

**THE MAIN SOCIAL ROLES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN RUSSIA IN  
THEIR CONNECTION WITH CLIL UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND  
CLASSROOM INTERACTION**

**OS PRINCIPAIS PAPÉIS SOCIAIS DA LÍNGUA INGLESA NA RÚSSIA EM  
CONEXÃO COM O ENSINO UNIVERSITÁRIO DO CLIL E A INTERAÇÃO  
EM SALA DE AULA**

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*Processo de Avaliação: Double Blind Review*

Maria Pavenkova Rubtcova<sup>1</sup>

Doctor of Sociological Sciences

Faculty of Sociology, Saint Petersburg State University

Associate Professor in the Department of Social Management and Planning

Oleg Pavenkov<sup>2</sup>

Doctor in Philosophy

Saint Petersburg Institute of Film and Television

Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media Communications

**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the main social roles of English language in Russia in their connection with CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) university teaching and classroom interaction. Data comes from two-stage expert research with CLIL and ESL university teachers (N = 33). They were asked about the social roles of English language in nowadays Russian universities and the preferable conception for future development of CLIL university program. Four conceptions were chosen by experts: Global English, Russian English, multilingual conception and English as an investment. The features of each concept were identified and discussed in terms of their influence on

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<sup>1</sup> Autor para correspondência: Department of Social Management and Planning, St Petersburg State University, 2 Smolny street, St Petersburg, 191124, Russian Federation. Telephone and fax numbers: +79817601869. m.rubtsova@spbu.ru

<sup>2</sup> E-mail: oleg.pavenkov@gmail.com

the process of CLIL education. The «conceptions-leaders» were determined by ranking. They are Russian English and Multilingual conception. Despite the fact that the concept of Russian English is considered appropriate at the present time, future preferences are associated with the concept of multilingualism.

**Keyword:** CLIL university education; social roles of the English language; multilingualism; World Englishes; Russia

## RESUMO

Este estudo investigou os principais papéis sociais da língua inglesa na Rússia em sua conexão com o ensino universitário CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) e a interação em sala de aula. Os dados provêm de dois perfis de investigação especializada com CLIL e professores universitários ESL (N = 33). Eles foram questionados sobre os papéis sociais da língua inglesa nas universidades russas atuais e a concepção preferível para o desenvolvimento futuro do programa universitário CLIL. Quatro concepções foram escolhidas por especialistas: inglês mundial, inglês russo, concepção multilingue e inglês como investimento. As características de cada conceito foram identificadas e discutidas em termos de sua influência sobre o processo de educação CLIL. As “concepções-líderes” foram determinadas por ranking. São elas: inglês russo e concepção multilingual. Apesar do fato de que o conceito de inglês russo é considerado apropriado na atualidade, as preferências futuras estão associadas ao conceito de multilinguismo.

**Palavra-chave:** CLIL; educação universitária; papéis sociais da língua inglesa; multilinguismo; inglês mundial; Rússia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we will explore the main social roles of English language in Russian society in their connection with CLIL university teaching. Despite the many contradictions inside and outside of the scientific community (Rubtsova & Martianova, 2014; Rubtcova, 2015), some Russians universities support the idea of using English as one of the working university languages (SPbGU, 2016; HSE, 2016).



The Russian government expects from education in English a growth of economic well-being. On this way, English has a competition with Asian languages, primarily with Chinese. Ministry of Education has decided to include a second foreign language in the secondary school program and informally recommend Chinese as the second foreign language (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2016). From this point of view, we need to return to the discussion about the main social roles of English language and the possibility of using CLIL conceptions in the Russian high (tertiary) education.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is one of the main educational parameters in Europe during the last ten years and deal with the linguistic status of English firstly as an additional language, then as the main language of instructions (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013; Dafouz & Guerrini, 2009; Fortanet-Gómez's, 2013). The first ideas of CLIL were humanistic and multicultural. The CLIL supporters think that the aim of the CLIL curriculum is to arouse curiosity and tolerance to foreign cultures and to encourage pupils to know them better. At the same time, teachers were obliged to highlight and name the paths that link different school subjects in their syllabuses i.e. to show during which lesson they are going to teach other subject content (Luczywek, 2009). However, if only English is the preferred language in CLIL curriculum so students can study only Anglo-Saxon culture. Some attempts of World Englishes conception (Kachru, 1986; Halliday, 2003; Proshina, 2006; 2014) to discuss this question are not popular in CLIL scientific group.

