

## INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES: INTEGRATING LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH OTHER FIELDS

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**Abstract:** Integrating different disciplines has long been a valuable and essential strategy in contemporary education. When teaching a language for specific purposes, it serves as one of the most effective methods to modernize the learning process and bridge theory with practical application. This integration could involve organizing a field class where students engage with authentic English in a real-world context while examining sociological themes relevant to their studies. For instance, sports management students might conduct semi-structured interviews with foreign tourists in Split, focusing on their perceptions of the city as a hub for sports. Through this activity, students gain firsthand experience in researching a relevant topic, compiling and presenting their findings, all while using the English language throughout the entire process.

**Keywords:** English for specific purposes, interdisciplinary approach, neurolinguistic programming, language acquisition.

### INTRODUCTION

The interdisciplinary approach is becoming increasingly vital in the context of education, particularly as the demand for measurable results and the acquisition of practical, applicable skills grows. These skills are essential for preparing students for both their professional careers and personal lives. Teaching that fulfills all quality standards is difficult to envision without the incorporation of interdisciplinary methods. By merging different professions, fields, or disciplines, teachers can offer diverse perspectives and approaches, leading to a more sophisticated understanding of topics, a comprehensive approach to problem-solving, and enhanced creativity in both

delivering and absorbing content. This approach holds particular significance in higher education, where instructors are often expected to have knowledge in multiple areas, and students are motivated to learn in more innovative ways. As Salnaia et al. (2021) note, “The integration of interdisciplinary methods in higher education institutions fosters both scientific and professional thinking in students, while also equipping them with the interdisciplinary knowledge necessary for addressing complex scientific and technical challenges”. Beyond technical problems, this approach also helps students develop a greater awareness of social issues, given that universities and colleges aim to prepare students for social responsibility and active community engagement. Many innovative teaching methods, such as neurolinguistic programming, have demonstrated that students’ motivation to learn increases, their memory improves, and their ability to recall information strengthens when multiple senses are engaged in the learning process. Interdisciplinary education, alongside experiential learning like fieldwork with specific tasks related to students’ interests, enhances this engagement by involving more senses and offering hands-on experience. This ultimately leads to more efficient learning, greater skill development, and better application of the material.

## **METHODS**

This research utilized qualitative methods and secondary data analysis to investigate the integration of language learning with other academic disciplines. The qualitative approach involved a thorough review of existing scholarly resources, including academic journals, books, and educational studies, which provided insights into the application of interdisciplinary approaches in language education. These materials were critically analyzed to understand how language learning is integrated with different fields, particularly in higher education settings. The secondary data analysis method was employed to synthesize existing research findings on interdisciplinary teaching practices. This method allowed for an examination of prior studies without requiring new data collection, focusing on how language learning can be effectively combined with other subject areas. By reviewing and analyzing established research, the study sought to uncover patterns, strategies, and outcomes

related to interdisciplinary language teaching, while considering factors such as educational goals, curriculum integration, and student outcomes. This analysis offered a comprehensive understanding of the impact and advantages of interdisciplinary approaches in language education.

## **RESULTS**

While there are numerous benefits to adopting an interdisciplinary approach and engaging in fieldwork, careful consideration is needed when integrating subjects and selecting the most appropriate learning methods, particularly in the context of language learning and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

### **Teaching Language for Specific Purposes**

When teaching ESP, the primary focus should be on the purpose behind the learning process. The goal is not just to master the linguistic structures or achieve general communication, but to equip students with the language skills they will need in their professional careers. While classrooms offer a controlled environment for practicing skills and acquiring vocabulary, they lack the real-world context and conditions that students will encounter in the workplace. To address this gap, the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method proves to be highly effective.

### **CLIL Method**

One of the most effective methods for interdisciplinary learning is the CLIL method, which integrates content learning with language learning. According to Arnó-Macià and Mancho-Barés (2015), “This approach enables the structuring of the foreign language learning process within an interdisciplinary framework, especially in the context of ESP. The key features of CLIL include the integration of subject content and language learning, using the target language as a tool to study professional disciplines. Professional communication becomes the medium through which language is naturally learned, with the primary focus on the content of the discipline and a secondary focus on language accuracy, provided that grammar mistakes do not restrict communication (Salnaia Leia et al., 2021).

When teaching ESP, it is essential to recognize that students are learning the language to communicate non-linguistic topics effectively. Mastering English relevant to one's field of study has become a crucial asset in the current job market. This is why the CLIL method is highly beneficial, as it immerses students in real-world situations where English is used in a business context.

