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Doctoral Thesis

**Implementing a CLIL Approach to Teaching English
for Special Purposes in Academic Contexts**

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Overview of the PhD thesis

This study took place in the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana and aimed to improve the quality of ESP communicative competence of students at the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana, by implementing a CLIL approach in the ESP classes, specifically for Business English. This was achieved by encouraging students and me, as a teacher, to use some of the CLIL teaching techniques for the acquisition of specific/profession-related language terminology and communicative skills. The study attempted an exploration of CLIL integration by implementing an experimental CLIL syllabus and materials developed for that target group of students. There will be two groups of students involved in the research experimental implementation: One is the CLIL Group, the so-called as ‘experimental group’, which will take classes through CLIL experimental syllabus and the other is the non-CLIL Group, the so-called ‘control group’ which will receive classes of teaching English as a curricular subject, by following the traditional program of English language at the university. At the beginning of the course, and for the purpose of this research, a detailed questionnaire collected the learners’ actual level of proficiency in English which has also been determined by the final compulsory English State exam, called Matura. Along with this, there was a second form of self-assessment grid, where students would self-asses their level of English by using the European Language Portfolio (ELP) grid. After these initial forms to get an overall idea about the students’ expected level of English language, it was conducted the Oxford Test of English (OTE) to each student which consisted of the four language skills, and this provided some more quantitative/objective data about the students' level at the start of my study. The OTE test served to triangulate the obtained data and made it more valid for the end of the study.

This PhD thesis includes seven different chapters, some related to the theoretical review of related literature and defining the basic concepts underpinning the study, and some related to the empirical research, presenting the research methodologies applied for the collection of the data, the results of the analysis of the data from the pedagogical experiment, and implications related to the implementation of the new ESP methodology.

This research study is carried out as a qualitative study, aiming to develop ideas for the hypothesis and to provide a deeper understanding of the existing research, by carrying out some student’ questionnaires and interviews, in the group that was taught through CLIL experimental syllabus. The investigation measures and validates the usefulness of the CLIL approach for students and

their overall language skills. Qualitative data collection were realized by using some common methods, such as individual questionnaires, language assessment tests and interviews, with the selected CLIL group.

This research topic proposed to build on prior research from more developed countries, such as Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, France, and Spain which have carried out for the implementation of CLIL approach in their education system. It aims to further extend the existing field of research, through the implementation of the CLIL approach in the Albanian higher education system. To date, CLIL has not been integrated into the Albanian public schools, particularly into higher education and English for Special Purposes.

My research proposes to document the value of CLIL and design courses to effectively integrate CLIL into the Albanian higher education system. This would have substantial impact on improving English skills for future students and their employment abilities.

The conclusion highlighted some of the benefits of adopting a CLIL approach in the area of Business English, at the University level, where students being taught through CLIL proved to have a higher fluency and accuracy in communicative language skills and better competence of profession-related language terminology and that this new approach not only equipped students with better language knowledge and skills related to their business area of study but it also increased their motivation and prepared the learners for work-related purposes and the real world. From the teaching point of view, the study tried to argue the thesis that using this new discipline and a variety of activities and tasks of professional interest for the students of ESP classes will help them develop not only communicative skills, but also critical thinking and the other language skills, and will stimulate them towards a higher level of motivation and self-confidence, with greater exposure to authentic use of the English language. This is a crucial factor in preserving and strengthening the student's interest in specific language learning terminology, similar to the level of CLIL learners. Teachers play an essential role in the classroom, a role that is determined by the techniques and the diverse strategies that they use.

There are many factors that influence teaching ESP, starting from the accurate determination of the student level within the classroom, as well as the ongoing motivation of students in the learning process, determining their motivation and adapting the defined tasks clearly related to specific

language terminology, as projects and a variety of class materials will affect not only in language acquisition, but also its use for communicative purposes.

Literature Review

A brief review of the English language teaching tradition

First, let's review the history of some of the main methods and approaches applied to teaching English over the years are: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audiolingual Method to the Communicative Approach and its elaboration in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and variations like task-based learning (TBL), active learning, intercultural approach, etc. Referring to Andonic definition about the task-based learning approach, he emphasizes that TBL is a conceptualized approach in which tasks form the basis of what is planned and implemented in the lessons and tasks can also be manipulated to focus on form and lead learners to negotiate meaning, draw out comprehensible input and produce output.

While Richards and Rodgers (1986, pp. 5-7) state that the Grammar-Translation Method is a way of studying language through detailed analysis of its grammar rules followed then by the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. Hence, this way also reinforces the rules of understanding morphology and syntax of the foreign language.

In the mid-nineteenth century, some innovations about the language teaching way were knocking and the Grammar-Translation Method started to be "rejected" because the demand for communication between Europeans started to increase and so the demand for oral proficiency in foreign language increased as well. This was called as the 'Reform Movement' and the study of spoken language and communicative purposes took place widely thanks to the in-depth lobby and the updated policies that Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) drafted accordingly.

It is worth mentioning that English language teaching has experienced a number of fundamental changes worldwide, especially in the last decades. Meanwhile, in my country Albania, the English language teaching remained unchanged for over 45 years, as Albania was an isolated country under the totalitarian communist regime system and foreign languages were considered a 'taboo'. People were not allowed to learn any other foreign language except for the Russian language, as in those days these two countries enjoyed good political and diplomatic relations (Cauli, A General

Reflection of the English Language Education in Albania, 2019). Albanian people first came in touch with the English language and its culture elements through translated literature works of writers like Shakespeare or Oscar Wilde, and later on through popular music like the songs of Tina Turner or other famous British and American bands that were transmitted during the early post-communist times (Kapo, 2011).

The culture and education development of a country is often made possible by the strongest instrument of change implementation, namely language learning. Seeking openness to the world and ensuring stability and prosperity for the future generations once they finish university can happen only by providing young people with better education services and in particular by fulfilling their needs through high-quality foreign language learning. As mentioned above, language teaching has been widely affected by the technological development and the social changes in recent years, and various new methodological approaches have been introduced in academic contexts across the globe in an effort to achieve better qualitative and quantitative results in the education of young people. All these educational innovations have contributed to the upbringing of a new generation of English learners who are well aware of the aim for studying this language – English is a lingua franca and a pass to the globalized world, where knowledge of English is essential as countries become ever more integrated in terms of culture, economy, trade and commerce. Once students are familiar with the basics of English, all they need to fulfill the above goal is the acquisition of specific, profession-related vocabulary and better communicative skills, finely tuned for use in professional settings, which will empower them to join the global market and effectively contribute to world progress.

