.

The workshop-type presentations are designed practically identically and they usually take longer time than simple mini-lectures (up to 15 minutes, so there are usually not more than three workshop-type presentations in one lecture class). For instance, one of such workshop-type presentations on the task-topic *Involuntary Retention* from the second part *Retention and forgetting* of the general topic *Psychology of memory, retention and forgetting* was designed by the student-organizer as consisting of three parts:

1. A five-minute organizer's introductory presentation analyzing what involuntary retention is and how it works.
2. A five-minute students' work (for completing the organizer's task) in groups of four-five participants when they share their personal experiences of retaining some information involuntarily.
3. A whole-class discussion led by the organizer to draw some definite conclusions concerning the essence and functioning of involuntary retention.

From the above description it can be seen that in their lecture class periods students are not so much taught as *self-construct* their own knowledge of the subject matter of the course through

preparing and delivering in English their own mini-lectures and workshop-type presentations and through listening to and participating in such lectures and presentations. Such *self-constructing* also happens in practical classes (seminars) analyzed below.

### ***Practical classes (seminars)***

As it has already been said, every practical class (seminar) is preceded by students' information search which is mostly done on sites in English devoted to psychological and pedagogical issues. Students' assignments are to find as much additional information as possible in comparison with what they have learned from the teacher's lecture-introduction on the topic being studied. Since doing such tasks occupies at least one third of the total time in the teaching/learning process (more than half the time of students' autonomous out-of-class work), this process becomes really *blended* with the online learning activities organically built into it. For doing their Internet research, students obtain from the teacher long lists of sites that may be useful and they also try finding additional sites themselves. That creates opportunities for different students to do their search on different sites finding there somewhat different information, so that the entire group of students collects quite a great variety of pieces of it to be shared with other learners.

This sharing takes place at the very beginning of the practical class (seminar) when students interact in small groups of 4-5 learners doing the task of summarizing all the different pieces of information that each of them has collected. At the end of such short information sharing and summarizing, small group members present their summaries to the class. All the short presentations are followed by a whole-class discussion with drawing conclusions about the main points to be learned in what concerns the topic under consideration.

The work on the theoretical aspects of the topic further develops into considering its practical aspects. The students are given a set of practical problems set first by the teacher and later by students themselves (peer-teaching) who are previously instructed and given the task to elaborate such problems for their group-mates. An example of the problem to be solved while studying the second part *Retention and forgetting* of the general topic *Psychology of memory, retention and forgetting* may be as follows:

*You need to remember this 12-digit phone number (the number is given) with its first two digits being the country code, the next three the cell-phone operator's code, and the last seven digits the number itself. What do you suggest doing to retain the number in the fastest and most efficient manner?*

The students are expected to brainstorm the problem in small groups and then to report the solution to the class. All the solutions are shortly discussed to decide which of them is the best in what concerns the effectiveness and economy of efforts. The problems to solve may be set as case-studies for students to brainstorm and discuss— a description of a practical psychological or pedagogical case that learners are expected to analyze in small groups and suggest solutions.

A small part of every practical class (seminar) is devoted to discussing the process and results of students' project work. The project is started in the first practical class and is devoted to developing and writing *A Star Student's Reference Book*. All the group is divided into several smaller groups of not more than 10 students in each of them. They are expected to prepare and write during the course on "The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy" a short reference book (no longer than 20 pages) containing some psychological and pedagogical tips to other students helping them to succeed in their university studies. Every small group discusses and decides (out-of-class) what is to be done by each of its members and, after studying every topic, they have to add new entries to their reference book. The progress is briefly reported and demonstrated (by sending the completed sections via e-mail to the teacher and other students' smartphones) at the end of every practical class. When all the small groups' projects are completed, the results are temporarily displayed for a month after the end of the course on the departmental web-page within the university's web-site for commenting and voting the best of the prepared reference books.

Every practical class (seminar) closes with students receiving a home task of writing an essay, an abstract, or a summary on the results of their project work and, in general, on the topic studied.

Students are instructed to first write the first draft of their work, then to send its electronic version to at least two other students for checking and commenting. On the basis of those comments, the final draft is expected to be written and thoroughly edited, and only this last draft can be handed in to the teacher for checking and grading. Thus, the process approach to teaching English writing [15,16] is followed in the course. Writing is also the activity in the end-piece of the course since the course is completed with students writing a lengthy, not less than 350 words, final essay on one of the course topics (the theme of the end-piece essay for every student is chosen by the teacher).

The above-given course description gives grounds for the theoretical analysis of the methodology underlying it. This analysis is theoretical providing for the reference of different aspects and features of the course to the most cutting-edge trends in modern pedagogy and foreign language teaching methods.

### Discussion of Methodology

The course under discussion is indubitably a CLIL course because it is taught and learned in English only. But unlike many other CLIL courses, where there are no other distinguishing features but the target (foreign) language of instruction, the analyzed CLIL course on “The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy” has a number of specific features that make it a thing apart from the more traditional courses taught in the first year of students’ university studies.

The first of such features is the *blended* (traditional in class activities and online out of class learning) *character* of the course. This feature has been sufficiently discussed above, so there is no need to speak further about it.