The Russian CLIL implementation experience also has some contradiction. From one side, English is a popular language. It is easy to find many examples of its influence in areas related to commerce and popular culture from music and films to names of shops and job titles (see e.g. Rivlina, 2015). In Russian education, English is predominant as the main foreign language at secondary schools and universities throughout all-Russian regions. English has a political support from the Russian government (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2016). In result, it has affected many areas of Russian economic and social life.

However, in contrast to the European experience, English has not a teachers' support as the medium of instruction. Not all teachers entering state schools and universities met the requirements regarding the competence of a second language. Russia still faced with a lack of qualified teachers that fit CLIL tasks (Rubtcova, 2015). There were some



differences in teachers methods. The growing mobility of the Russian population has had its impact on foreign language teaching. Whereas the Soviet grammar-translation method laid a solid basis for those engaged in writing and reading skills, it turned out to be insufficient to satisfy the need for adequate spoken skills, which is why the focus on teaching formal language rules and practising translation exercises shifted to a focus on communicative skills. This idea had no full realization and some Russian linguists evaluate new method as «pidginisation» (Safonova, 2000). However, pidginisation can be everywhere (Sokolova, 2015) and it is not a feature of Russia per se.

With English as the lingua franca in business, economics and science, Russian government have given special attention to the teaching of English language. Its international importance has led to the introduction of CLIL, bilingual education with English as the language of instruction for a number of non-language university subjects such as economics, social science and management, but also Public Administration (HSE, 2016). However, at the same time there is another political process. Many social groups and some political parties announced the salvation of the Russian language as one of the main objectives of the activity. They conducted round tables and conferences, including round tables in the Kremlin, dedicated to improving the quality of teaching of the Russian language (see e.g. Yarovaya, 2015). Education in the English language does not correspond to that mainstream. In result, the scientific communities with big differences in ideological traditions are involved in this process.

In our preliminary studies on the implementation of CLIL programmes in Russia, we faced serious resistance from professors (Rubtcova, 2015). They noted several problems including the idea of untranslatability of Russian concepts into English, loss of significant contexts and development of the foreign culture to the detriment of the Russian. It was assumed that students wouldn't be able to use Russian fundamental science in a foreign language, and foreign concepts without serious analysis being perceived superficially (Ibid). Russian linguists Kogut (2014) and Proshina (2006; 2014) have shown that the Russian academic genres, both written and oral, are considerably different from the English.

In spite of the government's decision to introduce "Western standards", we began to seek for what the concept of English language spread could find support, or at least, would be faced with less resistance of professors. The fact is that in the Russian society, the professors and university scientists perform the function of the experts. We need



their expert opinion in order to gain an insight into the background of Russian CLIL and the factors that make this type of learning successful or not. The aim of our research is to collect data on opinion of experts – different ESL/CLIL university teachers – about their visions on social roles of English language, preferable conception of education in English and methodology of CLIL lessons/lectures/courses, with a view to contribute to the future development of this type of bilingual learning in Russia.

The objective of our research is the following: *based on expert opinion explain the social roles of English language in Russia in their connection with CLIL university education and classroom interaction and to find preferable conception for future development.*

## **2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

In our small-scale research, we refer to expert opinion as an essential part of decision-making process. The small-scale research addressed the following questions:

*What are the social roles of English language in the nowadays Russian universities in their connection with the process CLIL university education and classroom interaction?  
What conception is preferable for future development?*

The research was carried out in January 2016 in St. Petersburg. Data was collected using two interviews: in-deep semi-structural interviews (the first interview) and formalized interviews with the same informants (the second interview). Two interviews was needed because in accordance with our objective we should describe the main conceptions and find the preferable one. According to the sociological methodology (Yadov, 2003) in-deep semi-structural interview is the best tool to find new ideas, but formalized interview is better for ranking. That is also why we needed two interviews.

