

# THE CLIL APPROACH INTEGRATION INTO TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES WITHIN ECONOMIC HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Problem statement.** In the modern world, proficiency in English is not merely an advantage but a necessity, especially for those striving to develop business and economic cooperation at the international level. English has become a universal means of communication in business, science, technology and innovation, providing access to global markets, partnerships, and new opportunities. Knowledge of the language enables businessmen to conduct negotiations effectively, conclude contracts, participate in international conferences as well as understand global trends. Today, learning English is a strategic investment in one's professional success and in a company's competitiveness on the global stage.

At the national level in Ukraine, considerable attention is paid to the study of foreign languages, primarily English as the language of international communication. However, despite the increased emphasis on the necessity of language training for future

specialists, Ukraine currently lags behind many European countries in terms of English proficiency. According to the EF English Proficiency Index 2025, Ukraine ranked 45th out of 123 countries that participated in the survey and testing, remaining for several consecutive years among countries with a moderate proficiency level. The analysis indicates that the country's performance has worsened compared to the previous year, when Ukraine held the 40th position. The country continues to demonstrate lower results than all of its neighboring states. Slovakia (10th place), Romania (11th), and Poland (15th) are classified as countries with very high English proficiency level; Hungary (22nd) and the Czech Republic (23rd) are considered countries with high proficiency; Belarus (41st) and Moldova (43rd) share the same moderate proficiency level as Ukraine but occupy higher positions in the ranking (EF Education First, 2025).

Addressing the issue of improving the population's foreign language competence at the current stage of the country's socio-economic development remains highly relevant, as the significant growth of interest in foreign language expertise, reinforced by rapid globalization, informatization, and digitalization of all spheres of life, is becoming a national educational vector. One of the main concerns for most foreign language teachers is the search for effective tools, approaches, methods, and techniques that would enable learners to achieve an adequate level of foreign language proficiency. In this context, students' communicative competence, particularly in speaking, is regarded as one of the most important skills, since the ability to express one's own thoughts and organize ideas into a coherent verbal structure is considered the ultimate goal of the entire language learning process.

**Analysis of current research.** In order to overcome the discrepancy between contemporary demands for improving graduates' foreign language competence and the actual capacities of university teachers and higher educational institutions, it is worthwhile to examine international experience in implementing the so-called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach, which involves studying a professional subject (or any other discipline) through a foreign language (Podoliak, 2024).

The term Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was introduced by D. Marsh in 1994 within the European context to describe and further develop effective practices in various types of educational environments where instruction takes place in an additional language. According to D. Marsh, CLIL refers to educational settings in which a subject or its thematic parts are taught in a foreign language with a dual objective: mastering the subject content and simultaneously learning the language (Marsh,

2002). One of the most widely cited definitions today describes CLIL as a didactic methodology that enables learners to develop foreign language linguistic and communicative competences within the same educational context in which they acquire general knowledge and skills (Rudnik, 2013, p. 63).

This method integrates subject and language learning and is defined by D. Coyle, P. Hood, and D. Marsh as a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used simultaneously for learning both content and language. In other words, during the teaching and learning process, attention is focused not only on the content and not only on the language; rather, both components are interconnected, even if greater emphasis is placed on one of the other at a particular stage. Thus, CLIL is neither a new form of language education nor a new form of subject instruction; it is an innovative combination of both. The key point is that regardless of whether the content or language aspect dominates at a given stage, neither should be secondary to the other (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 1–2).

According to a report by the European educational information network Eurydice, content-language integrated learning is an educational approach that employs various forms of language support to ensure dual-focused learning with simultaneous attention to both language and content. Achieving this dual objective requires the development of a specific teaching approach in which a non-language subject is taught not simply in a foreign language, but with and through a foreign language (Eurydice, 2006). Similarly, the British Council defines CLIL as integrated content and language learning that includes both studying other academic subjects, such as physics or geography (content), through a foreign language, and learning a foreign language through mastering content-oriented subjects (British Council).

Therefore, CLIL is not merely language learning nor solely subject learning, but their synthesis, associated with processes of convergence. Convergence implies combining elements that previously existed separately, particularly academic subjects within an educational program. It is precisely in this respect that CLIL opens up new opportunities. CLIL is not just a convenient response to the challenges of rapid globalization, but a timely and effective solution aligned with broader social processes (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 4).

