

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Interdisciplinary Integration in ESP For Economics: Evidence from Uzbek Higher Education

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## Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of interdisciplinary collaboration in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for economics students in Uzbekistan. Using a mixed-method design, the research combines document analysis of 15 ESP and economics syllabi with survey data from 67 instructors. The findings reveal a significant discrepancy between perceived and actual implementation of interdisciplinary integration. While 57% of instructors report the presence of interdisciplinary practices, syllabus analysis demonstrates that integration remains largely superficial, limited to thematic overlap without alignment of learning outcomes, assessment, and independent learning tasks. The study identifies key barriers, including insufficient methodological coordination, limited teacher preparedness, and lack of localized materials. The results are interpreted through ESP and CLIL theoretical frameworks, emphasizing the need for structured interdisciplinary models. The study contributes empirical evidence from the Uzbek higher education context and offers pedagogical implications for improving independent learning and professional competence.

## KEY WORDS

ESP, interdisciplinary approach, CLIL, economics education, independent learning, higher education, Uzbekistan.

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary higher education, interdisciplinary integration has become a central principle guiding curriculum design and pedagogical innovation. This shift reflects the growing need to prepare students for complex professional environments that require the integration of knowledge, skills, and competencies across disciplines.

In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), interdisciplinarity is not optional but inherent. ESP aims to equip learners with language skills directly applicable to their academic and professional domains. For economics students, this includes mastering specialized terminology, interpreting economic discourse, and engaging in professional communication. Moreover, the adoption of credit-modular

systems has increased the emphasis on independent learning. Students are expected to construct knowledge autonomously, which necessitates the integration of linguistic and disciplinary competencies.

Despite strong theoretical support, the implementation of interdisciplinary approaches remains inconsistent in many educational contexts, including Uzbekistan. This study addresses this gap by examining how interdisciplinary collaboration is realized in practice through curriculum design and teacher perceptions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

ESP has been conceptualized as a learner-centered approach

that integrates language and content to meet specific professional needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This integration requires alignment between linguistic objectives and disciplinary knowledge. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) emphasize the multidisciplinary nature of ESP, highlighting the importance of collaboration between language teachers and subject specialists. Such collaboration enables the development of authentic learning tasks that reflect real-world professional contexts.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) further extends this paradigm by promoting simultaneous learning of subject content and language (Marsh, 1994). The CLIL framework is often operationalized through the 4Cs model—Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture—which underscores the interconnected nature of knowledge construction. However, research indicates that implementing interdisciplinary approaches presents significant challenges. Basturkmen (2006) notes that teachers often lack the expertise required to integrate content and language effectively. Similarly, Gatehouse (2001) highlights the importance of curriculum design in ensuring meaningful integration.

In post-Soviet educational contexts, these challenges are further compounded by traditional discipline-based teaching models and limited institutional support. This study builds on

existing literature by providing empirical evidence from Uzbekistan.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a mixed-method design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The use of multiple data sources allows for triangulation and enhances the reliability of findings. The first component involves document analysis of 15 syllabi from ESP and economics courses across higher education institutions. The analysis focuses on alignment between content, learning outcomes, assessment, and independent learning tasks. The second component is a survey conducted among 67 ESP instructors via a professional Telegram platform. The survey explores teachers’ perceptions of interdisciplinary collaboration and its implementation.

Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, while quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of both formal curriculum design and actual teaching practices.

**RESULTS**

The analysis of syllabi revealed that interdisciplinary integration is predominantly limited to thematic inclusion of economic topics. Table 1 summarizes the findings based on key integration criteria.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Observed in Syllabi</b>	<b>Level</b>
Content integration	Topic-level inclusion	Low
Learning outcomes alignment	No explicit link	Low
Assessment integration	Language-focused	Low
Independent learning tasks	General tasks	Low
Terminology integration	Partially present	Moderate

The data indicate that interdisciplinary integration lacks structural depth. Although economic content is present, it is not systematically aligned with learning outcomes or assessment practices.

Survey results further reveal discrepancies between perception and implementation. Table 2 presents the distribution of responses.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Yes	57%	Perceived presence
No	43%	No integration

The results suggest a mismatch between teacher perceptions and curriculum reality. While interdisciplinary collaboration is perceived as present, it is not reflected in systematic curriculum design.

### DISCUSSION

The findings highlight a critical gap between theoretical models and practical implementation. According to ESP and CLIL frameworks, effective integration requires alignment across content, language, cognition, and assessment. However, the observed practices indicate a predominantly surface-level approach. This discrepancy can be explained by several factors. First, the lack of methodological frameworks limits teachers' ability to operationalize interdisciplinary principles. Second, insufficient teacher training creates barriers to collaboration between language and subject specialists. Third, the absence of localized teaching materials reduces the relevance of ESP courses. Reliance on foreign textbooks may not adequately reflect local economic contexts or student needs.

These findings align with previous studies (Basturkmen, 2006; Gatehouse, 2001) but also extend them by providing empirical evidence from Uzbekistan. The results underscore the need for institutional support and structured interdisciplinary models. From a pedagogical perspective, integrating CLIL principles into ESP curricula could enhance both language and content learning. This requires rethinking curriculum design, assessment strategies, and independent learning tasks.

### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that interdisciplinary collaboration in ESP for economics is conceptually recognized but insufficiently implemented in practice. Integration remains superficial and lacks methodological coherence.

To improve effectiveness, it is necessary to develop structured interdisciplinary models, enhance teacher training, and design context-specific materials. These measures will support independent learning and professional competence development. Future research should explore the implementation of interdisciplinary models and examine student perspectives on integrated learning.

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