The next feature is probably even more important. From the description of learning activities in the preceding section it is clearly seen how *autonomous* students’ learning is. The course is fully based on *learning autonomy* [17,18], the learning itself being implemented in the target language (English) and the teacher playing in that learning not so much the role of an instructor as the role of a *facilitator* [19] showing the students the directions in their autonomous or even independent studies and giving them prompts, stimuli, and help in those studies.

The next feature, also easily observable from the above description of learning activities, is the experiential nature of such activities which make the entire learning in the course *experiential* [20]. *Experiential learning is based on constantly modeling the extra-linguistic activities in students’ language learning activities, so that the latter model the genuine target language communication. That quasi-genuine communication is implemented not by the means of learners’ mother tongue but by the means of their target language, and this creates opportunities for acquiring the foreign language and communication skills mostly involuntarily in the form of a by-product of modeled extra-linguistic activities and quasi-genuine target language communication.* There is no need to prove that such learning activities as mini-lectures and workshop-type presentations, brainstorming, case-studies, discussions, etc. on the psychological and pedagogical issues are extra-linguistic learning activities in which learning is achieved through learners’ *gaining experience* in those practical activities. Gaining that experience is attained by the means of target language communication which ensures opportunities for learners’ involuntary acquisition of relevant target language communication skills.

Experiential learning in the course is highly *interactive* (so it is even better to speak about not just experiential but about *experiential-interactive learning*) since all the students do practically all their experiential learning tasks in interaction with other students (see the description of the learning activities in the preceding section). The continuous interaction provides for the implementation of the *cooperative learning* [21], including its highest form, the peer-teaching, so that, interacting, students not only learn themselves, they also learn from each other and teach one another.

All these features taken together make the course on “The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy” a *constructivist* one. The constructivist approach “... may be defined as the approach providing students with opportunities of “constructing” their own knowledge and skills through practical experience in real-life or modeled activities. In this case, students acquire their knowledge and skills as a by-product of their real-life or modeled activities, thus internalizing (appropriating)

*the knowledge and skills and not just learning them*" [22, p. 13]. In the case under consideration, thanks to blended, autonomous, experiential-interactive, and cooperative learning activities, students self-construct not only their knowledge of the subject matter of the course, as it has already been mentioned in the part of the article devoted to students' mini-lectures/workshop-type presentations. Thanks to those activities being done in English, students also involuntarily (subconsciously) develop their English communication skills. This makes the course a truly CLIL one, ensuring learners' integrated development of both their knowledge of Psychology and Pedagogy and enhancing their command of the target language (English) through extended communication practice in it.

## Conclusions

Everything said in this article was supposed to substantiate the idea underlying the developed methodology of teaching English-based optional CLIL courses on humanities disciplines, those courses designed to be introduced in the first year of studies at Ukrainian universities. That idea is the assumption that such courses, to achieve their optimal efficiency, need to be *constructivist* providing for learners' integrated self-construction of subject matter content and target language communication knowledge and skills. In this case, the constructivist nature of the course can be ensured by a specific methodology making students' learning:

- a) blended,
- b) autonomous,
- c) experiential-interactive,
- d) and cooperative.

The assumption given above may be considered as proven not only by the analysis in the article but by the practical success of the optional course designed in accordance with it. The reported constructivist optional CLIL course "The Fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy" taught in English to the first-years students of different majors at Alfred Nobel University in Dnipro, Ukraine, can be considered as quite successful due to the very fact of its existence for longer than nine years during which it has always been popular among students with never a drop in enrolment figures. As it has already been mentioned in the *Introduction*, students mostly opted for the course in question because it provided them with an opportunity of continuously practicing communication in English. That means that their desire of learning some basics of Psychology and Pedagogy for further studies and future career has been only the second and subordinated motive. From this it can be concluded that students entering Ukrainian universities with the sufficient initial level of English indeed feel the need for such and similar constructivist optional CLIL courses from their first days of university studies. But even after opting for the course, students would hardly stay in it and hardly recommend it to other students of their major if they were dissatisfied with the methodology underlying the course. The fact that not a single student has left the course all through the nine years of its existence testifies to the success of the elaborated methodology in what concerns teaching students both English and the fundamentals of Psychology and Pedagogy, as well as its success in maintaining their high level of learning motivation. Therefore, it can be safely asserted that our primary objective – creating a successful methodology underlying one of the very first English-based optional CLIL courses for teaching humanities disciplines to the first year Ukrainian university students – has been successfully achieved.

However, it should be noted that, besides meeting an obvious students' requirement, considerably improving their English communication skills, and teaching them something useful for their further studies and future work irrespective of their particular majors, the elaborated and practically successful constructivist methodology for optional CLIL courses on humanities serves one more, very important, purpose. It opens *the vista for further research* in the chosen direction. Successful constructivist English-based optional CLIL courses for first and second year university students (especially when combined with content-based mandatory teaching/learning of English [22]) are probably the best preparation for the introduction in the senior years of learners' university studies of *English immersion programs* [23,24] *into courses of professional disciplines*, thereby conducting in English learners' professional training. This creates a *pyramid of English language education* at

Ukrainian universities preparing students for working in their profession not only within the country but making them ready to enter the international labor market. As a result, the constructivist optional CLIL courses on humanities designed for the first year of university studies make the foundation of such a pyramid, which emphasizes their importance for students' higher school training as a whole. But the conjecture in this, last, paragraph of the article needs to be theoretically and practically proved, which requires a thorough and prolonged further research. This is the *perspective* of our future studies.

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