For the selection of the experts, we addressed to CLIL literature and conceptions that put emphasis on collaboration between CLIL and ESL teachers on bilingual university program (e.g. Dafouz & Guerrini, 2009; Dafouz, Llinares & Morton, 2010; Dafouz & Smit, 2014). The sample method used was the snowball technique. In result we found thirty-three experts including eighteen CLIL/EMI university teachers from the field of social sciences and fifteen ESL/EFL/EAP university teachers (the list of them is presented in Appendix 1). All of them participated in both interviews.



### **3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

All studies were conducted according to the Professional Ethical Code of Sociologists by the Russian Society of Sociologists (RSS). It means that according to requirements of anonymity, the signed Participant Consent Agreement cannot be asked for.

All participants were asked to participate in the study and informed about the objectives of the research. Participation was consented by participants. They were assured of the anonymity of their responses through the use of pseudonyms to report the results and were guaranteed the confidentiality of collecting data. They allowed the use of data for research purposes.

### **4. RESULTS**

In line with our objective in this section, we present the results of our study of the main social roles of English language in their connection with the conception of CLIL university teaching in Russian universities using data which was collected through our research.

We have not asked experts to evaluate the social roles of the English language in the Russian society neither to select a conception that has been eligible. In the first in-deep semi-structured interview the experts found four conceptions for the building of bilingual program, which are the following:

- 1) political conception (Global English with the priority/domination of English native-speakers and people with fluent English, creation of global people – the actors of global market under democratic ideology);
- 2) cultural conception (Russian English as one of World Englishes);
- 3) multicultural conception (many languages in the curriculum, English is not the only one and maybe not the main);
- 4) economic conception (education in English as an investment with a financial effect, the profit should be proved).

In our in-deep interviews we discussed with the experts what are the links between the conception, the aim of CLIL education, the image of relevant CLIL teacher, the

character of ESL&CLIL teachers' interaction and the character of interaction in CLIL classroom. Experts can express different opinions and ideas about the conceptions when they are considered separately. The idea of global English and English as a working language (multicultural concept) were often together and they are hardly distinguishable. However, experts could formulate clear viewpoint, when the four concepts were considered together with all features. In Table 1 we have reflected the view that can be taken from most the total responses.



Table 1. The links between the conception, the aim of CLIL education, the image of relevant CLIL teacher, the character of ESL&CLIL teachers' interaction and the character of interaction in CLIL classroom.

<i>Conception</i>	<i>The aim of CLIL education</i>	<i>The image of the main teacher</i>	<i>The character of ESL&amp;CLIL teachers' interaction</i>	<i>The character of interaction in CLIL classroom</i>	<i>Frequency of use</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Global English</i>	Students can work in international (mostly West) business inside or outside Russia.	The ESL teachers with education in the field of Social Sciences and Economics are preferable. However, the ideal is the English native-speaker professional with good knowledge of a specific subject.	ESL teachers can recommend CLIL teacher to dismiss and replace by another. There is greater control over the level of English proficiency of students. NS teachers do not need interaction, as they combine both – CLIL and ESL skills.	High-quality control of both language and subject matters in the subject class. Students communicate only in English. At home they continue to communicate in English through social media (VKontakte) and during break with friends. All skills should be well developed, but priority is given to oral interaction. Students have a lot of business games and discussions in the classroom, studying and discuss cases.	This is an elite education and it is a very rare phenomenon.
<i>Russian English</i>	Students can work in Russia, however they can be successful in Russian-Asian and Russian-East European communication.	The CLIL teachers with some education in the field of Language and Linguistics are preferable. The idea of domination of the English native-speaker is not accepted, however NS teachers can find work as good teachers of the subject without emphasis being they NS or not.	CLIL teachers want to have some control over ESL program in order to include the professional and subject tasks in it. ESL teachers are waiting for ideological defence against NS, since perceiving them (NS) as dangerous competitors. The relationship between CLIL and ESL teachers are good, but both acknowledge that the level of English is not enough for both (CLIL and ESL).	CLIL teachers have no big concern and control of language skills in the subject of the class. As a rule, they have a focus on lexicon and writing on students. The most similar to CLIL happens in ESL classes when CLIL teachers control content and ESL teachers control English during the classroom interaction.	Wide spread practice, but it does not have any discussion and analysis. It is latent to some extent.



