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**Multimodal CLIL approaches in teaching Canadian literature:
enhancing language and literary competence**

This article investigates the integration of multimodal strategies into a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) framework for teaching Canadian Literature in Ukrainian higher educational institutions. The study addresses a gap in current research by exploring how multimodal approaches – combining visual, auditory, textual, and digital elements – can support both language acquisition and literary engagement among university students. Canadian literature, with its focus on themes of identity, cultural hybridity, and migration, offers rich potential for such interdisciplinary and language-sensitive instruction.

The aim of the study is to analyze theoretical and methodological foundations for implementing multimodal CLIL pedagogy in literature classrooms. To achieve this, the research employs methods of content analysis, generalization, and systematization, focusing on contemporary scholarship in linguistics, semiotics, and education with the particular attention to the concept of scaffolding as a core principle of CLIL methodology.

Findings suggest that multimodal strategies serve as effective scaffolding tools in CLIL environments, enabling students to access and interpret complex literary texts more effectively. These strategies enhance language competence, support comprehension, and foster critical cultural awareness. The study proposes a model for integrating multimodal resources – such as visual modes (infographics, videos and interactive digital tools) – into the teaching of Canadian Literature in Ukrainian higher educational institutions. Observation shows that using infographics and videos supplements students' understanding of socio-cultural environment of the events as well as enhances language competence and the ability to analyze literary output. Interactive digital tools like creating a book trailer facilitates students' understanding of the problems raised by the author, develops their critical thinking and the ability to pass judgement, which aims at developing literary competence.

The article concludes by outlining practical implications for curriculum design and offering directions for future research on multimodal CLIL practices in literature education.

Keywords: CLIL, scaffolding, multimodality, Canadian Literature, visual, audial scaffolding.

Introduction. In recent years, the integration of language learning with subject matter instruction has gained prominence in higher education, particularly through approaches like the Content and Language Integrated Learning. CLIL is characterized by its dual-focused methodology, aiming to teach both content and language simultaneously, thereby enriching students' learning experiences and outcomes (Coyle, 2007: 545). This pedagogical strategy has been widely adopted across university curricula, including literature studies, to enhance linguistic proficiency while deepening subject matter understanding.

Concurrently, the evolution of digital technologies has accelerated the development of multimodal learning environments, where information is conveyed through diverse modes such as visuals, audio, text, gestures, and digital media. Scholars such as Kress and van Leeuwen (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001: 20) and Jewitt (Jewitt, 2008: 247) argue that meaning-making today is inherently multimodal, requiring educators to integrate

multiple semiotic resources into their teaching. Within CLIL settings, multimodality has been shown to support cognitive processing, improve language acquisition, and foster engagement (Llinares & Morton, 2017: 65; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012: 311). However, the intersection of multimodal pedagogy and CLIL in literary education – especially Canadian Literature – remains underexplored. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating how multimodal CLIL approaches can be applied to enhance both linguistic competence and cultural literacy in higher education.

Aim and tasks. The **aim** of this study is to explore the potential of multimodal CLIL approaches in the teaching of Canadian Literature within the Ukrainian higher education contexts. It seeks to determine how multimodal strategies – integrating textual, visual, auditory, and digital resources – can enhance both the linguistic development of Ukrainian Bachelor students and their literary and cultural understanding of Canadian texts.

To achieve this aim, the following research tasks were identified: first, to define and contextualize key theoretical concepts related to multimodality and CLIL pedagogy, with specific reference to their application in literature education; and second, to design a model of multimodal CLIL-based instruction for Canadian Literature, incorporating a range of multimodal resources and tasks aimed at fostering both language and content mastery.