Methods and approaches teaching and learning English for general purposes

Today, it is common and much easier to talk with people from different countries, either through social media sites or when travelling around the world, and because of all these opportunities, English seems to be the medium and unique language of communication. For the same reasons, this language is taught to children around the world since in their first school years, and ever more often even earlier. The world is developing so fast that people travel in any direction and at any moment from the Far East to the opposite corner of the globe and they use exactly this language when passing through continents. Although it is not the oldest language in the world, English is

spread all over the world. Thus the English language is the means of communication with different nationalities, to surf the internet or do business internationally.

Although there are many different methods and approaches generally applied to teaching and learning English over the years (starting from the Grammar-Translation Method, through the Audiolingual Method to the Communicative Approach and its elaboration in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); we can also mention here variations as task-based learning and CBI-content-based instruction), and recently various online platforms and additional materials and resources have been developed to help people improve their own language skills, still the more traditional ways of teaching and learning this language predominate across the world. The most widespread method in many EFL classrooms still is the Grammar-Translation method. This is the way how English is taught even in elementary schools. In the Albanian educational system English as a school subject accompanying students up to their last year of high school, is also taught in this traditional way. It should be noted, however, that with the democratic changes in the socio-political system in Albania, English took the position of an important foreign language to be learned and knowledge of English was considered an ‘asset’ for those few people who had some prior English language competence. Previous generations used to learn Russian as a foreign language, so there was an eagerness and desire to learn this ‘new’ language and be a part of the modern world. Initially, EFL professionals used some old English coursebooks to teach the language, like ‘*Essential English for foreign students*’, and in later years it was followed by other similar coursebooks and dictionaries which were mainly promoted for use by the first Albanians who had studied abroad and had personal experience of learning the English language through them. More recently, the English language was given due prominence by the Ministry of Education in Albania as they initiated the introduction of new syllabuses and launched various projects to improve the process of language learning and replace the outdated curriculum and teaching methods. Albanian teachers and scholars joined efforts to create more modern coursebooks which were published by well-known publishing houses. These innovations took an immediate implementation and were embraced by the learners and teachers of that time and can still be seen in present EFL classrooms. As learning English enjoyed a greater demand in schools around the country and its importance grew even more, the number of language classes was also adjusted to meet the requirements in the CEFL for the different levels of language proficiency and to intensify the learning process. It has been almost a decade now since those

educational changes took place in Albania and now the present generations of school leavers are well-equipped with EFL communicative competence.

However, it remains necessary to highlight the fact that even though English language teaching continues evolving across the school system in Albania in accordance with the outlined new language education policy, in academic ESP contexts the traditional way of language teaching still prevails and ESP lecturers stick to the old academic curriculum frames.

A General Reflection of the English Language Education in Albania

Albania, a small country located on the southeastern Europe's Balkan Peninsula, and worldwide known as a post-communist country where everything was ruled and commanded under the harsh surveillance of the communist leader of that time, Mr. Enver Hoxha, who served in power from 1944 until 1985. So, for over 45 years Albania has been an isolated country where the totalitarian regime flourished for many long years since early 1944. Being ruled under that communist regime of the time there was no contact with the English world, except very few movies broadcasted in English language by the only Albanian Public Television Station of that time, called

TVSH. Albana Hadri, a University Professor in Albania, emphasizes in her article that after the fall of dictatorship all the economic and socio-cultural changes that were brought in the country had also done a big impact in the English language teaching situation in Albania as it had been subject to many changes on going. Therefore, coming out from a dictatorial isolation where foreign languages were considered a 'taboo' and were harshly punished by the government, people who could speak this language were very few in number, despite of very few who had studied abroad and mastered this language and some few others who had secretly and hideously learned it in their houses by taking lectures and books in any unofficial way.

These were the first people in Albania to write guide books, English-Albanian or Albanian-English dictionaries and pocket dictionaries in English Albanian language after the fall of dictatorship, and to spread the language and help other people and the young generation learn it too. The love and desire to learn a foreign language was immense, especially after having studied Russian language for so many years as a compulsory subject in all the schools of the country during the communism times.

So, people wanted to learn new innovative languages. They demonstrated to have a sharp skill in a foreign language acquisition and easily switching from one language to another (Cauli, 2019).

Albanians' attitude towards English

English as a global language has had an impact in many countries around the world, which is a fact even in Albania. This language holds an important place due to the fact of being a bridge language or otherwise called 'a lingua franca' in international communications between many diplomatic delegations or many other foreign institutions based in Tirana, Albania. This also comes as a result of being the language of business and tourism for many years now. English has been regarded as the language of improvement and integration of Albania as a country and many road signs, restaurants or other landmarks also display the English version explanation next to the mother tongue, Albanian language. This study aims to describe various factors and viewpoints affecting and contributing in English language learning as second/foreign language in Albania and also the Albanians' positive attitude towards acquiring the English language. This language is found to be always embraced and applied by many individuals, researchers, public and private institutions or headquarters of many important international companies settled in this country.

According to one of the English professors, Irena Pata (2011), the first touch that Albanian population had with English language and its culture elements were through literature of its writers like Shakespeare or Oscar Wilde and later on by some music touch like the first songs of Tina Turner or other famous bands that were transmitted during the post-communist time. Nowadays, many foreign people from other countries and not only, but also native speakers of English language from Great Britain and United States of America and from many other countries get hired under employment contracts (teach in Albania website) and come to teach English to Albanian people every year. Also, the globally known organization 'AIESEC' every year recruits a big number of English speaking people, who volunteer to come and professionally share their teaching experiences in many schools and institutions of my country. Today, English is seen as the language of businesses and of job interviews. Many trainings and briefings continue to be hold in English language, in the global language. Though Albania is not yet part of European Union, people seem to learn this language in advance to show in a way that they are preparing and being ready for a work market with real standards and with a more professional image for it.

CLIL in the eye of European Union: Its Evolution and Implementation

In the literature review section, it will mainly be discussed the originating and current perspectives of the Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. It will review, from the inception of CLIL to date, the continued supporting research evidence for its efficiency collected by linguists and practicing teachers: starting from those who were the first to experiment with the CLIL approach, to those who have developed the theoretical background for substantiating the CLIL implementation.

