

THE CLIL APPROACH TO TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR STUDENTS IN ECONOMICS SPECIALISATIONS AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Summary

The article examines the specific features of applying the CLIL approach (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in teaching a foreign language to students majoring in economics at higher education institutions. It **reveals** the essence of integrated content and language learning, its key principles, advantages, and implementation challenges. Special emphasis is placed on the interdisciplinary nature of CLIL, which enables students to simultaneously acquire subject-specific knowledge and develop foreign language proficiency in a meaningful context.

The study analyses the impact of CLIL on the development of both professional and foreign language communicative competence of future economists, highlighting improvements in critical thinking, problem-solving, and academic communication skills. Particular attention is paid to methodological aspects of CLIL implementation in the educational process, including the use of interactive technologies, project-based learning, case studies, and authentic materials relevant to the field of economics.

The paper substantiates the relevance and effectiveness of CLIL in the context of modern higher education and ongoing globalization processes. It also outlines prospects for further research, particularly in evaluating long-term learning outcomes and refining teaching strategies.

Key words: integrated subject-language learning, professional communicative competence, interdisciplinary approach, authentic learning materials, project-based learning, case study method, critical thinking skills, academic foreign language communication.

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1. Introduction

The modern stage of societal development is characterized by processes of globalization, internationalization of the economy, and the growing role of intercultural communication. Under these conditions, the training of competitive specialists in the field of economics requires not only solid professional knowledge but also a high level of proficiency in a foreign language.

Traditional approaches to teaching foreign languages often fail to ensure a sufficient level of integration between language and professional training. In this regard, the CLIL approach (Content and Language Integrated Learning), which involves the simultaneous study of subject content and a foreign language, is becoming particularly relevant.

CLIL is considered an effective pedagogical technology that contributes to increasing student motivation, developing their cognitive abilities, and forming professional foreign language competence.

The aim of the article is to provide a theoretical justification and analyze the features of applying the CLIL approach in teaching a foreign language to students of economic specialties.

2. Theoretical Foundations of the CLIL Approach

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is an innovative educational approach that involves the simultaneous acquisition of subject content and a foreign language, where the language serves not only as an object of study but also as a tool for cognition. Unlike traditional foreign language teaching, CLIL integrates language learning into a professional context, ensuring more natural and effective acquisition of both linguistic and professional material.

Essence and Conceptual Foundations of CLIL

The concept of CLIL emerged in the European educational space as a response to the need to train specialists capable of functioning in a multilingual and multicultural environment. It combines elements of the communicative approach, cognitive learning theory, and constructivism.

The essence of CLIL lies in:

- integration of language and subject learning;
- focus on the practical use of language;
- creation of conditions for a natural language environment;
- activation of students' cognitive activity.

It is important to emphasize that CLIL is not simply teaching a subject in a foreign language. It is a methodologically structured process that takes into account students' language needs, their level of preparation, and the specifics of the academic discipline.

Key Principles of the CLIL Approach

CLIL is based on several key principles that determine its effectiveness:

1. Dual focus

The learning process is simultaneously oriented toward mastering subject content and developing language competence. This means that the teacher must balance between explaining subject material and supporting students' language development.

2. Integration of content and language

Language is used as a means of learning, not only as a goal. This contributes to the formation of functional language competence necessary for professional activity.

3. Development of cognitive skills

CLIL stimulates higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation). Students do not simply absorb information but actively process, interpret, and apply it.

4. Intercultural orientation

Language learning is inseparably linked with culture. CLIL contributes to the formation of intercultural competence, which is an important component of training economists in a globalized world.

The "4Cs" Model as the Basis of CLIL

A key theoretical tool of CLIL is the "4Cs" model, which ensures the integrity of the learning process:

– Content

Involves mastering knowledge from a specific discipline (e.g., economics, finance, management). In CLIL, it is important that the content is relevant to students' professional training.

– Communication

Covers the development of language skills necessary for academic and professional activities. Special attention is given to functional language (language for learning, language of learning, language through learning).

– **Cognition**

Involves the development of cognitive processes – from basic (remembering, understanding) to complex (analysis, evaluation, creation). CLIL promotes critical thinking and analytical abilities.