Material and Methods. This study is grounded in a qualitative research design aimed at investigating how multimodal CLIL approaches can be effectively employed in the teaching of Canadian Literature (particularly Lisa Grekul's novel "Kalyna's Song") in higher education. The research methodology draws on several interrelated methods to analyze theoretical perspectives, identify pedagogical patterns, and propose practical applications. These include: (1) the method of content analysis, used to examine scholarly literature on multimodality, CLIL pedagogy, and Canadian Literary studies published over the past 15 years; (2) the method of generalization, applied to synthesize findings from different sources, allowing for the extraction of overarching principles and best practices relevant to multimodal CLIL instruction; and (3) the method of systematization, which supports the development of a structured instructional model tailored to the teaching of Canadian Literature through multimodal CLIL. This involved organizing selected multimodal resources (visual, auditory, and digital) and linking them to specific learning outcomes, both linguistic and literary.

Though primarily theoretical in nature, the study also proposes a pedagogical model designed for practical classroom application, laying the groundwork for future empirical research and classroom-based experimentation.

Research Findings. Teaching Canadian Literature to Ukrainian Bachelor students within a CLIL framework presents a unique opportunity to merge language development with deep literary and cultural engagement. Canadian texts, which often explore themes of identity, migration, indigeneity, and multiculturalism, serve not only as literary content but also as authentic linguistic and cultural input for language learners.

A foundational principle of CLIL is **scaffolding** – the provision of structured, temporary support to help learners progress in both content understanding and language use. Scaffolding enables students to access complex texts and ideas that might otherwise be beyond their current linguistic proficiency. In the context of literature teaching, this includes support in interpreting metaphors, cultural references, narrative voice, and literary structure. Effective scaffolding often relies on the integration of multimodal resources that reinforce and extend meaning.

Contemporary communication is increasingly shaped by the simultaneous use of multiple semiotic modes – linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial, and gestural – each contributing uniquely to the construction of meaning. This shift from language-only models to multimodal approaches reflects a broader understanding of how people transmit and interpret information in both social and educational contexts. Meaning is no longer conveyed exclusively through verbal language but is distributed across various semiotic resources (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001: 21). This dynamic interplay of modalities forms the foundation of what is widely referred to as **multimodality**.

From a semiotic perspective, multimodality involves the integration of distinct communicative channels within a single act of meaning-making. It encompasses semiotic systems such as language, image, movement, and gesture, all of which interact to convey nuanced information. Kress and van Leeuwen (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001: 20) define multimodality as "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a communicative artifact or event." Jewitt (Jewitt, 2009: 14) emphasizes that "communication and representation are more than about language," highlighting the importance of image, movement, and layout, while Bateman (Bateman, 2008: 7) adds that multimodality involves the ways in which different semiotic

modes – language, images, layout, typography – combine to produce meaning in complex texts. Ukrainian scholars echo this view, highlighting that social interaction is increasingly mediated through multimodal texts – valuable communicative spaces for encoding and decoding layered meaning (Kovalenko, 2024: 47; Zhabotynska, 2024: 86).

In pedagogical terms, multimodality is recognized as a powerful tool to enhance student engagement, support differentiated learning, and develop critical literacy skills. Bezemer and Kress (Bezemer and Kress, 2008: 174) describe multimodal classrooms as environments where various representational resources – such as visuals, text, movement, and digital tools – are actively integrated into instruction. Walsh (Walsh, 2010: 24) defines **multimodal pedagogy** as the strategic use of combined modes – spoken, written, visual, and digital – to deepen comprehension and participation. Likewise, Serafini (Serafini, 2014: 12) views multimodal literacy as the ability to interpret and produce meaning across multiple formats, a competence increasingly essential in today's media-saturated world.

These principles align with the 4Cs Framework of CLIL (Coyle, 1999), which includes Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. In this model, *Content* refers to disciplinary knowledge such as literary analysis; *Communication* involves language use, which multimodal tools can enhance through diverse forms of expression (Mayer, 2005: 32); *Cognition* encompasses thinking skills supported by multisensory engagement (Moreno & Mayer, 2007: 310); and *Culture* highlights the exploration of perspectives and identities – particularly relevant in Canadian Literature's multicultural narratives.