In the course of the chapter the implementation of CLIL in several educational institutions, will be presented and the impact and results of that educational reform will be discussed, Questions as to why CLIL attracted the attention of many teachers and school directors, as well as how CLIL increased student motivation while learning through this approach, will be addressed. Emphasis is also placed on how teaching and learning with this new approach casts doubt on the traditional ways of acquiring a language. Discussing several investigative studies will clarify how the CLIL approach shifted English from being a “library language” to a skill that would further enhance student motivation, language awareness and communicative abilities in the learning process. The acronym of CLIL was coined by David Marsh, a professor working in the area of multilingualism and bilingual education at the Finnish University of Jyväskylä in 1994 (Marsh, Maljers, & Hartiala, 2001) and he was also a key team member who led the European project of CLIL/EMILE, entitled “The European Dimension”, in 1999 - 2002.

Another pioneer who discovered the value of this new approach was Professor Do Coyle: she spread the CLIL approach across Europe while working with other bilingual teachers at the University of Nottingham during the years of 1990-2008 (Coyle, 2005). She was the one who developed the famous 4Cs model of the CLIL framework, namely content, cognition, communication and culture.

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) has emerged since the millennium as a major trend in education. Written by Do Coyle, Philip Hood and David Marsh and drawing on their experience of CLIL in secondary schools, primary schools and English language schools across Europe, their book – (C.L.I.L. Content and Language Integrated Learning (2012), provide a full comprehensive overview of CLIL by summarizing the theory which underpins the teaching of a content subject through another language and discusses its practical application, outlining the key directions for the development of research and practice. This book acknowledges the uncertainty

many teachers feel about CLIL, because of the requirement for both language and subject knowledge, while providing theoretical and practical routes towards successful practice for all.

Meanwhile, another noble contribution in the area of CLIL comes from some other pioneers like Phil Ball, Keith Kelly and John Clegg, who in their book named “Putting CLIL into Practice” (2016) offered a new methodological framework for the CLIL classroom, focusing on how to guide input and support output. Full of real-life examples and practical guidelines, it was provided support to both novice and experienced CLIL teachers.

For example, taking into consideration the case of Bulgaria (Case 12 – EU Pre Accession Foreign Language) where Keith was the key proponent of CLIL in the CLIL/EMILE project (representing Bulgaria's contribution to it) applied in specialized schools (vocational secondary), under the coordination of Stefka Kitanova (a Bulgarian teacher and team member of several projects on CLIL/LSP) came into conclusion that this was an added value because; a) it prepares students for further study abroad, b) the linguistic and subject competencies are high, c) the transferability potential is high if contexts are fairly similar, d) it offers aspects of European citizenship in the school curriculum and this is linked to the aspirations towards membership of the European Union, and e) parallel to the use of CLIL/EMILE, three foreign languages are specifically studied by the school learners. This project (CLIL/EMILE-The European Dimension, pp. 147-149) also highlighted some of the predominant reasons for the implementation of CLIL/EMILE such as:

- The Culture Dimension – develops intercultural communication skills
- The Environment Dimension – prepares for internationalization, specifically EU integration; - it gives access to international Certification and enhances school profile as well
- The Language Dimension - improves overall target language competence and develops plurilingual interests and attitudes
- The Content Dimension - prepares for future studies and/or working life
- The Learning Dimension - diversifies methods and forms of classroom practice

According to them, all these key case characteristics were of particular importance because of the fact that they enhanced the learner’s foreign language skills alongside provision of mainstream education and because such revival of tradition and of the learner’s interest was attributed to the impact of internationalization and accession procedures of the country.

CLIL was conceived by European language experts and educators within the European educational setting of the 1990s in which a strive at multilingualism was prominent. The new multilingualism policy in the European Union aimed to encourage language learning and linguistic diversity in society, at a faster pace. Thus, they intended to progress towards the acquisition of multiple foreign languages goal, under the coordination of David Marsh, the leading proponent of the CLIL approach, who launched the ground-breaking concept of CLIL for the first time in Europe in 1994 (CLIL/EMILE. The European Dimension, 2002).

The European Network of administrators, researchers, and practitioners for content and language integrated classrooms named as EUROCLIC defined CLIL as "an umbrella term" because it aimed to include as many teachers, trainers, policymakers and other scholars in the field of CLIL as possible. Their main aim was to focus on developing programs which would foster the use of a modern foreign language as the language of instruction or implement CLIL (content and language integrated learning) for non-language subjects. According to David Marsh (ibid.), "CLIL does not focus only on language and neither only on content; it serves as an integral part of both, and as a medium for an equal purpose" (Marsh, 2002, p. 58), meaning that this specific feature makes this approach different from the other language teaching methodologies. With confidence that the CLIL approach would ensure the fast development of students' foreign language competences, the European Union Commission for Modern Languages (EUCML) strongly continued to support its implementation in the mainstream education. It was initially applied in pre-schools and school contexts, and then in adult and lifelong education.

Then, in 2002, based on the European Commission Action Plan (Marsh 2002) it was officially led the European CLIL project by promoting it as a tool for language learning, essential in achieving the European goal of linguistic diversity.

According to Marsh and his colleagues (ibid.), by 2002 the CLIL teaching approach had been successfully implemented in the education systems of the majority of European countries, and they argued that there was not a single CLIL model applied across Europe but a variety of different CLIL-based approaches, which all share the principle of "learning by construction", rather than learning only by instruction (ibid., p. 184). They defined CLIL as "*any dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language, thus not usually the first foreign language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning process of non-language content*" (Marsh, 2002, p.2). As an added value, CLIL provides for the achievement of the ultimate

goal of guiding students to be motivated, capable, bilingual and multilingual, and above all, fosters independent learners of a foreign language. In other words, the CLIL methodology supports the holistic environments of learners of a foreign language and beyond.

According to Marsh (2008), the novelty of CLIL is that it mainly comes from content subjects, academic/scientific disciplines or professional life rather than from the everyday life content of the target language culture and he underlines three essential aspects of the context of CLIL.

- CLIL must not be regarded simply as an approach to language teaching and learning, however, it is concerned both with content and language. Thus, learners are more motivated than in non-CLIL context and they look at content from a different and broader perspective.
- In CLIL another language is used to teach and learn content subject, i.e. it is the medium of instruction. Language is both content and medium in the CLIL classroom.
- Within a CLIL framework content and language are learnt in integration. The two subjects – a language and a content subject – are related to each other and dealt with as a whole. In non-CLIL surroundings the learners have difficulties in establishing relationships between subjects. (ibid.)

The potential of CLIL is to use language as a natural instrument and this can be realized through various classroom situations and activities, which brings many advantages to the quality of language learning such as communication progress, gaining knowledge from other subjects and preparing students for lifelong learning by developing their learning autonomy and decision making (Kováčiková, 2020).