Although considerable attention has been paid by both foreign and domestic scholars to the definition of the content-language integrated learning essence and features, in our view insufficient attention has been devoted to the problem of the possible integration of CLIL activities into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes. Such integration might be very helpful for ESP teaching and studying at Ukrainian higher educational establishments, where ESP is often the only or one of the most important foreign language courses for students of non-philological higher educational institutions. The discipline is included into the curriculum as a compulsory subject and is intended to ensure that students achieve a level of English proficiency no lower than B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Thus, only through ESP they can form and develop the necessary communicative competence in the spheres of professional communication, both oral and written, as well as practical foreign language skills in various types of speech activities within the scope of professional topics.

**The purpose of the article** is to specify the possible CLIL effective practices and activities which might be successfully integrated into ESP university course aiming to enhance the students' FL communicative competences in professional environment.

### **Methodology and research methods.**

The study is based on the analysis of scholarly sources and employs methods of conceptual analysis as well as synthesis of European educational experience, offers theoretical investigation of CLIL principles and their application to ESP modelling possibilities for integrating this approach into the educational process of Ukrainian higher educational institutions. A comparative analytical method is used to highlight the added value of CLIL in ESP contexts. A descriptive method is applied to outline classroom techniques (role-plays, case studies, presentations); scaffolding types (linguistic, cognitive, task-based) as well as practical implementation stages.

**Presentation of the main material.** As mentioned above, CLIL was introduced within the European context to develop effective practices in various types of educational environments, but let us specify which exactly CLIL characteristics and peculiarities are valuable for ESP classes. First comes the principle of authenticity. CLIL methodology focuses on the high degree of integration between language and content provided through guided access to authentic materials and learning environments. Authenticity should build connections between students' lives and learning as well as between students and other speakers of the CLIL language. The approach encourages utilization of current materials from media or other sources as frequently as possible. This principle is especially important because achieving an appropriate level of authenticity for foreign language teachers remains a challenging task. Even when authentic texts are used, the primary goal of lessons often remains language study, which is assessed mainly in terms of grammatical accuracy. When combined with CLIL, learners gain two complementary experiences: conscious language learning and natural language

acquisition. CLIL creates natural conditions for language development by integrating intentional instruction with situational acquisition, significantly increasing motivation to learning languages.

Second is the principle of active learning as one of CLIL fundamentals. It emphasizes learner engagement in meaningful, cognitively demanding activities rather than passive reception of information. In CLIL, students are not only learning a language but also constructing subject knowledge through interaction, problem-solving, discussion, and collaboration. They should be given central role in CLIL classes: initiative, personalization, active thinking, expressing one's viewpoints, peer cooperative work is encouraged. Instead of teacher-centered explanation, CLIL lessons engage students into discussing concepts in pairs or groups; solving subject-related problems; conducting mini-research tasks; participating in debates or simulations; producing presentations, reports, or projects. Language here is learned through purposeful use, not isolated practice. Students are actively involved into setting the content, determining language and learning skills outcomes. More than that, during the class they should be in the center of preparation and presentation, thus communicating more than the teacher who steps back and acts just as a facilitator.

These are very valuable recommendations not only for CLIL or ESP classes, but for any educational practice in general. In English for Specific Purposes active learning is especially effective because professional communication is inherently interactive and task-based. Through problem-based learning, students solve realistic professional challenges: e.g. analyze a market case, evaluate the company performance progress, interpret the balance sheet, etc. With simulations and role-plays students practice both specialized vocabulary and communicative strategies

in context as professional scenarios encourage authentic communication, e.g. business negotiations, project meetings, technical briefings, etc. Another valuable technique is based on group tasks such as collaborative projects. The examples of these for Economics students might be preparing a business plan, designing a product proposal, creating an advertisement poster, conducting a mock conference. These activities integrate content mastery with communicative competence and help students practice true-to-life professional conversation situations.

No least efficient are task-based presentations. Students research a professional topic and present findings, answer questions, defend ideas, evaluate self-performance as well as their fellow-students' presentations. This promotes subject understanding, structured discourse, critical thinking and builds confidence in public speaking. To sum up, the active learning principle is particularly effective in ESP as it mirrors real professional communication; increases motivation by making learning relevant and practical; develops both hard (content) and soft (communication, teamwork) skills; encourages deeper processing of both language and subject matter. It helps create an authentic, professionally oriented learning environments where language development naturally supports subject expertise and real-world communication competence.

