
**INTEGRATING CONTENT AND LANGUAGE
INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) INTO ENGLISH
FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP): A COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS OF ESP, CLIL, AND EMI IN UKRAINIAN
ECONOMICS HIGHER EDUCATION**

Hildebrant Kateryna

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary globalized economy, English proficiency has evolved from a desirable asset into an essential professional competence, particularly for those engaged in international business and economic cooperation. As the dominant lingua franca of business, science, technology, and innovation, English provides access to global markets, facilitates cross-border partnerships, and enhances participation in the international exchange of knowledge and expertise. For business professionals, a command of English is indispensable for conducting negotiations, drafting and interpreting contracts, participating in international conferences, and responding effectively to emerging global trends. Consequently, investment in English language education has become a strategic prerequisite for both individual career advancement and organizational competitiveness in the global marketplace.

In Ukraine, foreign language education, with particular emphasis on English as the principal language of international communication, has become an important component of national educational policy. Despite increasing recognition of the need to strengthen the language competence of future professionals, the country's overall level of English proficiency remains below that of most European nations. According to the EF English Proficiency Index 2025, Ukraine ranked 45th among 123 participating countries, maintaining its position within the category of moderate proficiency. Moreover, the country's performance declined compared with the previous year, when it ranked 40th. Ukraine continues to lag behind all of its neighboring countries. Slovakia (10th), Romania (11th), and Poland (15th) are classified as having very high English proficiency, while Hungary (22nd) and the Czech Republic

(23rd) fall into the high proficiency category. Although Belarus (41st) and Moldova (43rd) are also classified as countries with moderate proficiency, both achieved higher positions than Ukraine in the 2025 ranking¹.

Against this backdrop, enhancing the foreign language competence of the Ukrainian population remains a strategic educational priority. The growing demand for foreign language proficiency, driven by globalization, digital transformation, and the increasing internationalization of education and the labour market, has significantly reshaped national educational objectives. That is why one of the major challenges facing foreign language educators is the identification and implementation of pedagogical approaches capable of ensuring meaningful and sustainable improvements in learners' language proficiency. Within this context, the development of communicative competence, particularly oral communication skills, is widely recognized as a central objective of language education, as the ability to articulate ideas clearly and participate effectively in spoken interaction ultimately reflects successful language acquisition.

Bridging the gap between the growing societal demand for graduates with advanced foreign language competence and the practical limitations of higher education institutions requires the adoption of innovative instructional approaches that have demonstrated their effectiveness internationally. One such approach is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which integrates the learning of subject content with the simultaneous development of foreign language competence by teaching academic subjects through the medium of a foreign language². In recent decades, CLIL has attracted considerable scholarly attention owing to its potential to promote both subject-specific learning and language acquisition, making it particularly relevant for the preparation of future professionals in Economics and business.

1. The Content and Language Integrated Learning Concept

The concept of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was introduced by David Marsh in 1994 within the European educational context to describe and promote instructional practices in which subject content is taught through an additional language. Marsh defines CLIL as an educational approach in which a subject, or part of a subject, is delivered in a foreign language with a dual objective: to facilitate the acquisition of disciplinary

¹ EF EPI. EF English Proficiency Index. The world's largest ranking of countries and regions by English skills, 2025. URL: <https://www.ef.com/wwen/ept/>

² Подоляк М. Використання методу CLIL у процесі навчання іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням. Збірник наукових праць Уманського державного педагогічного університету. 2024. Вип. 3. С. 44–57. DOI: 10.31499/2307-4906.3.2024.312958

knowledge while simultaneously develop learners' language competence³. Since then, CLIL has become one of the most influential pedagogical approaches in bilingual and multilingual education. A frequently cited definition characterizes CLIL as a didactic approach that enables learners to develop both linguistic and communicative competence in a foreign language while acquiring subject-specific knowledge and skills within the same educational setting⁴.