The spread of CLIL in Europe since the early 1990s (Marsh, 2002) is well reflected in the emerging research in this area. Since then various language perspectives like language planning and didactics have been taken into consideration while analyzing CLIL initiatives from its early start (Wolff, 2003). Many diverse variants of CLIL came into being in all levels of education across Europe and these CLIL models depended on the goal, the context and the aimed outcomes and their only difference was being either modular or program -based, according to the choice of subjects, target languages and overall objectives (Marsh, et al., 2005, pp. 6-7).

Apart from these recent developments in the theory and practice of CLIL, researchers also focus on the predecessors of CLIL and/or on other teaching and learning methods that may have influenced CLIL. Dalton-Puffer (2007) goes back into the history of language teaching

methodologies and outlines some cognate to CLIL approaches, such as Content-Based Instruction Content-Based Teaching, Bilingual Teaching and Dual-Language Programs. She acknowledges the fact that these are all synonymous with the term CLIL despite having “slightly different contextual roots and accompanying slightly different philosophical implications”; the only difference is that CLIL emerged as a method and spread across countries in Europe (Hasenova, 2015). Moreover, professor Henry Widdowson, explains in his slides the possible similarities and differences of these language teaching methodologies and CLIL approach. He defines that in task based language teaching, *content* and *context* are designed tasks to ‘resemble’ the real world activities and enhance ‘natural’ communication through fluency and accuracy. He relates CLIL with the learners’ language experience and with the learners’ subject experience.

In her book on the history of CLIL, Hasenova (2015) makes an interesting comment on the origin of this educational approach, stating that an educational phenomenon similar to CLIL existed around 5,000 years ago in the Akkadian Empire, where the Akkadians after invading Sumerians, started picking up the local language of the Sumerians and using it as the language of instruction (Hasenova, 2015, p. 8). Throughout the centuries it is evidenced that people used bilingualism as a survival method while living in ethnic groups and in the richest and multilingual territories of their time. Hasenova (ibid.) also claims that in the late 19th century there were two ways of learning a foreign language very similar to the more modern CLIL approach: these were employed by some wealthy families back then who used to send their children abroad to learn a foreign language directly in the country where it was spoken (so that later they could also get their professional training in that country), and others who would hire a native speaker as a tutor to teach their kids the vocabulary and grammatical rules of the target language (Hasenova, 2015, pp. 8-9).

Moving forward to the second half of the 20th century and over the ocean to North America, around the year of 1965, a group of English-speaking parents in Canada, and more precisely in the French territory of Quebec, required from the educational authorities of the country to provide a kindergarten program for their children which would give them equal opportunities to become fluent in speaking, reading and writing in the French language, as well as to reach normal competence in speaking the English language and to know and appreciate the culture and tradition of the French and English-speaking Canadians (Canadian Parents for French 2000). So, on a voluntarily basis, English-speaking children learned the school subjects in French language, together with the French-speaking children and it was here, in St. Lambert Quebec kindergarten,

that began a well-researched and documented experiment about how children could be successfully taught in this way (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). At that time, they named it ‘immersion’ or bilingual education (Baker & Jones, 1998, p. 496). As this idea proved to be coherent, in 1966, other countries, including Finland and England, took advantage of this innovative educational approach and started making program adaptations in their schools’ curriculum. The success of these programs drew the attention of Europeans interested in the policy of language learning. As mentioned before, a group of experts at the European Commission elaborated the ‘immersion’ idea by issuing a proposal under the motto of “*encouraging teaching in schools through the medium of more than one language*” (Marsh D., 2002, p. 52). Due to the development and integration of many teaching approaches in the new methodological concept, this new method was finalized under the name of the ‘CLIL umbrella’. The mobility for work and employment across the European Union further increased the demand among Europeans for higher language competency levels. It was precisely here that CLIL gained an immediate and broad adoption, with the aim to provide better and faster language competence to a wide range of learners. The last decade has welcomed vast research on the CLIL approach, with the support of multi-disciplinary research, conducted by many other educators, linguistics, and psychologists. Their main focus has been on the linguistic aspects of the methodology, rather than on its non-linguistic elements (Marsh, 2012, p. 5).

Based on the provided case studies of CLIL development in several selected European countries at the time, it is argued in the 2002 report of the 'European dimension' of CLIL (Marsh, 2002) that the Netherlands and Finland are distinguished with the highest levels of CLIL implementation in their primary and secondary schools, as well as in tertiary education. In other countries like Poland, under their educational reform in 1999, the CLIL approach started to be applied in secondary schools (Papaja, 2014, p. 15). In Hungary, CLIL was initiated in 1997 and it was referred to as ‘a bilingual educational program. Then, in 2001, twenty-five primary schools with CLIL programs were counted in Budapest, Hungary alone. In the academic year of 2006-2007 the government of Hungary officially introduced teacher training programs for preparing practitioners to use this new approach (Kovacs, 2014, p. 15).

The development of ESP and its difference with EGP

For Dudley-Evans (2001, p. 131), the ESP course design and the teaching methodology along with the activities and materials used in it, are strongly defined by the results of a need assessment carried out by the targeted group of learners. Earlier in time, Mackay and Mountford (1978, p. 2) classified ESP as the teaching of English for a “utilitarian purpose”. They referred to the purpose of defining the needs of the learners through a clear investigation which could be either academic, occupational, or scientific. Such needs, in turn, determine the content of the ESP curriculum and how it would be taught and learned. According to Mackay and Mountford (ibid.), adults who learn English are “matured enough” to master it in the field of their specialization and also “highly conscious” to make use of specialized language in authentic situations. Thus, they referred to ESP as a ‘special’ language that is used in specific settings and by certain participants.

In addition, it is argued that ESP’s genesis dates since the post-World War II era, as the language of instruction when people in the market labor force were targeted. They made use of it to meet their needs and wants and ongoing; with the massive expansion of human activities, this specific area became even more developed and needed at the same time (Hughes & Maccarthy, 1995). A very specific need for the ESP type of instruction dates back to some decades ago and more specifically to the 1960s, when the traditional approach to language instruction was no longer considered as complementing the specific needs and objectives of the learners who aimed to acquire faster and better the specific communicative skills that would make them more successful in their professional world and global market. Also, in many educational institutions, this traditional way of language teaching and learning slowed down the progress of language learning for specific needs and contexts. The traditional instructional method – or the teaching of the so-called ‘*English for general purposes*’ – was mainly based on discourse and grammatical analysis (Hughes & Maccarthy, 1995) of either general or technical texts as the learners’ proficiency level was very low. Due to this, a major part of the language course content was mainly focused on the general English language context with some emphasis on ‘survival’ situations in professional / ESP contexts.