Numerous studies confirm the cognitive and linguistic benefits of multimodal learning. Fadel and Lemke (Fadel and Lemke, 2008: 3) note that engaging multiple sensory channels improves comprehension and memory. Mayer (Mayer, 2009: 547) demonstrates that combining visual and auditory inputs leads to more effective retention than unimodal approaches. In the context of CLIL, Lob (Lob, 2024) emphasizes that multimodal assessment provides a more nuanced picture of student learning. Paivio (Paivio, 2007: 115) adds that multimodal strategies enhance vocabulary and pragmatic skills through contextualized input. Gardner (Gardner, 2006: 49) further suggests that multimodal teaching caters to diverse learning styles, increasing motivation and overall engagement in literary analysis.

Applied to CLIL, these strategies serve as powerful **scaffolding tools**, helping learners decode complex literary content and express nuanced interpretations. In the context of Canadian Literature, they are particularly valuable in making culturally rich texts accessible to second-language learners.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the following section outlines specific multimodal techniques and classroom practices for teaching Canadian literary works in a CLIL environment.

The course "Cognitive Reading (on the material of modern Canadian literature)" is designed for Ukrainian Bachelor students to be immersed in the literary processes of Canadian literature of the XXI century. The outcome of the course is students' ability to read and interpret Canadian literary texts in English; identify cultural, historic, and social contexts of novels under study; engage in discussion in English about literary works and literary heritage of writers; perform various types of tasks (individual, group, interactive using modern technology). One of the modules of the course invites Bachelor students to study the novel "Kalyna's Song" by a contemporary Canadian writer Lisa Grekul. In her novel, this writer brings forth "the assimilationist behavior of third generation immigrant children who lament that all traces of the homeland, the home culture, or language are lost" (Gunew, 2004: 134) in the new multicultural Canadian environment.

Ukrainian Bachelor students face a number of challenges in the process of reading, interpreting, and discussing the major issues of this novel. To help students decode literary content and language nuances related to the novel under study, various multimodal strategies can be used. These strategies aim to widen students' outlook about the writer, enhancing their understanding of the complex socio-cultural environment populated by numerous ethnicities (Ukrainian among them), exposing them to some historical episodes from Ukrainian history which reveal the immigration of Ukrainians to Canada.

The multimodal strategies employed within the course are represented by visual modes, particularly infographics, videos, and interactive digital tools. **Infographics** are effective at clarifying historical contexts, literary themes, key issues, and character relationships. Firstly, for more detailed information about the historical context of the Ukrainian immigration to Canada, students are asked to watch the video, and to complete a table on several generations of Ukrainian immigrants living in Canada and the reasons for their migration. They are provided with pre-watching watching task which is given in Figure 1.

Watch the video and complete the table according to the following criteria:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5tJYMEwdsE>

- social status of Ukrainian immigrants of each generation
- dates of immigration wave
- reasons of immigration
- social position upon arrival to Canada

Figure 1. Pre-watching task

After watching the video, Bachelor students are ready to fill in a table on dates, reasons, social status and position of immigrants in Canada upon arrival. Example of the table is provided in Figure 2.