The defining characteristic of CLIL lies in its dual focus on both content and language learning. As Coyle, Hood, and Marsh explain, CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language serves as the medium for learning disciplinary content while simultaneously becoming the object of language learning. Rather than prioritizing either subject knowledge or language development, CLIL seeks to integrate both dimensions into a coherent learning process. Although the relative emphasis on content or language may vary depending on the learning objectives, neither component is regarded as subordinate to the other. Consequently, CLIL should be viewed neither as a modified form of language instruction nor as traditional subject teaching delivered in another language, but rather as an integrated pedagogical framework that combines the strengths of both⁵.

This interpretation is consistent with the position adopted by the European educational information network Eurydice, which describes CLIL as an educational approach characterized by dual-focused instruction supported by a range of language scaffolding strategies. According to Eurydice, successful CLIL implementation requires subject content to be taught not merely in a foreign language but with and through the foreign language, thereby promoting the parallel development of both disciplinary understanding and linguistic competence⁶. Likewise, the British Council defines CLIL as an approach in which learners study curriculum subjects, such as geography or physics, through a foreign language while simultaneously developing their language proficiency through engagement with meaningful academic content⁷.

³ Marsh D. Content and Language Integrated Learning: The European Dimension-Actions, Trends and Foresight Potential, 2002. URL: <https://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/index.html>

⁴ Руднік Ю. В. Методика предметно-мовного інтегрованого навчання (CLIL): світовий досвід. Педагогіка та психологія: проблеми науки та практики: Міжнар. Наук.-практ. Конф. (Львів, Україна, 9 серпня 2013 р.). Львів, 2013. С. 63–67

⁵ Coyle D., Hood P., Marsh D. CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010. 169 p.

⁶ Eurydice. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at School in Europe. Brussels: Eurydice, 2006. URL: <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/4856/1/Content%20and%20language%20integrated%20learning%20CLIL%20at%20school%20in%20Europe.pdf>

⁷ British Council. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). TeachingEnglish. URL: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/content-and-language-integrated-learning-clil>

From this perspective, CLIL represents considerably more than the coexistence of language learning and subject instruction. It embodies an educational philosophy based on curricular integration and interdisciplinary learning, reflecting broader processes of educational convergence. By bringing together domains that have traditionally been taught separately, CLIL creates opportunities for more authentic, meaningful, and cognitively engaging learning experiences. Consequently, it is widely regarded not only as an effective response to the challenges of globalization and internationalization, but also as a pedagogical model that aligns with contemporary educational paradigms emphasizing interdisciplinarity, learner autonomy, and competence-based education⁸.

Despite the substantial body of international and Ukrainian investigations devoted to defining the theoretical foundations and core characteristics of CLIL, relatively little attention has been paid to its systematic integration into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction. This issue is particularly relevant in the context of Ukrainian higher education, where ESP frequently constitutes the primary, and in many programmes the only foreign language course offered to students of non-philological majors. As a compulsory component of the curriculum, ESP aims to enable students to attain at least a B2 level of English proficiency in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) while developing the communicative competence required for professional interaction in both spoken and written contexts. Consequently, ESP plays a crucial role in preparing future specialists for effective communication within their professional domains.

Against this background, exploring the pedagogical compatibility of CLIL and ESP appears both timely and necessary. Rather than viewing these approaches as competing models, they may be regarded as complementary stages within a coherent framework of professionally oriented language education. The present study therefore aims to compare three influential approaches to foreign language instruction, like English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), with particular reference to their potential for developing the foreign language communicative competence of students enrolled in Economics programmes. More specifically, the study seeks to evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness, appropriateness, and complementarity of these approaches in the professional preparation of future economists, as well as to identify CLIL principles, instructional strategies, and classroom

⁸ Coyle D., Hood P., Marsh D. CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010. 169 p.

activities that can be effectively incorporated into university ESP courses to enhance students' communicative competence in professional contexts.