During the last twenty years, a lot of research has been done in the field of ESP as it is considered essential for the future professional success of the learners aiming to equip them with more subject-specific language knowledge and communicative skills depending on their areas of study. The prevalent use of the English language as the main global communication tool (a lingua franca),

made the educational authorities across the world introduce the English language as a compulsory subject into their educational systems and especially at higher academic levels. This in turn led to the emergence of various types of ESP and also to the development of different teaching concepts and methodologies.

It is sometimes claimed that there is not a very clear distinction between the areas of ESP and EGP and that they overlap. Each other at times, specifically when the students' language knowledge and skills leave space for improvement and / or their linguistic proficiency is lower.

From a theoretical point of view, there is no difference between EGP and ESP and they both contribute to the acquisition of the target language, even if the former helps in the overall language learning with its main focus on components like grammar and analytical skills, while the latter helps to meet the specific needs of the students to use that language in a specific area by providing a deeper context for the language learning activities and materials (Hutchinson & Waters, *English for Specific Purposes*, 1987). As a result, the two authors argue that there are some distinguishing characteristics between EGP and ESP pedagogy, because "ESP is not the existence of a need, but rather an awareness of the need, and as such, ESP pedagogy tends to be eclectic and does not adhere to any specific approach or method of language teaching." (ibid.p.53) While EGP is language-centered and mainly concentrates on the learning of the foreign language as such, ESP is learner-centered and guides the learners in their use of that foreign language with a specific focus to it (ibid.pp.16-17).

Another distinction made by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) between English for general purposes and English for specific purposes is that learners of the first are pupils and young age learners whose goal is to learn another language and succeed in their school exams, whereas learners of the second, i.e. ESP, are university students, adults who have obtained a degree, or professionals who have language needs related to a certain field of practice. The goal of ESP is to speed up the learning process and guide the learners to achieve their goals in a more efficient and timely manner. In other words, in an ESP classroom, the learners are different, as well as the course objectives, topics of the materials and the themes are different too.

The evolution and demand for English and especially ESP over time led to the splitting of the EFL teaching theory and practice into many branches. As graphically illustrated in '*the Tree of English Language Teaching*', the separation of the ESP branch from the ELT family tree came as a

response to the market demand for professionally qualified students who could speak the language of their trade once their academic studies were completed. On the other hand, it is worth noting the strong tie between these two primary branches of ELT as one would not have existed without the other, and ESP builds on the competences developed through EGP teaching. In other words, the ESP branch would not have been feasible without the EGP one, which paves the way for it and allows learners to join courses in English for Academic Purposes or English for Specific Purposes at an intermediate level.

So, as previously mentioned, the border between where General English courses end and ESP courses begin is considerably blurred (Laurence, 1997).

ESP in the context of Business English

There are several context-related features of ESP when teaching Business English. The term "specific" in itself, refers to a specific goal for learning English for a particular domain. In fact, ESP combines both subject matter and English language teaching because learners are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study and then to their future-related profession (Fiorito, 2005).

While English as a second language (ESL) applies equally to the four language skills such as; listening, reading, speaking, and writing, an ESP program mostly emphasizes the development of spoken skills for communicative purposes in students who may be studying marketing, business management, economics, or tourism and it also emphasizes the reading development skills for the use of vocabulary and structures in a context-related subject matter in those students who may be preparing for their future-related works like business administration, accounting or computer science.

Empirical Research

Setting: The ESP teaching situation at the Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana, Albania

This study aimed at finding out the difference between teaching ESP while complying to the general 'Professional English' syllabus and applying the more traditional language teaching methods, and teaching ESP through implementing a CLIL approach in the instruction, in the belief that this extension of the ESP syllabus suits best to the learners' needs. All the findings are based on the collected research data, including the perspective of the current students and ESP Lecturers at the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana which was also accounted for, thus hoping

to make well-supported through research evidence recommendations for improving the ESP syllabus through implementing the CLIL approach to teaching the course of "Professional English". Recognizing the complexity of teaching demands and aiming to obtain reliable and valid data, I, therefore, decided to carry out an experiment in the format of a case study. The empirical research included the collection of some qualitative data through students' self-assessment and classroom observation and some quantitative data through the implementation of needs analysis in the targeted academic context, the results of which fed into the design of an action research experiment.

As previously stated, the place chosen for the research is the Faculty of Economy at the University of Tirana, Albania. The Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana is a higher public institution, founded in 1952 and so far offers six different branches related to the economic and financial accounting field. The experimental research was implemented in the first year of bachelor's program in the finance branch.

In their first year at the University, in addition to other academic subjects, all students also learn English as a foreign language (for a total of 120 academic hours), starting from the B1+ level. The subject course is called 'Professional English' and is part of the compulsory program curriculum of the University of Tirana. Students focus on learning special profession-related terminology and ESP skills for communication in professional settings. In their second year of studies, students are offered English only in the first semester of the academic year and this is an elective course. In both cases, however, the ESP courses lack clear objectives and a specialized course syllabus, which makes it difficult for the teachers of ESP to meet the specific needs of their students. To make matters worse, there is also a lack of suitable ESP materials, adapted for use by Albanian speakers. This deficit in the teaching context calls for implementing a more practical, faster and more efficient approach to the teaching of the English language, with more focus on ESP terminology and special communicative skills for professional settings rather than on EGP vocabulary and grammar. The number of hours provided for 'Professional English' during the academic year (120 hours) and the B1+ level of English that students have at the start of their course were seen as prerequisites for employing a more integrated approach to teaching ESP such as CLIL without leaving the framework of the traditional curriculum of the university.

As mentioned above, this study aimed to further improve the English language skills of the students studying in the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana, Albania. They study English for

specific purposes (ESP) – also referred to as learning English for real-life context purposes, or 'Professional English', – with a focus on Business English terminology and communicative skills, based on their future profession-related needs. In the University of Tirana and more specifically in the Faculty of Economy, among the core subjects, students are also provided with a 120-hour English language course (spread over the two semesters of their first academic year) which in theory should be orientated towards the acquisition of profession-related communicative competence and specific terminology (as implied even in the name of the course "Professional English"), but in practice, it fails to achieve this aim due to the fact that its standard syllabus is not based on any learning needs analysis data, nor does it reflect the new methodological developments in the area of ESP instruction, and in addition class activities and language learning materials do not take into account the actual level of language proficiency of the students when they start university (which is B2). So, it could be argued that not enough importance is given to this ESP competence and the affordance of the high number of hours offered for its acquisition is not utilized effectively.