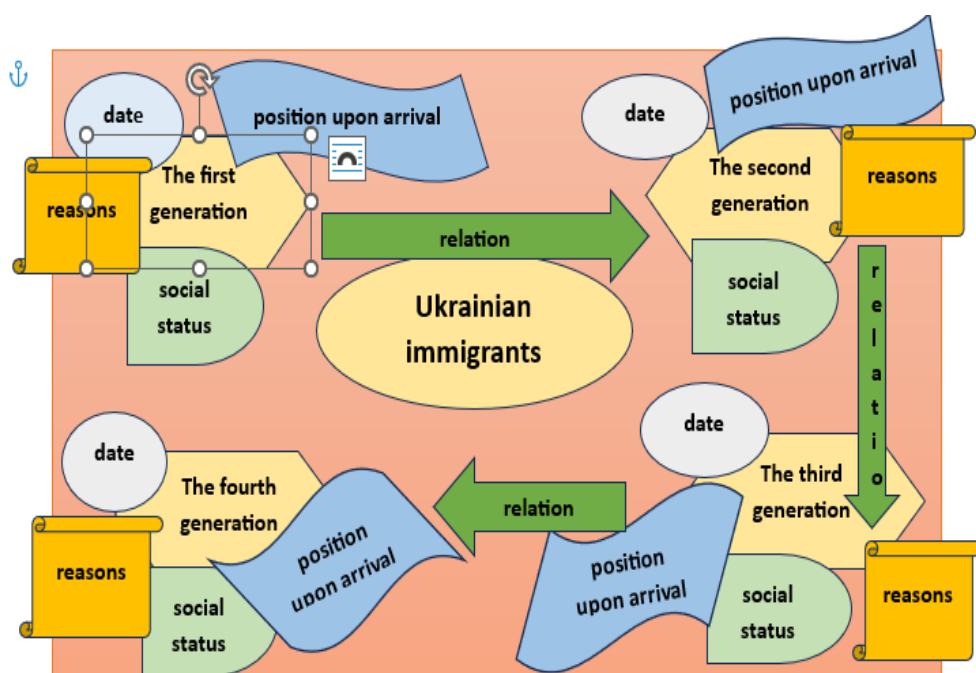


Figure 2. Peculiarities of Ukrainian Immigration to Canada

After completing the table, students receive the task to discuss, with the partners, the peculiarities of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. These episodes are of significant importance to students, as they are generally overlooked in history books. Secondly, students get the assignment to prepare a report on Lisa Grekul, following the plan that includes: biography, educational background, literary achievements, genres of writing, and a classroom presentation. Students learn that this contemporary Canadian writer has Ukrainian roots, worked as a musician, attended school in Swaziland (this location is mentioned in her novel "Kalyna's Song"), received creative awards, and currently is teaching in the English department of the University of British Columbia. In her books, she gives an insight into the life of Ukrainian immigrants living in Canada for several generations and highlights the processes of assimilation and adaptation to new socio-cultural environments. At this stage, students are asked to watch an interview with Lisa Grekul, in which she explains the role of literature in shaping Canadian culture. An example of this task is given in Figure 3.

Watch the interview with Lisa Grekul and answer the questions:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJd4AO-iPv0>

- *How can literature enhance our understanding of immigrants?*
- *What can Canadian literature teach us about the nation's past?*
- *What topics and ideas were unfolded by Canadian writers we should be particularly attentive to?*
- *How does Lisa Grekul understand the term 'multiculturalism'?*

Figure 3. Interview with Lisa Grekul

At this stage Ukrainian Bachelor students are ready to begin reading the novel "Kalyna's Song", which is divided into several sections, each accompanied by pre-reading scaffolding techniques to reduce linguistic challenges. An example of a scaffolding prompt is provided in Figure 4.

Translate the following words and phrases, give English equivalents, recount the situations where they were used:

- *p. 1 to step onto the tarmac*
- *p. 2 to feel like in a tailspin*
- *p. 8 to sift through one's backpack*
- *p. 9 chaperons*
- *p. 10 to get restless*

Figure 4. Pre-reading Scaffolding Tasks

Next, students engage (are engaged?) in a discussion of the chapters, guided by the questions outlined below in Figure 5.

Answer the questions providing quotes from the book:

Prologue:
What events are described in the prologue? Where did Colleen go? Describe airport procedures Colleen went through. What is known about her name? Who was Kalyna? What did she think about on the plane? What is known about her studies? What is known about her family members?

Chapter 1:
Describe the beginning of the festival. Why were the dancers restless? What was Colleen supposed to do at the festival? Why couldn't she dance? Who was Carla? What were her relations with Colleen? What dance clubs were marching at the parade? Who was the laughing stock of the festival? Why? Why was Senior Girls' Lemko Dance disqualified?

Figure 5. After-reading discussion

Discussion of the chapters may also be accompanied by the creation of visual modes such as infographics that illustrate key events, airport procedures which the protagonist undergo, and a full scope of characters with their relations indicated. These visual modes can be expanded each time each time (when?) students discuss new chapters, using culminating into the full picture of the events with all the characters involved. Thirdly, students are expected to analyze the plot, the problems raised by the author, and make character sketches. Before analysing the characters, students are asked to fill in a table with citations from the text that illustrate each character's traits. An example is provided in Figure 6.