This study is based on a comprehensive review of the relevant literature and combines comparative analysis with the synthesis of European pedagogical experience to examine the theoretical foundations of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and its potential application within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction in Ukrainian higher education. The analysis explores the pedagogical principles underpinning CLIL and considers their applicability to the design of ESP courses in Economics-oriented higher education institutions. The study identifies the key conceptual distinctions between ESP, CLIL, and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), focusing on the role of language in the learning process, instructional objectives, and the methodological principles that characterize each approach. Particular attention is given to the importance of combining complementary pedagogical approaches in order to ensure continuity in foreign language education, promote the progressive development of students' professional communicative competence, enhance academic literacy, foster higher-order cognitive skills, and encourage interdisciplinary thinking.

A comparative analytical approach is employed to evaluate the pedagogical value of CLIL in relation to ESP and to identify areas of complementarity between the two approaches. In addition, descriptive analysis is used to examine CLIL classroom practices, including interactive learning activities such as role plays, case studies, and student presentations, together with different forms of instructional scaffolding (linguistic, cognitive, and task-based). Based on this analysis, the study proposes a range of CLIL-informed teaching strategies and classroom activities that can be effectively integrated into university ESP courses to strengthen students' foreign language communicative competence in professional contexts. So let us first analyze and compare the didactic approaches like English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and English as a Medium Instruction (EMI) in terms of their appropriateness, effectiveness, and complementarity as means of enhancing the foreign language communicative competence of students at higher educational institutions of Ukraine specializing in Economics.

2. CLIL versus ESP and EMI

As discussed earlier, English for Specific Purposes is often the only or one of the most important courses in Ukrainian higher education for non-philological majors. The course is included in the curriculum as a compulsory subject and is intended to help the students achieve a level of English language proficiency no

lower than B2, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The aim of teaching English for Specific Purposes to Ukrainian university students is to increase their communication skills for professional purposes in both spoken and written form and to develop practical foreign language skills across various modes of their future professional needs. The other point is to help students develop up-to-date professional knowledge from foreign language sources and to assist them in a specific field. In order to communicate, students need to use English not only as a means of communication across cultures but also as a means of professional relations within their chosen field. This includes reading and translating subject-based literature and using professional terminology accurately as well as conducting efficient oral and written business communication.

It is expected that higher education students will achieve a level of professional communicative competence that will allow them to actively participate in professionally oriented communication and confidently use a foreign language in their further professional activities. The training is aimed at a gradual increase of their professional language competence level, which in the future will contribute to the growth of professional awareness, as students begin to turn to foreign language texts not only in preparation for foreign language classes, but also to improve their professional knowledge and skills, using authentic subject materials from journals, monographs, and Internet resources in the process of professional training.

As we can see, ESP in Ukrainian higher education programs aims for an ambitious and well-founded goal: to prepare competent, highly educated and well-qualified professionals who can effectively apply modern solutions to contemporary problems. But the objective of ESP has proved more difficult as every year more contact hours have been cut in order to balance the proportion of this non-major subject in the curriculum against the increasing education cost.

According to Coyle, one of the reasons for the establishment of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was that the number of contact hours allocated to foreign languages teaching in the educational syllabus was not always enough to produce the optimal learning results⁹. This has led to growing interest in the possibility of teaching languages in parallel with the study of other disciplines, which provides greater general contact with the language. At the same time, other problems were also relevant: the need for a higher level

⁹ Coyle D., Hood P., Marsh D. CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010. 169 p.

of linguistic and communicative competence, the use of more relevant methods and an increase in the level of teaching authenticity in order to increase learners' motivation.

A distinctive feature of CLIL compared to such approaches as subject-oriented language teaching or various forms of bilingual education is the purposeful pedagogical integration of contextualized content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching practice. The difference with English for Specific Purposes is that achieving the appropriate level of authenticity of teaching remains a difficult task for FL teachers. Even when using authentic texts, the main goal of classes often remains language learning, which is assessed mainly in terms of grammatical perfection. In combination with CLIL, learners receive two complementary experiences: deliberate language learning and natural language acquisition. CLIL creates natural conditions for language development by combining intentional learning with situational acquisition, which significantly increases motivation to language learning.