– **Culture**

Includes the formation of intercultural awareness, tolerance, and the ability to interact effectively in an international environment.

The Language Component of CLIL

One of the important components of CLIL is language support within the learning process. Three types of language are distinguished:

- Language of learning – specialized vocabulary and grammatical structures necessary for understanding the content;
- Language for learning – language tools for participating in learning activities (discussions, presentations);
- Language through learning – language that develops in the process of learning.

This approach ensures the gradual and systematic development of language competence.

The Cognitive Aspect of CLIL

CLIL is closely related to the taxonomy of educational objectives (in particular, Bloom's taxonomy), which involves the development of thinking from simple to complex. In this context, teachers use tasks of varying levels of difficulty:

- reproductive (description, definition);
- analytical (comparison, classification);
- creative (project development, decision-making).

This contributes to deeper learning and the development of student independence.

Pedagogical Conditions for CLIL Effectiveness

For successful CLIL implementation, the following conditions are necessary:

- sufficient level of students' language proficiency;
- methodological training of teachers;
- use of authentic materials;
- integration of modern educational technologies;
- institutional support.

Educational Potential of CLIL

Research shows that CLIL:

- increases learning motivation;
- improves foreign language proficiency;
- develops professional competencies;
- fosters interdisciplinary thinking;
- prepares students for work in an international environment.

Thus, the CLIL approach serves as an effective pedagogical technology that combines language and professional training, ensuring comprehensive student development.

3. Features of Teaching a Foreign Language to Students of Economic Specialties

Teaching a foreign language to students of economic specialties in higher education institutions has a strong professional orientation and differs significantly from general language training. The main goal is not only to develop foreign language communicative competence

but also to prepare students for effective professional activity in an international economic environment.

One of the key features is the focus on professional vocabulary and terminology. Students must master a wide range of economic concepts, including:

- financial terminology;
- management and marketing vocabulary;
- banking and investment terminology;
- international trade terms.

Importantly, this vocabulary is acquired not in isolation but within the context of real professional situations, ensuring its effective use in future activities.

The learning process involves active use of authentic sources: economic articles, analytical reports, financial documents, and materials from international organizations (*Kuzminska and others, 2019*).

Such materials contribute not only to the development of language skills but also to the formation of professional thinking, as students work with up-to-date information and real cases.

Development of Business Communication Skills

A special place in the learning process is given to the development of business communication skills. Students must be able to:

- conduct negotiations;
- participate in business meetings;
- carry out professional correspondence;
- present economic projects.

In this context, activities such as role plays, business simulations, debates, and presentations are particularly important.

Development of Analytical Thinking

Economic activity requires a high level of analytical thinking. Therefore, foreign language teaching should include:

- analysis of economic data;
- interpretation of graphs and tables;
- evaluation of market trends;
- forecasting of economic processes.

This contributes to the development of cognitive skills and prepares students for making informed professional decisions.

Key Professional Skills of Economics Students

During foreign language learning, important professional skills are formed:

– Analysis of economic information

Students learn to work with large volumes of information, identify key aspects, and draw conclusions.

– Data presentation

The ability to present research results in a foreign language using modern visual tools is essential.

– Participation in business negotiations

Students develop the ability to express their position and reach compromises.

– Working with international documents

Students acquire skills in handling contracts, reports, and official documentation.

Integration of CLIL into Professional Training

The CLIL approach allows for the organic integration of language and professional training (Akhobadze, 2021). In this case, a foreign language becomes not the goal but a means of:

- acquiring economic knowledge;
- developing professional competencies;
- forming practical skills.

Thanks to CLIL, students are immersed in a professionally oriented language environment, which significantly increases the effectiveness of learning.

Methodological Approaches to Teaching

To achieve high results, various methods are used:

- case method (analysis of real economic situations);
- project-based learning;
- problem-based learning;
- interactive technologies.

These approaches ensure active student participation in the learning process and contribute to the development of learner autonomy.

Difficulties in Teaching

Among the main difficulties, the following can be identified:

- different levels of students' language proficiency;
- complexity of economic terminology;
- limited time allocated for language learning;
- the need to integrate with professional disciplines.

These challenges require a flexible approach to organizing the educational process and adapting teaching methods.

