

# The Practice of Integrating CLIL and Bloom's Taxonomy in Business English Courses

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**Abstract:** With the aim of improving business English major students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical tasks, this paper describes the method of combining CLIL teaching methodology and Bloom's taxonomy theory in business English courses. The paper points out that the traditional teaching system guided solely by the CLIL method may ignore students' cognitive foundation, as they have never learned any business-related knowledge. With the combination of CLIL's 4C framework and the six cognitive levels of Bloom's theory, teachers can better design the teaching objectives and activities of each stage in business-related courses.

**Keywords:** New liberal arts; Business English; CLIL; Bloom's taxonomy

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## 1. Introduction

Under the guidance of the concept of "cross-integration and innovative development" of "New Liberal Arts", the professional abilities of business English students have been endowed with multi-dimensional and comprehensive new connotations. The core dimension should be based on content and communication, and be expanded and deepened on this basis. Current teaching practices, however, still reflect the disadvantages of traditional education. For business English major students, language learning is isolated from business-related courses. Students are taught to memorize and understand business concepts in English, while high-level cognitive skills such as critical, analytical, and creative thinking are ignored. Therefore, the comprehensive requirements for business English teaching require teachers to find a method that can systematically combine language skill development with deep content learning <sup>[1]</sup>. These concepts encourage business English teachers to explore new pedagogical frameworks that can cultivate students' comprehensive and practical ability. This trend makes the integration of different teaching methods and theories a necessary approach.

## 2. Innovation in teaching method

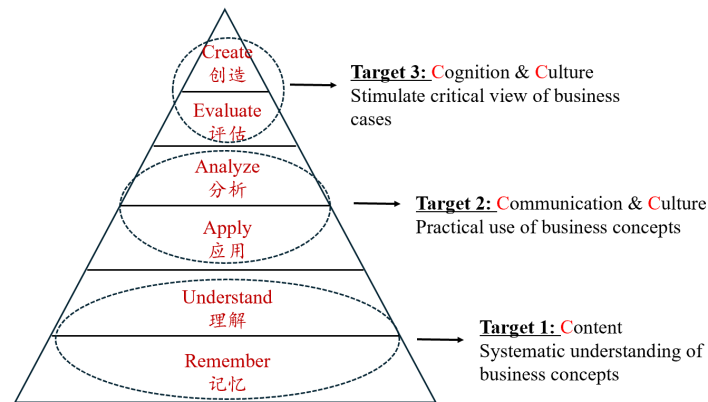
Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a teaching method widely adopted by teachers. This approach can help teachers focus on both content and language and maximize the value of teaching materials<sup>[2]</sup>. Its 4C framework integrates four aspects, including content, communication, cognition, and culture. Under the “New Liberal Arts” framework, it is required that business English teaching methods be comprehensive, effectively cultivating students’ language skills, professional skills, and the ability to apply them flexibly. The CLIL teaching method can well meet this requirement, achieving a balance and complementarity of the two teaching directions.

However, the CLIL teaching method still has its drawbacks. CLIL aims to create a context that is suitable for the current cognitive level of students, driven by subject content, and encourages students to actively acquire language input<sup>[3]</sup>. Teachers may find that the basic cognitive level of students that is required by CLIL can sometimes be ignored or difficult to achieve. There is no specific guidance on how to improve students’ cognitive ability in this model. This encourages teachers to find another method to perfect the teaching model. Bloom’s taxonomy provides a solid framework for designing learning objectives and assessing tasks based on cognitive hierarchy. It presents six sections, including remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. These sections provide an accurate and operational definition for cognition, enabling the goals of cultivating thinking abilities to be clearly defined and sequenced. Another advantage of this theory is its aim of facilitating students’ retention and transfer of the knowledge they have learned<sup>[4]</sup>. Students can experience a closed-loop process from cognitive development to knowledge acquisition and application.

In this framework, every instructional task is consciously designed to intersect a specific cognitive level with CLIL’s core components. For instance, applying and analyzing a business case (Bloom) drives the need for specialized language to articulate findings (CLIL’s Communication), deepening content mastery (CLIL’s Content). This structured framework ensures that language learning is cognitively demanding and that advancing cognitive tasks are linguistically scaffolded, thereby fostering integrated competency development.

## 3. Theoretical framework: Combining CLIL with Bloom’s taxonomy

Based on the discussion above, this paper introduces a new model design that combines CLIL and Bloom’s theory (**Figure 1**). The model posits that Bloom’s taxonomy serves as the essential operational engine for CLIL’s cognitive pillar. For Business English majors, business knowledge constitutes the core Content, and the target language is the medium of Communication. The model systematically structures this learning by designing layered cognitive tasks aligned with Bloom’s six levels, which progressively deepen both content mastery and linguistic competence. This creates a “CLIL-Bloom Matrix” where learning objectives are explicitly defined at the intersection of content area and cognitive demand. The integrated method thus merges CLIL’s dual-focus advantage with Bloom’s hierarchy, enacting the core teaching principle of using hierarchical cognitive tasks to drive deep content and language learning.