<i>Multicultural conception</i>	Students can live and work in multilingual society.	The image of an ideal teacher has not yet formed. It is expected that he/she will know more than one language or at least special terminology in multiple languages. It is rather a subject teacher, not a language teacher.	Since the idea of making education more Multilingual has been initiated by the Ministry of Education recently, the mechanism of interaction between a teacher of subject and a teacher of language has not yet been formed. It is expected that ESL teachers will interact with teachers of other languages, and together create some multilingual educational materials. CLIL teacher can use them with their own materials.	There is a small practice, which shows that this interaction takes place in Russian with switching to other languages and commentary in several languages. In this case, more electronic presentations are used. The lesson has a focus on the study of professional terminology and the ability to read and translate into Russian. Oral discussions in foreign language are held in English. Knowledge of the third language is usually insufficient for discussion.	This model has just appeared.
<i>English as an investment</i>	CLIL education should promote the growth of the student's income. The choice of a foreign language by means of economic calculation of optimal choice (usually based on microeconomic models)	The student selects a language and teachers based on economic calculation. Typically, a student is guided by business requirements.	ESL& CLIL teachers' interaction depends on the choice of a student.	Depends on the choice of a student. In the process of classroom interaction, the student will receive only those skills that he/she needs as a good investment.	This model is generally common in private practice. Private teachers fully focused on the students' problems. However, in the case of a model English as an investment, the prove of cost-effectiveness study of the English language should be more detailed, while many Russians learn English without this calculation under crowd influence.

The main differences in the experts' responses were in the discussion about the conceptions of Russian English and English as an investment. In this study, four from 33 experts refused to include the concept of Russian-English, saying that it does not exist. They all were ESL teachers. Two experts rejected the concept of English as an investment, arguing that, in accordance with the science about language («Yazykoznaniye»), language is a cultural phenomenon, not an investment.

In the formalised interview, the experts ranked a priority of these conceptions (the second interview with all experts). The first place has the most preferable conception for creating/support a CLIL programme in the field of university social sciences (see Table 2).



Table 2 The most preferable conceptions of social roles of English for creating/support a CLIL programme in the field of Russian university social sciences.

<i>№</i>	<i>CLIL/ESL</i>	<i>The base education (the first university education)</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Priority</i>
1	CLIL	Economics	Associate Professor	1432
2	CLIL	Economics	Associate Professor	4132
3	CLIL	Economics	Professor	4213
4	CLIL	History	Associate Professor	2341
5	CLIL	History	Professor	2431
6	CLIL	Management	Senior Lecturer	4231
7	CLIL	Management	Associate Professor	4312
8	CLIL	Philosophy	Associate Professor	2341
9	CLIL	Philosophy	Professor	2314
10	CLIL	Philosophy	Professor	2341
11	CLIL	Politolgy (Politics Sciences)	Senior Lecturer	4312
12	CLIL	Politolgy (Politics Sciences)	Junior research fellow	1342
13	CLIL	Politolgy (Politics Sciences)	Associate Professor	2341
14	CLIL	Psychology	Senior research fellow	3214
15	CLIL	Sociology	Associate Professor	1324
16	CLIL	Sociology	Associate Professor	2341
17	CLIL	Sociology	Associate Professor	2341
18	CLIL	Sociology	Professor	4321
19	ESL	Linguistics	Senior Lecturer	1234
20	ESL	Linguistics	Associate Professor	1234
21	ESL	Linguistics	Associate Professor	3214
22	ESL	Linguistics	Associate Professor	1243
23	ESL	Linguistics	Associate Professor	1342
24	ESL	Pedagogics	Associate Professor	2341
25	ESL	Pedagogics	Professor	2314
26	ESL	Pedagogics (Chemistry in English)	Associate Professor	3241
27	ESL	Pedagogics (Chemistry in English)	Professor	3241
28	ESL	Philology	Senior Lecturer	3214
29	ESL	Philology	Associate Professor	1243
30	ESL	Philology	Associate Professor	3214
31	ESL	Philology	Professor	3214
32	ESL	Philology	Professor	3214
33	ESL	Philology	Professor	2341