An important difference between CLIL and ESP is the role of language in the learning process. In CLIL, language functions as a means of teaching subject content, while in ESP it is the main object of learning. Accordingly, assessment in CLIL is focused mainly on mastery of the subject content taking into account language progress, while in ESP the main focus is on the development of language skills and competences. While ESP emphasizes specialized terminology, typical discourse, text genres and communicative situations inherent in a particular profession, CLIL also promotes the development of foreign language communicative competence, as well as the improvement of cognitive skills, academic literacy and interdisciplinary thinking by combining language learning with subject content mastery.

Although ESP focuses primarily on purposeful language learning that meets the specific professional or academic students' needs and is focused on the formation of necessary language competence for effective communication in a specific field, the use of the CLIL approach can continue the process of improving the foreign language competence of higher education students without taking away hours from professional disciplines in the curriculum.

Thus, CLIL and ESP are useful but different approaches to foreign languages learning. ESP is the best course for professionals who need to learn a foreign language for practical use. CLIL is better suited as a natural continuation of the language immersion process for higher education students in professionally oriented foreign language communication, as well as in the context of integrated education, where the combination of language and subject learning is important.

We also note that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a different concept from English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) which

refers to the use of English to teach non-language (content) subjects. EMI is focusing on learning the subject while language improvement is viewed as an incidental learning outcome. CLIL pursues a dual goal: mastering the content of the academic discipline, as well as developing foreign language competence. Content and Language Integrated Learning is not just teaching in another language but rather education through an additional language, and is based on a combination of interconnected pedagogical principles and teaching practices. Content development is supported through linguistic scaffolding by gradually introducing vocabulary, grammar and concepts, as well as explicit attention to language structures and academic genres.

Since English functions as a medium of instruction rather than the object of learning within the EMI approach, students' lexical and grammatical errors are generally not corrected. In CLIL, however, language functions simultaneously as both the medium and the object of instruction. Learners receive continuous linguistic support together with the explicit introduction of content-specific terminology. Furthermore, CLIL employs integrated pedagogical methodologies based on the 4Cs Framework – Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture¹⁰ as well as active and interactive learning strategies. Consequently, CLIL teachers are expected to possess both subject expertise and language pedagogical competence or to work in close collaboration with foreign language teachers. In EMI, by contrast, the instructor is primarily a subject specialist rather than a language educator and is therefore free to employ conventional content-specific teaching methodologies.

3. Integration of CLIL Principles and Approaches into ESP Classes

CLIL implementation and successful integration into the educational framework of Ukrainian higher education institutions specializing in Economics has major benefits. CLIL provides Economics students with an opportunity to be fluent in a FL for professional needs and develop their communicative competence within multiple professional settings. Besides, CLIL increases motivation by linking the study of academic content to the foreign language application. Third, CLIL improves the students' cognitive ability as well. The truth is that learning to think in more than one language can be beneficial and lead to overall students' cognitive abilities improvement.

At the same time, it should be recognized that the success of a CLIL course and how it ends up being learned is dependent on the level of students' foreign

¹⁰ Coyle D., Hood P., Marsh D. CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010. 169 p.

language proficiency. At a minimum, a student must be able to understand basic subject concepts in order to engage into the interactive learning processes inherent in the CLIL approach. Such basic FL proficiency and professional FL communication skills can be developed through an initial ESP course which can prepare the students for possible further CLIL-based instruction. Therefore, we propose that CLIL should be introduced in Ukrainian higher educational institutions to the third or fourth-year students after the successful completion of an ESP course, which will keep the curriculum of foreign language education consistent, develop students' communication skills in a professional context, enhance their academic literacy and develop higher-order cognitive skills as well as encourage interdisciplinary thinking¹¹.

Despite the above-discussed educational route, many CLIL principles and concepts can be successfully integrated and used in ESP classes through the early stages of FL learning as well. In this respect we will try to explain which CLIL characteristics and features are useful and can be applied to improve the ESP methodology, provide for a class procedure diversity and complement the teaching methods and means.

