

Title: Content and Language Integrated Learning for Achieving Advanced Proficiency in Third Year Russian

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Abstract:

The paper argues for the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) for teaching Third Year Russian. It suggests a concept of a textbook/course that aims at cultural and linguistic proficiency at the Low Advanced Level on the OPI scale (and in some cases at Mid and even High) while integrating history, social studies, analytical grammar, phraseology, and pragmatics in a comprehensive, coherent, and sustainable manner. This approach follows the notion that Content Based Instruction (CBI) is essentially identical to CLIL and differs only in quantitative proportion of teaching content in the target language to language as such (Cristopher 1996; Euridice 2006; Coyle, Hoode, & Marsh 2010; Cenoz 2015). As distinct from many existing materials for advanced Russian, it fully integrates language and culture in one continuous course without compromising either of the two. Teaching grammar, vocab, phraseology, and syntax provides the “scaffolding for content” (Stryker & Leaver 1997); however, the reverse is also true since contents embodies grammar, sustains its use, and, in so doing, synthesizes structure with pragmatics. The course pushes the learner from the level of surviving in social settings to the level of surviving in “academic areas” (Echervarria & Graves 2000) and, more broadly, to developing critical thinking skills in the target language (Kasper 2000). The paper addresses the question of balancing the need for “sheltered content” adapted to the levels just above the learners’ current proficiency levels (Krashen 1982) with the authentic and intellectually challenging content appropriate to educated native speakers of the language. Moreover, it continues the discussion of the issue of credibility of language teachers in subject matters taught in L2 (Richards & Rodgers 2001) as well as the role of engaging and sophisticated content in CBI.