Scale of ranks was distributed by the same experts, as shown below:

- Rank 1: +50%
- Rank 2: +25%
- Rank 3: +15%
- Rank 4: +10%

Total 100%

As an outcome, we have the following results of ranking (see Tables 3, 4):

Table 3. The results of ranking of conceptions.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Conception 1 (Global English, English is the main)	33	121,6667	16,56741	2,88402
Conception 2 (Russian English- Russian variation of English)	33	130,1515	15,23179	2,65152
Conception 3 (Multiculturalism: English among others)	33	127,8788	13,69479	2,38396
Conception 4 (English as an investment)	33	120,3030	14,68095	2,55563

Table 4. The results of ranking of conceptions (Statistical significance of differences).

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Conception 1	42,187	32	,000	121,66667	115,7921	127,5412
Conception 2	49,086	32	,000	130,15152	124,7506	135,5525
Conception 3	53,641	32	,000	127,87879	123,0228	132,7348
Conception 4	47,074	32	,000	120,30303	115,0974	125,5087

We can see that the concept of Russian English suddenly has the first place. Multiculturalism has the second place. The concept of global English and English as an investment have last position with quite big gap.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

During the current conflict between Russia and the West, there are many concerns associated with the fate of Russian and spread of the English language. We can confirm that all informants have serious concerns about the use of English language in the education system in Russia.

Regarding the objective, the experts have chosen main conceptions that present the social roles of English and can be a framework for CLIL education. It gives answer to our first research question: *What are the social roles of English language in the nowadays Russian universities in their connection with the process CLIL university education and classroom interaction?*

According to results, the following social roles of the English language and conception of CLIL teaching and classroom interaction can be acceptable in Russia (in order of preference):

1) **Russian English** is a new conception with some internal contradictions because it can be considered as the English language with typical Russian errors («mistaken English») or as one of World Englishes with its own rights. Russian English can be

studied in detail (that may eventually reduce the number of errors) and rebuilt in the variation of World Englishes aimed to international communication service with Russians. The main political objective of the conception is to reduce the dominance of the English native speakers and their priority with the attempt to separate International English language from Anglo-Saxon culture. This conception is officially unpopular (especially ESL teachers officially dislike it) however it has quite wide spread and is the «mirror» of real practice. It has own features in organisation of CLIL interactions: subjects knowledge (and so CLIL teacher) is the main in ESL/CLIL teachers interactions. ESL teachers ask some advises about how to improve professional lexicon in ESL courses. The last practice is the organization of the common evaluation of students' skills based on ESL classes. Therefore, the main focus is not on CLIL but on ESL classroom interaction in order to make it more relevant to CLIL. Subject CLIL courses are unmanageable for ESL teachers; however, CLIL teachers can have some concern about reading/translating/writing students' skills (not oral). That's why interaction has focus on discussing around scientific papers in English with future result in written papers (essay, final work, project of an article in English, translating to Russian). At the same time, these students' papers are written according to Russian, not English academic style and can give nothing for understanding of English style.