Make a list of quotations from the story and link them to the character that said it. How do these quotations characterize them? Focus on one episode.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Description/ quotation</i>

Figure 6. Character analysis

This activity is supplemented by interactive digital tools for collaborative annotation and discussion. Hence, the instructor creates and shares a Google document for students to collaboratively complete the above-mentioned table, with all the students contributing to the character description. During the discussion, students have all necessary information at hand, while the instructor has a clear picture of each student's level of contribution. Then comes a project-based activity with the use of auditory modes, particularly creating a book trailer. Students are asked to make use of images related to key events and characters, sound that reflect the overall tone of the book, music and words which prove appealing and captivating to the potential reader. The book trailers are presented in class, where their content, general tone and ability to build anticipation in the viewer are discussed and evaluated. Following this, book trailers are posted online. Typically, Ukrainian Bachelor students applaud the idea of creating book trailers after detailed discussion and plot / character analysis. They make extensive use of relevant vocabulary and show a deeper understanding of the general idea of the novel.

Conclusions. Based on the theoretical and methodological principles of the multimodal CLIL approach to teaching literature, this study has implemented multimodal strategies for teaching Canadian Literature within the framework of Ukrainian higher education. The applied strategies involve visual modes presented in the form of infographics, videos, and an interactive digital tool, with scaffolding techniques serving as an integral component. Integrating these strategies with scaffolding enhances Bachelor students' critical cultural awareness and facilitates the development of both language and literary competences. The proposed strategies appear promising for the advancement of literature curricula in Ukrainian higher education institutions.

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Використання мультимодальних CLIL-методів у вивченні канадської літератури: розвиток мовних і літературознавчих навичок

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У статті досліджується інтеграція мультимодальних стратегій у контекст інтегрованого навчання предмета і мови (CLIL) для викладання канадської літератури в закладах вищої освіти. Дослідження заповнює прогалину в сучасній науковій літературі, аналізуючи, яким чином мультимодальні підходи, що поєднують візуальні, аудіальні, текстові та цифрові компоненти, можуть сприяти як засвоєнню мови, так і залученню студентів до вивчення літератури. Канадська література, що зосереджується на темах ідентичності, культурної гібридності та міграції, відкриває широкі можливості для міждисциплінарного й чутливого до мовних аспектів викладання.

Метою дослідження є аналіз теоретичних і методологічних засад упровадження мультимодальної CLIL-педагогіки у викладанні літератури. Для досягнення цієї мети використано методи контент-

аналізу, узагальнення та систематизації з акцентом на сучасні наукові підходи в лінгвістиці, семіотиці та педагогіці. Особлива увага приділяється концепції підтримки навчання (*scaffolding*) як ключовому принципу методики CLIL.

Результати дослідження свідчать про те, що мультимодальні стратегії виступають ефективними інструментами підтримки в умовах CLIL-навчання, сприяючи кращому доступу студентів до складних художніх текстів та їх інтерпретації. Ці стратегії посилюють мовний розвиток, підтримують розуміння змісту та формують критичну культурну обізнаність. У статті запропоновано модель інтеграції мультимодальних ресурсів, зокрема екранізацій, візуальних наративів (інфографіки, відео та інтерактивних цифрових інструментів), у процес викладання канадської літератури. Автори стверджують, що інфографіка та відео сприяють усвідомленню студентами-бакалаврами соціокультурного тла подій, зображених у художній літературі. Інтерактивні цифрові інструменти, на кшталт створення трейлеру для книги, покращують розуміння проблематики твору, розвивають критичне мислення та спрямують формування у студентів мовної та літературної компетенції. У підсумку окреслено практичні наслідки для проєктування навчальних програм і визначено напрями подальших досліджень у сфері мультимодальної CLIL-освіти в літературному навчанні.

Ключові слова: ПМІН, скаффолдінг, канадська література, візуальна підтримка навчання, аудіальна підтримка навчання.

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