To make matters worse, English language teachers, who are assigned to teach English for Specific Purposes in the faculty, often change, and sometimes they lack professional experience and/or specific training to teach the particular type of ESP course at that academic level; more often than not they teach in many departments, and without any regard for students' real targeted needs and/or without complying with the particular profession-related syllabus. It should be admitted that it is not possible for teachers themselves to design and apply a more specifically focused ESP syllabus, so they generally choose readily available ESP coursebooks and/or develop ESP course materials depending on the intuitions where they are appointed to teach for the academic year. The unstable working conditions make it difficult for the ESP lecturers to devote any time to defining more precise teaching goals or identifying learners' targeted needs and priorities.

Therefore, this study aims to focus on the way ESP is taught in the academic context of the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana, where I teach, and suggest a new way of extending the traditional syllabus frame while focusing more on students' special language needs. Building on the review of the various research studies into ESP teaching and looking at the wide pool of available materials for teaching Business English, as well as critically reflecting on my own experience in this academic context, I thought it would be more than appropriate to implement a new methodology, such as CLIL (content and language integrated learning), in my ESP classes in

an attempt to improve the learning results of my students. I was inspired by numerous publications, sharing similar good practices of implementing CLIL in various contexts, such as in the compulsory school education in the French territory of Quebec, Canada (2015), in Greek tertiary education (Chostelidou & Griva, 2013) or in Portugal where the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto launched the first CLIL programmed ‘Go CLIL project’, through English language classes, in the academic year of 2013-2014 ,which proved CLIL to be useful for any educational institution that aims to set up a project of this kind (Ellison & Santos, 2018).

Data gathering: research instruments and procedures

Data collection was done in two phases. The first phase, or the so called pre-training phase, aimed at preparing the experimental research study and it involved the administration of an EGP placement test, a preliminary students’ questionnaire and self-assessment (incl. the more general language profile grid and the more specific one for level B1), students’ needs analysis and teachers’ needs analysis, and a pre-training intervention test (all of these are described in more detail below).The second phase was entirely devoted to the quasi-experiment in the context of ‘Professional English’ classes for the students at the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana during which the CLIL-training intervention was conducted in the experimental group of students (while in the control group of students the traditional approach to their ESP training was employed) and its impact on the ESP skills of targeted population of students was measured using on-going observation, a post-training intervention test, and the learners’ self-assessment form as a final check, as well as in order to triangulate the data and increase the validity of the findings. The two groups (the experimental and the control) were formed in an equal number in order to ensure that there is the same number of students in them and that all the subjects have similar level of proficiency in EGP at the start.

Here is a more detailed description of the research instruments used to collect the necessary data in this study:

- The **EGP placement test** (the Oxford English Placement Test (OTE) (see Appendix II): This test was conducted to objectively evaluate students’ English language level prior to the formative phase of the study, so that the researcher could better plan the steps of the intervention during the quasi-experiment.
- The **students’ EGP self-assessment questionnaire** (see Appendix III): This questionnaire was based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

assessment grid and it aimed to elicit the students' own evaluation of their current language profiles employing the communicative competence standards in the CEFR assessment grid.

- The above tool was supplemented by the **self-assessment checklist grid for B1 level from the European Language Portfolio** (ELP) (see Appendix IV): it provided the subjects in the research with more detailed information about each of the language skills at this level (related to language perception, production and interaction) in the format of 'can do' statements, so that their self-assessment could be more precise and they could set themselves more accurate learning aims in order to meet the standard requirements of the language level.
- The next step in the pre-training phase consisted of a **preliminary students' language profile questionnaire** (see Appendix V): This questionnaire was divided into three subcategories and invited the subjects in the study to provide more precise and detailed information about the following:
 - their needs as ESP learners.
 - their ESP-related interests.
 - their evaluation of the current ESP teaching situation at the University.
- **Students' needs analysis** (see Appendix No.VI) and **teachers' needs analysis** (see Appendix VII) **questionnaires**: These questionnaires were also administered at the beginning of the academic year (with the informed consent of both groups) and they played an important role in providing both some evidence on the current ESP situation in the Business English Program at my university, and outlining the stakeholders' expectations regarding the students' ESP training and their desired communicative competence. More precisely, the students' needs analysis confirmed their ESP motivation and expectations in doing the 'Professional English' course and the teachers' needs analysis helped to demonstrate what my colleagues - ESP teachers, the teachers in the special professional degree-oriented subjects, and the students themselves thought about both the current ESP teaching situation (based on application of the traditional approach to ESP), and the innovative methodological modification that was suggested in the study (namely, the implementation of the CLIL approach in the Professional English classes).

- During **the formative cycle of the quasi-experiment**, some of the CLIL teaching principles and techniques were implemented in the Business English classes of the experimental group by using some CLIL materials/activities, adapted by the researcher for the educational context (see Appendix VIII) and following the procedures from the priority drafted CLIL sample lesson plans (see Appendix IX). During the intervention, **observation** was employed as a research tool to collect data and evidence about the improvement in the learners' acquisition of specific/profession-related language terminology and communicative skills (see Appendixes X, XI, XII).
- To measure the impact of the intervention more accurately, **a post-training test** (see Appendix XIII-A&B) was conducted in both the experimental and the control groups. Test data analysis for the comparison between the results of the experimental and control groups in both pre-and post- intervention phases was realized with the help of the ANOVA statistical system (Analysis of Variance).
- In order to triangulate the data on the efficiency of the CLIL instruction (both for students' task engagement and motivation, as well as quality of task performance and learning), **learners' self-assessment questionnaire** was used to provide the students with a chance to evaluate the application of the CLIL approach in their ESP classes.
- Other tools and procedures:
 - The written questionnaires were produced and administered with the help of Google forms and Rubi Star Rubric–this format of data collection facilitated the research process in view of the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The vocabulary activities, focusing on the acquisition of ESP terms, were produced with the help of the Academic Vocabulary List (AVL) created by Gardner and Davies (2013).

Analysis, Data Interpretation and the Participants involved

At the first part of this study I reviewed the theoretical foundations of the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) methodology, revealing the major principles which underpinned its success, and examined the ways in which it could be implemented in practice – not only in teaching English as a foreign language at secondary school level but also in teaching English for specific purposes and more specifically, Business English.