The key principle of CLIL is authenticity, which is something that can be very useful, successfully integrated and applied in ESP classes. CLIL creates the language and subject content balance. To achieve this goal, the students should be exposed to authentic materials, real-world activities and contemporary language they need to practice in. Authenticity allows students to build connections between the classroom and the actual world. To this end, CLIL promotes the systematic use of professional publications, media texts, reports and websites, as well as other discipline-specific materials.

It is necessary to note that authenticity remains one of the major problems in traditional foreign language teaching. Even when authentic texts are introduced in language classes, they are often used to teach grammar or vocabulary and not as the source of meaningful subject content. CLIL at its core is the combination of language teaching with authentic content learning which enables students to learn more consciously and naturally. Consequently, by introducing CLIL authenticity into ESP, learners benefit from two complementary experiences: conscious language study and natural acquisition. This fosters an ideal environment for linguistic development through integrating intentional instruction with situational learning, which significantly boosts learners' motivation.

¹¹ Гільдебрант К., Ступак М. Сутність та особливості CLIL, ESP та ЕМІ як засобів вдосконалення іншомовної комунікативної компетентності студентів у ЗВО економічного профілю. Вісник Чернівецького торговельно-економічного інституту. Вип. 1 (101). 2026. С. 262–273. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.34025/2310-8185-2026-1.101.17>

Another fundamental principle of CLIL is active learning, which means that learning is not a teacher-centred process but rather a learner-centred process that is based on knowledge construction. Students are not just passive information viewers; they are in the class to do the work (thinking, learning, collaborating) and to study the subject in a foreign language as well as to express their voice in what they learn. In the process, the teacher acts as a facilitator, which promotes both cognitive and linguistic development for the students and provides them with an opportunity to have meaningful interaction. In practice, CLIL classrooms are characterized by pair and group discussions, problem-solving activities, mini research projects, debates, simulations, presentations, and project-based learning. In those activities language is learned through purposeful communication and not with purely linguistic practice. This is also good for deepening subject understanding and developing higher level thinking skills as well as improving communication ability.

These pedagogical principles are applicable to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching where communication is participative, collaborative and task-oriented. As professional communication is intrinsically cooperative and objective-driven, active learning provides a fruitful approach to developing language and professional knowledge. Problem-based learning, for example, allows students to tackle realistic professional problems, like examining market trends, assessing company performance or interpreting financial statements. In the same way, students learn through simulations and role play to use specialized terminology and professional communication practices in business negotiations, project meetings, technical briefings and consulting clients. Collaborative projects, such as business plans, product design and marketing campaigns, mock conferences and such, also integrate the subject knowledge with language learning and work to build collaboration, critical thinking as well as professional communication skills.

Task-based presentations also offer a good language practice opportunity. Students research an area, present their findings, answer questions, defend their views and take peer assessments. Such activities promote subject understanding, develop structured academic discourse, improve students' critical thinking and increase their public speaking confidence. In general, active learning relates to ESP objectives since it mirrors the true-to-life professional relationships and provides learners with realistic work environments. It encourages the subject-specific knowledge learning, improves communication, collaboration skills and other skills which are very important in order to develop students' cognitive skills for both language and subject learning.

Another defining principle of CLIL is scaffolding, which is the temporary instructional support that teachers provide to students, which allows them to do

tasks that are beyond what they are able to learn at the moment. As learning progresses, this support is gradually withdrawn and students steadily develop a higher degree of autonomy, thus becoming independent life-long learners. The concept is rooted in socio-constructivist theory, particularly Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development.

In CLIL, scaffolding serves three functions. It facilitates conceptual understanding as it makes more complex disciplinary material easier to understand, promotes language development as it provides language resources for subject-specific communication, and helps learners to learn higher-order thinking. Scaffolding in CLIL includes most commonly pre-teaching vocabulary and functional language, using visual aids (charts, diagrams, models), sentence starters or writing frames, modeling tasks and expected outcomes, structuring tasks step-by-step to support collaborative learning. The goal is not to simplify the content too much but to make it accessible through appropriate support.