Thus, teaching a foreign language to students of economic specialties has a comprehensive character and is aimed at forming not only linguistic but also professional competence. The use of the CLIL approach makes it possible to ensure a close connection between language and future professional activity, which significantly improves the quality of training for specialists in the field of economics.

4. Advantages of the CLIL Approach in Training Economists

The application of the CLIL approach in the training of students of economic specialties has significant didactic potential and ensures the comprehensive development of both language and professional competencies. The integration of subject content and a foreign language creates conditions for more effective, practice-oriented learning.

4.1. Increasing Learning Motivation

One of the most important advantages of CLIL is a significant increase in student motivation. Unlike the traditional approach, where language is often studied in isolation from real life, CLIL offers students the opportunity to work with material directly related to their future profession.

The practical orientation of learning:

- demonstrates the real value of a foreign language;
- increases students' interest in the learning process;
- fosters intrinsic motivation for self-development.

Students begin to perceive a foreign language not as a separate discipline, but as a tool for professional activity, which significantly enhances learning effectiveness.

4.2. Formation of Professional Competence

CLIL contributes to a deeper understanding of economic processes, as learning takes place through the analysis of real cases, economic models, and situations. This allows students to:

- acquire professional terminology in context;
- understand the specifics of international economic activity;
- develop decision-making skills.

It is especially important that students learn to think in a foreign language within their field of specialization, which is a necessary condition for professional mobility.

Studies confirm that the use of CLIL improves the level of mastery of both professional disciplines and specialized vocabulary, and also fosters interdisciplinary connections.

4.3. Development of Language Skills

CLIL provides a natural language environment in which a foreign language is used continuously and functionally. This promotes the development of all types of language activity:

- reading – through working with authentic economic texts;
- listening – through lectures, video materials, and presentations;
- speaking – through participation in discussions, negotiations, and presentations;
- writing – through preparing reports, analytical notes, and business correspondence.

Unlike traditional learning, language skills are formed in real communicative situations, which increases their practical value.

4.4. Development of Critical Thinking

CLIL is focused on active cognitive engagement, which promotes the development of critical thinking. During the learning process, students:

- analyze economic phenomena;
- compare different approaches;
- assess risks and prospects;
- argue their own positions.

The use of problem-based tasks, case studies, and projects stimulates analytical abilities and develops independent decision-making skills.

4.5. Preparation for Professional Activity in an International Environment

CLIL contributes to the development of competencies necessary for successful professional activity in the context of globalization. In particular, students acquire:

- the ability to work in international teams;
- intercultural communication skills;
- the ability to use a foreign language in professional situations;
- experience working with international standards and documents.

This significantly increases graduates' competitiveness in the labor market and expands their career opportunities.

4.6. Development of Autonomy and Independent Learning

CLIL encourages students to independently search for information, work with sources, and engage in self-education. In the learning process, they:

- develop research skills;
- learn to work with large volumes of information;
- build responsibility for their own learning outcomes.

This is an important component in preparing modern specialists capable of continuous professional development.

4.7. Integration of Theory and Practice

CLIL ensures a close connection between theoretical knowledge and its practical application. As a result:

- learning becomes more meaningful and effective;
- students better understand the value of acquired knowledge;
- the ability to apply knowledge in real-life situations is developed.

Thus, the CLIL approach has significant advantages in training students of economic specialties. It ensures the integration of language and professional training, promotes the development of key competencies, and prepares students for effective work in the international economic environment. The use of CLIL improves the quality of education and adapts it to the modern demands of a globalized world.

5. Methodology for Implementing CLIL in Teaching Economic Disciplines

The effective implementation of the CLIL approach in teaching economic disciplines involves the systematic integration of methodological, linguistic, and subject-specific components. It is not only about using a foreign language as a medium of instruction, but also about creating a holistic educational environment in which students simultaneously develop professional knowledge, language skills, and cognitive abilities (*Andriichuk et al., 2024*).

The CLIL methodology is based on the principles of interactivity, communicativeness, contextualization of knowledge, and active student participation in the learning process.

5.1. Use of Authentic Materials

Authentic materials are one of the key tools for implementing CLIL, as they ensure a connection between learning and the real professional environment.