**Figure 1.** Logic model of combining CLIL with Bloom's taxonomy

Bloom's theory is essential in this framework because it fundamentally responds to three instructional design questions: defining learning destinations, mapping the pathway to get there, and establishing methods to confirm arrival <sup>[5]</sup>. This new model provides possible answers: the destination is defined by integrated content-language-cognitive objectives; the pathway is the sequenced progression through Bloom's levels within authentic business contexts; and confirmation comes from assessing performance on tasks at the corresponding cognitive tier. This structured framework ensures that language acquisition is constantly challenged by meaningful thought, and that advancing cognitive engagement is consistently supported by targeted linguistic scaffolding.

For teachers, the framework and questions can provide guidance on the formulation of teaching objectives. At the understanding level, the learning objectives should focus on content understanding and absorption. The teacher can utilize multimedia resources to help students understand basic concepts and complex knowledge in English. At the application level, it is necessary to integrate language skills with business practice ability. Group tasks such as case analysis can improve students' ability to analyze and solve problems in real scenarios. At the innovative level, the teacher should scaffold students to complete high-level cognitive tasks. Presentation and debate can improve students' ability to make critical judgments, value assessment, and concept reconstruction. At the same time, an in-depth understanding of business concepts and cross-cultural critical thinking ability should also be emphasized. A four-in-one ability framework of "language-business-cognition-literacy" is formed through this teaching process.

For students, this approach has a multi-dimensional promoting effect on their knowledge internalization, ability advancement, and cognitive development. At the level of knowledge internalization, it promotes students' systematic understanding of core business concepts and constructs a complete knowledge map. At the level of ability advancement, through hierarchical task design, it guides students to move from memory and understanding to application and creation, strengthening their practical ability to solve complex business problems. At the level of cognitive development, it enhances students' professional identity, learning engagement, and critical judgment, and cultivates their comprehensive qualities of using English for business communication and innovation.

#### **4. Model design: *Introduction to Business* as an example**

This study selects the *Introduction to Business* course as the research case. As a compulsory professional

course in the first semester of the sophomore year, this course is an introductory course for students to further understand the business field after mastering basic English knowledge, and to establish professional cognition.

Within this teaching model, the teacher's main role is to be the designer of learning tasks, the guide for cognitive advancement, and the supporter of the learning process. When learning specific business concepts such as business ethics, the teaching process follows all levels of Bloom's theory, from memorizing definitions, understanding cases, analyzing business cases with a professional view, to evaluating and creating critical viewpoints. In the process of completing high-level cognitive tasks such as analyzing cross-cultural business cases, students would need to collect information, exchange ideas, and give presentations in professional language. The language and culture dimension is achieved simultaneously. Therefore, this paper introduces the whole teaching process from the content and cognition dimension, with the language and culture dimension integrated into each target.

The content dimension requires teachers to design a hierarchical task chain and build a cognitive scaffold. In this part, the teacher needs to use multimedia teaching resources and daily examples to help students understand the basic knowledge, including concepts and related cases. Following the targets shown in **Figure 1**, the teaching process can be divided into 3 parts:

Target 1 (remember and understand): Read and analyze the case studies in the textbook. The teacher needs to guide students to organize facts through structured questions and build a vocabulary bank of business terms, laying a solid linguistic and content foundation for subsequent learning.

Target 2 (analyze and apply): Complete the "Life Snapshot" activity. Students need to collect materials before class, and the teacher guides them to categorize these vivid cases into theoretical categories, thereby naturally introducing the definition and dimensions of business ethics. The function of this activity is to connect students' personal experiences with abstract theories, with the aim of helping students achieve effective application and preliminary analysis of knowledge.

Target 3 (evaluation and creation): Organize the "Global Scandal" group presentation project. The teacher needs to guide students to conduct online research and in-depth analysis of real-life business cases. Necessary resources, such as research framework, searching list, and evaluation criteria should be given to students. Students are expected to submit a research report and conduct a full English presentation.

In the cognition dimension, the most important thing is to cultivate students' ability to apply their existing knowledge in practice and evaluate business cases from a critical perspective. To achieve this, the teacher needs to create a real learning context to promote knowledge transfer, which means all task designs emphasize the connection with the real world. From "Life Snapshot" to "Global Scandal", students are always solving problems that are close to reality and have complexity. The teacher should provide a case library, analysis tools, and cross-cultural perspectives to support students in making the leap from theory to practice, thereby deeply understanding the application of ethical principles in dynamic business environments.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper points out the existing problems in business English teaching and discusses the possibility of combining CLIL teaching methodology and Bloom's taxonomy. This innovation is not a simple accumulation

of activities. Through a carefully designed task system, students can be guided to evolve from language and knowledge receivers to autonomous learners who can think critically and solve problems creatively in English.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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