Scaffolding in ESP can be split into linguistic, cognitive, and task-based support. Linguistic scaffolding involves pre-teaching discipline-specific vocabulary, functional language for professional communication, and model texts to illustrate genre conventions. Cognitive scaffolding involves breaking complex professional tasks into manageable stages, using graphic organizers and providing guiding questions to support analytical thinking. Task scaffolding gradually transitions learners from focused activities to more independent work with templates, working examples and staged communicative work.

A key condition for proper scaffolding is the gradual release of responsibility. A Business English negotiation task demonstrates this. The teacher provides students with prompts and guides the negotiating process. The students then start doing semi-guided negotiations and go on to independent simulations in which they employ the communication strategies and the professional vocabulary learned at the earlier stages.

Overall, scaffolding represents a strategic component of ESP instruction because it reduces the cognitive burden of complex disciplinary content and allows learners to gradually build up the language resources for independent academic and professional communication. Scaffolding is a way of connecting language learning with professional knowledge, which is fully consistent with CLIL philosophy¹².

Beyond authenticity, active learning, and scaffolding, several other CLIL characteristics are particularly relevant to ESP contexts. Primarily, CLIL emphasizes dual-focused objectives, integrating both content and language

¹² Hildebrant K. The CLIL Approach Integration into Teaching English for Specific Purposes within Economic Higher Educational Institutions. *Освіта та педагогічна наука*. 2026. No 1 (191). P. 63–71. DOI: 10.12958/2227-2747-2026-1(191)-63-71

outcomes to ensure that learners cultivate subject expertise alongside discipline-specific linguistic skills. CLIL fosters cognitive engagement, training higher-order thinking skills in tandem with language practice. Similarly, ESP students benefit from analyzing case studies, solving field-specific problems, evaluating data, and justifying their decision-making. This approach supports cohesive learning, ensuring that subject mastery, cognitive development, and advanced language use evolve simultaneously, ultimately enhancing both professional awareness and linguistic proficiency. Do Coyle's 4Cs framework comprising Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture underscores the vital role of intercultural awareness and effective communication within professional environments. For English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the "Culture" element is especially significant as well, given that professional discourse frequently occurs in international and cross-cultural settings.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the integration of authenticity, active learning, scaffolding, cognitive challenge, dual-focused learning objectives and intercultural awareness provides a coherent pedagogical framework for contemporary ESP instruction. Rather than treating language as an isolated object of study, this approach positions it as a medium for acquiring, constructing, and communicating disciplinary knowledge. Consequently, learners simultaneously develop subject expertise, communicative competence, and higher-order thinking skills. For students preparing for professional careers in Economics, such an integrated approach offers substantial educational benefits by strengthening academic literacy, learner autonomy, professional confidence and readiness for effective participation in international academic and workplace environments.

SUMMARY

In the context of globalization and the increasing demand for professional mobility, enhancing the foreign language communicative competence of Economics students has become a strategic priority in higher education. This study aims to provide a comparative theoretical analysis of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) as approaches to improving students' professionally oriented foreign language competence. The research is based on a review of the relevant literature, comparative analysis of pedagogical approaches, and the synthesis of European educational experience. The findings identify the principal conceptual differences between ESP, CLIL, and EMI with respect to the role of language, instructional objectives, and methodological principles. Particular attention is paid to the pedagogical

potential of integrating CLIL principles into university ESP courses for students majoring in Economics. The study demonstrates that CLIL-informed teaching strategies, including authentic tasks, active learning, scaffolding, and content-based classroom activities, can enhance students' motivation, academic literacy, critical thinking, and professional communicative competence. It is specified that introducing CLIL after a basic ESP course can ensure continuity in foreign language education while strengthening interdisciplinary learning and preparing students for professional communication in international contexts. The findings may contribute to the development of integrated ESP curricula and to the implementation of CLIL in Ukrainian Economics higher educational institutions.

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Information about the author:

Hildebrant Kateryna,

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of Management,

Marketing and Logistics,

Chernivtsi Institute of Trade and Economics

of State University of Trade and Economics

7, Tsentralna Square, Chernivtsi, Ukraine