Such materials include:

- economic articles from international publications;
- company financial reports;
- analytical market reviews;
- business cases;
- official documents of international organizations.
- Their use makes it possible to:
 - familiarize students with modern economic terminology;
 - develop skills in reading and analyzing professional texts;
 - build the ability to work with real data;
 - increase motivation through the relevance of materials.

An important condition is the adaptation of materials to students' language proficiency level (scaffolding), which includes explaining terms, using glossaries, and visualizing information.

5.2. Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning is an effective method for implementing CLIL, as it allows the integration of knowledge and skills in practical activities.

Typical projects for students of economic specialties include:

- market analysis of a specific product or service;
- development of a business plan;
- research on economic trends;
- creation of a marketing strategy;
- financial planning.

During project work, students:

- use authentic sources;
- apply a foreign language for communication;
- develop teamwork skills;
- present the results of their work.

Project-based learning promotes autonomy, critical thinking, and responsibility for learning outcomes.

5.3. Interactive Teaching Methods

Interactive methods are an integral part of CLIL, as they create conditions for the active use of language in the learning process.

The most effective include:

– Discussions

Allow students to express their opinions, justify their positions, and analyze economic issues.

– Role-play

Simulate real professional situations, such as:

- negotiations between companies;
- meetings with clients;
- discussions of investment projects.

– Debates

Promote the development of critical thinking and argumentation skills.

– Case method

Involves analyzing real or simulated economic situations followed by decision-making.

Interactive technologies:

- activate speech activity;
- promote deeper understanding of material;
- develop communicative competence;
- foster collaboration skills.

5.4. Use of Digital Technologies

The modern educational process is impossible without the integration of digital tools, which significantly enhance the effectiveness of CLIL.

Key tools include:

- online learning platforms (Moodle, Google Classroom);
- multimedia resources (videos, podcasts, interactive presentations);
- electronic textbooks;
- specialized economic databases;
- presentation tools (PowerPoint, Canva).

Digital technologies make it possible to:

- diversify the learning process;
- provide access to up-to-date information;
- organize distance and blended learning;
- increase student engagement.

Video materials and online lectures play a particularly important role in developing listening skills and understanding professional language.

5.5. Language Support (Scaffolding) in CLIL

Effective CLIL implementation is impossible without proper language support for students. Teachers should:

- explain new vocabulary;
- use visual materials (charts, tables, graphs);
- provide language patterns (phrases, sentence starters);
- gradually increase the complexity of the material.

This helps students better understand content and use language more confidently.

5.6. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

In CLIL, it is important to assess both language and subject achievements. For this purpose, the following are used: tests, presentations, projects, written assignments, and oral performances.

Assessment should be comprehensive and take into account:

- correctness of terminology use;
- level of content understanding;
- ability to apply knowledge;
- communicative skills.

Thus, the methodology for implementing CLIL in teaching economic disciplines involves the use of a wide range of modern methods and technologies. The combination of authentic materials, project-based learning, interactive methods, and digital resources ensures the effective development of both language and professional competencies. This approach contributes to training competitive specialists capable of successfully operating in a globalized economic environment.

6. Challenges of CLIL Implementation

Despite the significant potential of the CLIL approach, its practical implementation in higher education institutions is associated with a number of challenges of both methodological and organizational nature (Serdiukova, 2021). Addressing these challenges is essential for the effective implementation of integrated learning.

6.1. Insufficient Language Proficiency of Students

One of the most common problems is the varying and often insufficient level of foreign language proficiency among students. This complicates the comprehension of subject-specific material, especially if it is presented without proper adaptation.

Main difficulties include:

- lack of understanding of specialized terminology;
- difficulty in comprehending lectures in a foreign language;
- limited participation in discussions;
- psychological barriers to speaking.

To overcome this problem, it is necessary to:

- introduce gradual increases in material complexity;
- use scaffolding techniques;
- apply visualization (charts, graphs, tables);
- organize additional language courses.

6.2. Insufficient Teacher Preparation

CLIL places high demands on teachers, who must combine:

- deep knowledge of the subject;
- high proficiency in a foreign language;
- methodological competence in integrated learning.

- In practice, the following problems often arise:
- subject teachers may lack sufficient language proficiency;
- language teachers may lack sufficient economic knowledge;
- absence of specialized CLIL training.