Another core CLIL principle is scaffolding. It refers to the structured support teachers provide to help learners accomplish tasks they could not complete independently. As learners' competence increases, this support is gradually reduced, enabling them to work autonomously. The concept is grounded in socio-constructivist theory, particularly the idea of guided learning within the learners' potential for development.

In CLIL scaffolding is essential as it ensures content understanding helping

learners grasp complex subject concepts; stimulates language development providing linguistic tools needed to express subject knowledge; facilitates cognitive processing by guiding learners through higher-order thinking tasks. Scaffolding in CLIL typically includes pre-teaching key vocabulary and functional language, using visual aids (charts, diagrams, models), providing sentence starters or writing frames, modeling tasks and expected outcomes, structuring tasks step-by-step, encouraging collaborative learning. The aim is not to simplify content excessively but to make it accessible through appropriate support.

In English for Specific Purposes classes scaffolding is particularly valuable because learners must master both specialized terminology and professional communication skills. For linguistic scaffolding one might consider introducing domain-specific vocabulary in context before reading or listening tasks; providing phrase banks for professional functions (e.g., negotiating, reporting findings, giving instructions); using model texts (e.g., reports, emails, case studies) to highlight structure and language patterns. When it comes to cognitive scaffolding, it is worthwhile breaking complex professional tasks into stages (e.g., first analyzing data, next identifying trends, then presenting conclusions); using graphic organizers to structure reasoning or providing guiding questions for case studies or problem-solving tasks. When it comes to task scaffolding, one should move from controlled, then to semi-controlled and finally to free production activities. Offering templates for presentations, reports, or meetings before expecting independent performance is also a valuable practice especially for A2 students. As to role-plays, it helps students a lot to break the ice and start producing conversation when they are provided with clear role descriptions and objectives.

An important condition for proper scaffolding here is the gradual release of responsibility. For example, in a Business English class, the teacher models a negotiation dialogue which students practice with structured prompts at the initial stage. Next students are offered to conduct a semi-guided negotiation, after which, as their final stage, they perform an independent negotiation simulation, implementing all the skills and vocabulary mastered during the preliminary stages.

In a word, scaffolding is especially effective in ESP as it reduces cognitive overload caused by complex content and specialized terminology. It builds confidence in professional communication, ensures that language development supports real-world professional competence, aligns well with the integrated approach of CLIL, where language is a tool for content mastery. Thus, scaffolding ensures that learners can engage with cognitively demanding subject matter while progressively developing the language skills necessary for independent academic and professional performance. In ESP contexts, it is a practical and strategic tool for bridging the gap between language learning and professional expertise development.

In addition to authenticity, active learning, and scaffolding, several other CLIL characteristics are particularly important for ESP context. First, CLIL involves dual-focused objectives, integrating both content and language outcomes, which ensures that learners develop subject knowledge alongside discipline-specific language skills. CLIL promotes cognitive engagement and trains higher-order thinking skills along with the language practice. Similarly, in ESP classes learners can be challenged by analyzing case-studies, solving field-specific problems, evaluating data, making decisions and justifying them. This supports coherent learning and ensures that both subject mastery, cognitive skills improvement as well as advanced language

use are developed alongside, which leads not only to language proficiency enhancement, but also to deepening professional awareness. The 4Cs framework (Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture), proposed by Do Coyle, further highlights the importance of intercultural awareness and meaningful communication in professional contexts. In ESP, the “Culture” component is particularly important because professional communication often involves international and intercultural contexts.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** Therefore, the implementation of CLIL in the educational process of Economics higher educational institutions offers significant advantages. First, the CLIL approach makes it possible to integrate language and professional knowledge, ensuring deeper immersion of Economics students into the professional linguistic environment and thereby contributing to the formation and improvement of their professionally oriented foreign language competence. Second, the method of Content and Language Integrated Learning enhances students’ motivation, as it combines the study of the discipline they major in with the practical use of a foreign language. Third, CLIL, can have a positive impact on the overall acquisition of academic material. The different horizons and modes of thinking that are formed as a result of CLIL, as well as the effective constructivist educational practice it supports, influence conceptualization (literally, the way we think), enriching the understanding of concepts and expanding the resources for building a conceptual framework. This enables learners to establish stronger connections between various concepts and helps them progress to a higher and more complex level of learning in general.