An example of CLIL in practice is the fieldwork conducted at the University of Applied Sciences Aspira, where Sports Management students engaged in both the Sociology of Sport and Business English courses. This interdisciplinary approach enabled students to explore the role of sports in their local community while practicing English in a relevant, real-world context.

### **Sociology of Sport and Business English Fieldwork Example**

The Sociology of Sport course focuses on the interaction between society (social institutions, organizations, and groups) and sports (sports organizations and teams). One key topic is the connection between sports and tourism, a particularly relevant issue in Croatia, where tourism is a major industry and Split is both a popular tourist destination and a city rich in sports history. Merging these two sectors provides a logical and sustainable opportunity for students to gain practical, applicable knowledge in their areas of study. During the fieldwork, students conducted qualitative research, gaining hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of the topics they will work with in their professional careers. The task also helped students understand the broader context in which the relationship between sports and tourism takes place and provided guidance for future research endeavors. Given that tourists were the target group, the task would have been impossible without the use of Business English. Therefore, as students learned about the sociology of sport, they were also practicing English grammar and vocabulary in real-world settings. Unlike classroom-based role-playing exercises, this activity involved authentic communication with people about topics directly related to their studies.

## DISCUSSION

Modern teaching must recognize that education is far more than simply transmitting information. According to Haralambos et al. (2002), education encompasses more than just academic learning; it is also a key component of socialization that includes acquiring knowledge and developing skills. Intentionally or not, education often influences the formation of beliefs and moral values”. Ivan Illich, cited by Haralambos et al. (2002, p. 781), argued that “education should be a liberating experience where individuals explore, create, take initiative, judge, reason, and fully develop their talents and abilities”. Although Illich’s ideas may seem dated and his call for the abolition of formal education radical, his critique of education remains relevant in various cultures and institutions today. His primary emphasis was on teaching skills that are practical for life. To answer the question of who should teach, Illich proposed a straightforward answer – teachers of life skills. American sociologist Talcott Parsons, cited in Haralambos (2002, p. 779), demonstrated in the 1950s that after family socialization, school serves as a crucial socializing agent, acting as a bridge from childhood to adulthood. Higher education institutions, such as universities and polytechnics, represent another transitional phase. These institutions function as socializing agents, but with a specific focus on preparing students for professional roles and the workplace. Beyond the individual benefits of an interdisciplinary approach for students, real-life interaction and communication are invaluable. The importance of face-to-face communication, with no screen and no digital barriers between speakers, cannot be overlooked. The pandemic significantly disrupted in-person communication, which naturally involves numerous opportunities for understanding and misinterpretation alike. Hence, learning environments that foster direct interaction are crucial, especially for students who have grown accustomed to studying and interacting online. Engaging in real-life communication is a necessary activity. For many students, learning a language in a classroom among peers is relatively low-stakes, and their motivation largely depends on their internal drive, along with the educator’s teaching style. Fieldwork, on the other hand, poses a unique challenge. Communicating in a

foreign language with unfamiliar people requires greater concentration, higher motivation, resourcefulness, and a certain level of bravery. And, in the documentary *The Swedish Theory of Love* (2015), Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman underscores the critical need for socialization, emphasizing how stepping outside one's comfort zone and initiating conversation is vital. With the increasing trend toward individualism and self-sufficiency in Western societies, people risk losing their sense of collective identity and belonging, their sense of "We". Bauman argues that happiness is not about leading a trouble-free life but about overcoming challenges: "You face difficulties, you try your hardest... and then you experience moments of happiness. This cannot be provided by the state... it happens when you are among other people". He concludes that, at the end of the road to independence, there is only emptiness, meaninglessness, and profound boredom.

### CONCLUSION

This teaching method offers far more benefits and outcomes than one might initially expect. The interdisciplinary approach, combining Business English and Sociology, has clear and tangible goals. In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), this type of fieldwork demonstrates how language, while not the primary focus, remains an essential tool necessary to complete the task. At the same time, there are additional advantages that may not be immediately apparent but are equally valuable. Students gain experience using Business English in real-world international settings, learn to design research proposals, conduct semi-structured interviews, and develop research-oriented thinking. Moreover, this approach fosters the development of social skills, both in interactions with interviewees and collaboration among team members. This interdisciplinary method enhances personal motivation, engages students in authentic communication, and promotes group cohesion and the integration of foreign students. By connecting with new people, students also have the chance to experience other cultures, apply cultural relativism, and link sports and tourism, two significant fields, while also addressing anxiety related to speaking foreign languages.

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