2) **English as one of the working languages** of multilingual and multicultural society among many others with the same rights. The main political objective of the concept is to reduce the dominance of the English native speakers and their priority with the attempt to reduce using English and open doors for many working languages. This concept seems to be very attractive, but not very realistic. Experts have mentioned Chinese as the second required language, but none of them know the Chinese language. Since the practice is still very fragmented, experts tend to consider this concept as a guide to the future. It was named only one feature – the greater use of technology, electronic translators, distance education and new technologies, such as virtual reality for the organization of the multicultural dialogue.

3) **English as the main Global language** with the attempt to improve fluent English to the native-speaker level. Experts evaluate it as elite and as quite a utopian concept that reflects the dream of humankind of one common language and serves the interests of the global business that may not be interested in the differences in the labor force. As a result, it was suggested to leave it for the education of diplomats and business elite.



Description of the lesson methodology reminds CLIL in Europe, but with more stringent requirements for the content of the subject.

4) **English as an investment** that should be assessed as an ordinary investment in financial instruments. It is a new attempt to separate English language from Anglo-Saxon culture and any other culture and to fit it into a financial model. The idea of experts is that the investments in English should bring more profit than for example in Chinese. Otherwise, Chinese should be selected for an investment. In spite of the general unpopularity, this conception has received tremendous support among CLIL teachers with basic economic and management education. Four from five experts gave it the first rank and one – the second rank.

About the second research question «*What conception is preferable for future development?*» we could not get clear answer.

According to experts, the Russian English conception is preferable right now, but not *for the future*. This conception is highly stigmatized and it is regarded as a "false path", "the way of losers". Very few experts are inspired by the idea to build a Russian variation of English as one of the world Englishes. Despite its overall victory, only 11 of the 33 experts gave it the first rank. When they discussed it in the first interview many experts stressed that this is what we can do, but it's not something that should be done.

The main alternative for Russian English is the Multilingual conception that fit English as a working language among others. It began to receive the government support in recent years. However, experts do not understand how to implement it in practice. They expressed hope for the development of high technologies, which will help make it more real. If they are right, we need to be prepared to working in distance, in virtual reality labs and find a new way of classroom interaction in distance.

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## Appendix 1.

### The list of experts

<i>Nº</i>	<i>CLIL/ESL</i>	<i>The base education (the first university education)</i>	<i>Position</i>
1	CLIL	Economics	Associate Professor
2	CLIL	Economics	Associate Professor
3	CLIL	Economics	Professor
4	CLIL	History	Associate Professor
5	CLIL	History	Professor
6	CLIL	Management	Senior Lecturer
7	CLIL	Management	Associate Professor
8	CLIL	Philosophy	Associate Professor
9	CLIL	Philosophy	Professor
10	CLIL	Philosophy	Professor
11	CLIL	Politology (Politics Sciences)	Senior Lecturer
12	CLIL	Politology (Politics Sciences)	Junior research fellow
13	CLIL	Politology (Politics Sciences)	Associate Professor
14	CLIL	Psychology	Senior research fellow
15	CLIL	Sociology	Associate Professor
16	CLIL	Sociology	Associate Professor
17	CLIL	Sociology	Associate Professor
18	CLIL	Sociology	Professor
19	ESL	Linguistics	Senior Lecturer
20	ESL	Linguistics	Associate Professor
21	ESL	Linguistics	Associate Professor
22	ESL	Linguistics	Associate Professor
23	ESL	Linguistics	Associate Professor
24	ESL	Pedagogics	Associate Professor
25	ESL	Pedagogics	Professor
26	ESL	Pedagogics (Chemistry in English)	Associate Professor
27	ESL	Pedagogics (Chemistry in English)	Professor
28	ESL	Philology	Senior Lecturer
29	ESL	Philology	Associate Professor
30	ESL	Philology	Associate Professor
31	ESL	Philology	Professor
32	ESL	Philology	Professor
33	ESL	Philology	Professor