Solutions include:

- professional development courses;
- interdisciplinary cooperation (team teaching);
- participation in international educational programs;
- development of professional teaching communities.

6.3. Lack of Teaching Materials

Another significant problem is the limited availability of high-quality CLIL-adapted teaching materials.

The difficulty lies in the fact that:

- most textbooks are either purely linguistic or purely subject-specific;
- there is a lack of materials combining economic content with language support;
- authentic sources are often too complex for students.

As a result, teachers are often forced to independently develop materials, adapt texts, and create glossaries and methodological guidelines.

A promising direction is the development of specialized CLIL courses and electronic resources.

6.4. Organizational Challenges

CLIL implementation is often complicated by organizational constraints within higher education systems.

Main issues include:

- overloaded curricula;
- limited hours for foreign language instruction;
- lack of clear integration between disciplines;
- insufficient technical resources.

Additionally, CLIL requires:

- changes in curriculum planning;
- coordination among teachers of different disciplines;
- institutional support.

6.5. Psychological Barriers and Student Adaptation

Special attention should be paid to psychological aspects. Students may experience:

- lack of confidence in their language abilities;
- fear of making mistakes;
- difficulties adapting to new learning formats.

This can reduce their activity and motivation. Therefore, it is important to create a supportive learning environment, encourage participation, and use formative assessment.

6.6. Assessment Challenges

Another difficulty is assessing outcomes in CLIL. The question arises: what should be assessed – subject knowledge, language proficiency, or both?

This requires:

- clear assessment criteria;
- a comprehensive approach;
- alternative assessment forms (projects, portfolios, presentations).

Thus, CLIL implementation is accompanied by a number of objective challenges related to student language proficiency, teacher competence, lack of materials, and organizational constraints. However, with a comprehensive approach, proper methodological support, and gradual adaptation, these challenges can be successfully overcome.

7. Prospects for the Development of CLIL in Higher Education

In the context of educational internationalization and economic globalization, the CLIL approach is becoming increasingly relevant and offers broad opportunities for modernizing higher education systems.

7.1. Integration with Digital Technologies

One of the key directions of CLIL development is its integration with digital technologies.

Promising areas include:

- use of online learning platforms;
- application of interactive resources (videos, podcasts, simulations);
- access to international economic databases;
- use of artificial intelligence for personalized learning.

Digital tools enable the creation of a multimodal learning environment combining text, audio, and visual materials, enhancing learning effectiveness.

7.2. Blended Learning

Blended learning, combining face-to-face and online instruction, is a promising model for CLIL.

Its advantages include:

- flexibility;
- individualized learning;
- access to diverse resources;
- increased student autonomy.

7.3. Development of Specialized CLIL Courses

Future development involves creating specialized courses such as:

- “Business English through CLIL”;
- “International Economics in English”;
- “Financial Analysis in English”;
- “Marketing and Management in English.”

These courses integrate subject content with language training and focus on practical skills.

7.4. Teacher Professional Development

Improving teacher qualifications is crucial. Key areas include:

- language skills improvement;
- CLIL methodology training;
- digital competence development;
- participation in international programs.

7.5. Internationalization of Education

CLIL supports integration into the global educational space through:

- joint programs;
- academic mobility;

- international projects;
- teaching in foreign languages.

7.6. Competency-Based Approach

CLIL aligns with competency-based education, focusing on:

- professional competence;
- foreign language communicative competence;
- critical thinking;
- lifelong learning skills.

7.7. Training Competitive Specialists

CLIL helps prepare specialists who:

- are proficient in foreign languages;
- can work internationally;
- possess analytical and critical thinking;
- are ready for intercultural interaction.

8. Conclusions

The study confirms that the CLIL approach is an effective and promising tool for integrating language and professional training of economics students in higher education. Its use aligns with modern educational trends focused on developing comprehensive competencies and preparing specialists for a globalized world.

CLIL increases student motivation, improves language proficiency, enhances professional competence, and fosters critical thinking. It also strengthens the connection between theory and practice.

Despite existing challenges, they can be overcome through improved methodology, teacher training, and resource development.

Overall, CLIL represents an important direction in modern education, providing a new level of training for students of economic specialties by integrating language competence with professional knowledge and skills.

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