For the completion of this study, I researched the existing literature of CLIL written by the pioneers, who first started the research and experiments, to prove that CLIL is a novelty needed

for language learning and with a strong focus on ESP classes. I have also researched all the references and books launched by the European Union with the aim to foster CLIL among countries worldwide. I dedicated a particular focus to ESP development through time, its evolution in the past decade and its proportion, compared to academic and work occupation needs. For the practical design of a series of CLIL lessons, I have also researched different English language course books that researchers, teachers, and teacher trainers have published, to implement this approach, as well as any books that my professors or colleagues have published, contributing to ESP in the area of Business English. As the nature of CLIL requires adapting and integrating the best practical activities and materials, I also got focused on some internet-based resources, useful teaching websites and popular newspaper articles which conduct and publish informative topics with regard to business context.

For the purposes of the present empirical study, building on my theoretical findings, I developed some sample CLIL lesson plans for teaching Business English at the university level which I then implemented in my ESP classes at the Faculty of Economy at the University of Tirana through a series of CLIL lessons for the Business English course at my university. In this way I tried to measure the effect of implementing the CLIL approach on the learners' achievements in acquiring the language, employing such data collection tools as pre- and post- CLIL experimental activities tests and questionnaires with students and teachers, as well as unstructured observation while the students were being taught implementing the CLIL experimental lesson plans. During the study, I tried in particular to determine the impact of implementing the CLIL approach in the ESP classes on students' mastering of specific profession-related terminology, especially when compared to their peers who were attending regular ESP classes based on the traditional subject curriculum. In other words, for the purposes of this research, the CLIL approach was implemented in only some of the ESP groups that I taught at the Faculty of Economy at the University of Tirana in the academic year 2021/2022 (the experimental CLIL group), whereas the traditional way of teaching ESP was used in the rest of my classes with the so-called non-CLIL group students (the control group), aiming to show that there is significant improvement in the students' ESP competencies (incl. mastery of a wider range of the specific profession-related vocabulary) as a result of the implementation of the CLIL approach.

In a similar study on the efficiency of the CLIL approach, Lasagabaster (2008, p.32) claims that *“the need exists therefore to evaluate both CLIL and non CLIL groups using the same benchmarks to ascertain language competence precisely and discern which skills a CLIL approach complements most, as we intend to do in this paper.”*

Qualitative analysis is thought to be understanding and explanatory in nature, by explaining and providing details related to the subjects’ opinions and experiences and in this respect Cohen et al. (2007, p. 461), state that *“qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities.”* In this research study, qualitative analysis was conducted to examine the findings from research instruments, specifically the teachers' opinions and the data results obtained from the students' questionnaires and self-assessment checklists which allowed participants to express their opinions freely, with the aim to investigate and explain some issues. The findings were used to triangulate and validate the results from the more quantitative data analysis (e.g. the pre- and post-intervention test results).

Data collection and analysis went through three major phases, which were as follows:

- First (Pre) intervention phase – measured the learners’ spoken skills through a pre-test instrument with some speaking, reading, writing and the use of English activities for the business English terms.
- Second (Sec.) intervention phase – involved the sample population divided into two groups – the experimental group otherwise called as the CLIL group and the control group named as the Non-CLIL group. There were conducted activities related to real-life, professional situations and materials based on authentic texts from various business resources.
- Third (Post) intervention phase – asked the students from both groups to complete a Post-CLIL intervention questionnaire to express their opinions about the ESP learning process and also about the benefits of the CLIL approach (only the students from the experimental group).

The participants

At the beginning of my Business English course at the Faculty of Economy at the University of Tirana in the academic year 2021/2022, and for the purposes of this research study, I tried to

determine more precisely the ESP learners' actual level of proficiency in English prior to the CLIL experiment relying on their score on the final compulsory English State Matura exam, their own self-evaluation and their results on a full placement test. This ensured that all students who participated in the research sample had a similar level of proficiency at the start of the case study.

Additionally, in accordance with the research design of this study, two commensurable groups, each consisting of 14 students, were formed out of the 28 participants who had one academic semester of Business English at the university. One of the groups was used as a control group, hereinafter referred to as the "Non-CLIL Group"- their Business English classes followed the traditional curriculum for this course employing traditional methods of teaching at the University. The Non-CLIL Group was made of 14 students (N=14) who were enrolled in the first year of their bachelor studies at the Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana. Their proficiency level in general English at the start of the case study was at intermediate and higher intermediate level (B1/B1+), (which was later confirmed by the data collected in the first phase of the study).

The second one was the experimental group, hereinafter referred to as the "CLIL Group" – their ESP classes that semester included a number of CLIL activities in addition to the traditional Business English course materials in accordance with the CLIL experimental syllabus. As already mentioned, both groups were taught the subject of Business English for one academic semester with a frequency of three classes per week, composed of 60 min. each, excluding the five minutes break between classes. The CLIL Group was made of the same number of students, 14 students (N=14), who were also enrolled in the first year of their bachelor studies at the Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana, and all of whom had also started to learn English as a foreign language since their third grade of primary school. Apart from learning Business English as a traditional academic course (adhering to the conventional ESP methodology), this group was involved in the CLIL experimental program during the same academic semester (the number of their teaching hours per week remaining the same – three). In other words, in the CLIL Group only the teaching approach was different, the rest of the parameters of the pedagogical situation remained constant, so that any difference in the achievements of the CLIL- and Non-CLIL group could be attributed to the impact of the innovative approach.

There were also 13 teachers (N=13) who participated in the research and they were asked to express their professional opinions in the survey and to formally complete a needs analysis questionnaire, considering this as another key to the success of the ESP learning process.

Study 1: The results from the students' self-assessment grid, B1 from of the ELP and students' needs analysis questionnaire

After conducting a placement test (The Oxford Test of English, OTE) and after eliciting students' self-evaluation in regard to their EGP communicative competence and partial / preliminary ESP competence, as well as the prerequisites for its development, the next step was to use the official foreign language competence self-assessment tools provided by the European Union - the self-assessment checklist for level B1 from the European Language Portfolio (ELP)¹ and the Common European Framework of Languages (CEFR) self-assessment grid. These tools were employed to double-check the findings above and more objectively measure the students' English language level prior to the start of the experimental phase.

Again, all subjects from the research sample (N=28) were asked to complete these two self-assessment questionnaires (Cauli, A CLIL study perspective in teaching English for Specific Purposes, 2020).

The first questionnaire, based on the ELP checklist for level B1, consisted of a variety of statements per each language skill (thus also providing the students with more detailed information about the language competences), requiring the participants to mark on the provided checklist whether they *can already do it or know it by now*", or this is one of "*their priorities*" which they should try to achieve during the ESP course. The second questionnaire, based on the CEFR, invited the students to self-assess their overall language level, taking into account all of the explanations in the ELP checklist for level B1, as well as their performance on the final state Matura exam.