The integration of authenticity, active learning, scaffolding, and additional CLIL principles such as dual-focused objectives,

cognitive challenge, and intercultural awareness creates a coherent and pedagogically sound foundation for ESP instruction. These characteristics ensure that language is not treated as an isolated subject but as a functional tool for acquiring, processing, and communicating professional knowledge. By combining meaningful content with purposeful language use, CLIL enables learners to develop subject expertise, higher-order thinking skills, and communicative competence simultaneously. In ESP contexts, where learners are preparing for real academic and workplace demands, such an integrated approach is particularly valuable. It fosters motivation, autonomy, and confidence, ultimately bridging the gap between language learning and professional performance, and preparing students for effective participation in global professional communities.

Further research in the field of integrating CLIL approach into foreign language teaching in Ukraine may focus on the development of full-scale CLIL-based courses for students majoring in Economics, as well as creating methodological guidelines for both foreign language teachers and content instructors.

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**Гільдебрант К. Й. Інтеграція CLIL-підходу у викладання англійської мови за професійним спрямуванням у ЗВО економічного профілю**

У статті розглянуто проблему підвищення рівня володіння англійською мовою в Україні в умовах глобалізації та зростання вимог до професійної іншомовної компетентності майбутніх фахівців економічного профілю. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю посилення конкурентоспроможності українських випускників на міжнародному ринку праці та невисокими позиціями України у світових рейтингах, зокрема за даними індексу рівня володіння англійською мовою EF English Proficiency Index 2025 року. Проаналізовано сучасні наукові підходи до

впровадження предметно-мовного інтегрованого навчання (CLIL), запропонованого Д. Маршем, а також розкрито його сутність як двофокусного підходу, що поєднує засвоєння змісту фахової дисципліни та розвиток мовної компетентності.

Особливу увагу приділено можливостям інтеграції принципів предметно-мовного навчання у курс «Англійська мова за професійним спрямуванням» (ESP) у закладах вищої освіти України. Охарактеризовано ключові принципи CLIL, як-от: автентичність, активне навчання, поетапна підтримка (scaffolding), когнітивна складність та міжкультурний компонент. Обґрунтовано їхню ефективність для формування професійно орієнтованої комунікативної компетентності студентів-економістів. Представлено приклади методичних прийомів: рольові ігри, кейс-стаді, презентації, проєктна робота, а також різні види мовної та когнітивної підтримки. Доведено, що інтеграція CLIL у ESP-курс сприяє підвищенню мотивації студентів, розвитку критичного мислення, формуванню навичок професійної комунікації та забезпечує синергію між іншомовною підготовкою і фаховою освітою. Зроблено висновок про доцільність подальшого розроблення методичних рекомендацій щодо впровадження CLIL у практику викладання англійської мови в українських закладах вищої освіти економічного профілю.

*Ключові слова:* предметно-мовне навчання, англійська мова за професійним спрямуванням (АМПС), автентичність, активне навчання, підтримка.

**Hildebrant K. Y. The CLIL Approach Integration into Teaching English for Specific Purposes within Economic Higher Educational Institutions**

The article addresses the issue of improving English language proficiency in Ukraine in the context of globalization and increasing demands for professionally oriented foreign

language competence among future specialists in Economics. The study relevance is grounded in the need to enhance the Ukrainian graduates' competitiveness in the international labor market and by Ukraine's relatively low position in global rankings, particularly according to the EF English Proficiency Index 2025 report. The paper analyzes contemporary scholarly approaches to the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), introduced by D. Marsh, and defines it as a dual-focused educational approach integrating content mastery with language development.

Special attention is paid to the potential integration of CLIL principles into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses at Ukrainian higher educational institutions. The key CLIL principles, mainly authenticity, active learning, scaffolding, cognitive challenge, and the intercultural dimension reflected in the 4Cs framework (Content, Communication, Cognition,

Culture) are characterized and substantiated as effective tools for developing professionally oriented communicative competence among Economics students. Practical classroom techniques such as role-plays, case studies, presentations, project-based learning, and various types of linguistic, cognitive, and task scaffolding are described. The study demonstrates that integrating CLIL into ESP courses enhances students' motivation, promotes critical thinking, strengthens professional communication skills, and ensures synergy between language training and subject-specific education. It is concluded that further research should focus on designing full-scale CLIL-based courses for Economics students and developing methodological guidelines for both language and content instructors in Ukrainian higher educational institutions.

*Key words:* Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), authenticity, active learning, scaffolding.

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