As explained above needs analysis is considered as a primary stage of any research aiming to determine the gap between the learners' existing and required skills, their needs and lacks before

¹Available online at: <https://www.eaquals.org/resources/the-eaquals-alte-european-language-portfolio-a-manual-for-schools-and-teachers/>

taking the necessary decisions for conducting of any type of training or the organization of a course. Burksaitiene (2008) refers to needs analysis as “the key to collect insider’s view of the ESP situation and the views of the chosen learners are of utmost importance”, while Dudley-Evans (2001) has insisted that the main aim of the ESP course is to meet the explicit needs of the learners.

In order to best identify the students' language needs and wants and also to ensure that all the necessary steps were undertaken prior to the implementation of the CLIL experimental phase, an NA survey was conducted with all the students from the target population in this study (N = 28) and the results from the analysis of the collected data are presented below. It should be noted that the questions from the students' NA survey almost mirrored those from the teachers' questionnaire to allow for comparison of data.

To conclude, all the data obtained from the language test and the various forms of students' self-evaluation proved that the students' real level of EGP competence at the start of this experimental study was at higher intermediate level which findings correlate with the results of the students' placement test where the majority of the subjects in the study turned out to be at a higher intermediate level. Also 53.6% of the respondents self-evaluated their mastery of the language at higher intermediate level in *students' NA surveys*. These results overlap with the data obtained from *teachers' NA surveys* as they also believed that their students' average EGP competence is at higher intermediate level.

Another interesting conclusion that came out from these preliminary study data was the students' interest in the practical application of acquired ESP skills i.e. their expectation for practice-oriented language classes, with exercises based on the acquisition of professional terminology and job-related skills (with an emphasis on the productive skills of speaking and writing) and the use of authentic materials. These findings correlated well with the teachers' opinions provided in their needs analysis survey.

All of this information was very helpful in attaining a general understanding of the participants' real level of English and their needs and expectations for their "Professional English" course at the University, which served as a base in the methodological design the CLIL lessons from the experimental research phase of the study.

In the long term, the results from the preliminary study would also serve as a valuable benchmark and resource for the improvement of the ESP course at the Faculty of Economy that would lead to students' better acquisition of profession-related language terminology and faster progress in gaining the desired communicative competences.

Study 2: The First (Pre-), Second (Sec-) and Third (Post-) Intervention Phases Results

For the purpose of this study, the data collection procedure for collecting and/or analyzing data and interpreting it accordingly for its overall aim to achieve the validity of this investigation. As Tashakkori and Creswell (2007, p. 4) state: *“as research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry.”*

During the first cycle of CLIL lessons with the sample population, a pre-test was conducted by means of a speaking activity generated by the platform of ‘oral presentation rubric’ which revealed a more positive attitude of the students [from the experimental group] toward English for communication purposes, and more specifically towards the use of appropriate and extended vocabulary and towards spontaneous communication by defining words that might be new to most of the audience.

Both the oral and the written tests administered were tests that assess the global communication aspect and they made it possible to measure both communicative and linguistic competence (cp. Lasagabaster, 2008, p. 35). However, it should be admitted that as a result of the first phase of the experiment both groups displayed some improvement of their skills and difference between them was only slightly statistically significant. But, after the completion of the second (sec-) and the third (post-) intervention phases of the experiment, it was revealed that the experimental group statistically significantly differentiated from the control group with considerably higher mean scores in many conducted activities as shown in the graphs.

While in the second (sec-) and third (post-) intervention phases, the students’ results were measured after applying [during the intervention stage] the same format of activities while slightly upgrading their level of difficulty in terms of vocabulary for ESP communicative competences, reading comprehension of subject-specific content and writing for formal correspondence. The obtained results from the measurement at the end clearly revealed significantly higher progress in

the ESP linguistic and communicative competence of the students from the experimental group as a result of the implementation of the CLIL program.

The first activity conducted to measure and compare the progress of the students from the experimental and the control group in terms of their use of ESP vocabulary was a gap-filling exercise. During the focused observation, four main categories were measured in regard to students' use of the Business English terms acquired in the second semester. The collected data for both the sec- and post-intervention phases showed that both groups had made significant progress in that respect, especially in the post-intervention phase, but the CLIL group outperformed the Non-CLIL one.

Overall, there was obtained a significant increase in the students' language performance towards the implementation of CLIL activities during the three intervention stages. The experimental phase clearly showed significant progress with a slight upgrade from one stage to another, resulting in 8.2 percent at the end first intervention phase (when compared to the second one), (see Table below).

Intervention Phases	Overall Mean	Percentage
First (Pre-) Intervention Phase	1.252	25.2 %
Second (Sec-)Intervention Phase	1.334	33.4%
Third (Post-) Intervention Phase	1.494	49.4 %

Overall data results from the three intervention stages

After completion of the second (sec-) and the third (post-) intervention phases of the experiment, it was revealed that the second (sec-) intervention phase statistically significantly differentiated from the third (post-) intervention phase with 16 percent higher for students' better performance towards all the conducted activities. While the third (post-) intervention phase experienced a higher increase in the students' linguistic performance towards all the conducted activities, with 24.2 percent (when compared to the initial phase).

The obtained results from the measurement of the third (post-) intervention phase clearly revealed significantly higher progress in the ESP linguistic and communicative competence of the students from the experimental group as a result of the implementation of the CLIL program.

The overall students' attitude toward the Implementation of CLIL and Non-CLIL instruction in the pre and post intervention phases

After the first intervention phase students of both groups were asked to complete a pre-intervention questionnaire in which the students had to express their opinions about the learning process so far (both groups) and also the benefit of the experimental phase (the CLIL group) up to the end of this phase.

It resulted that both CLIL and non-CLIL learners were optimistic towards such learning process so far and they both expressed some significant progress in the given categories, with special focus in some of the given categories the students' answers were the same (e.g. codes 2.3; 3.3) while in some others they shared similar opinions (like in the codes 2.4; 3.4; 4.1; 4.3; 4.4).

From the first measurement it can be concluded that both groups had good progress during the first intervention phase with a slight difference of a higher performance of 18 percent for the CLIL group. The overall mean from both groups was 1.18 times more in favor of the experimental group (or 18 percent).

To sum up, the results from the analysis of the data from the first (pre-) test observation were reinforced by higher results from the second and post-test observations conducted in the second (sec-) and third (post-) intervention phase of this research study and this was duly confirmed by the students' responses in the completion of the pre- and post- CLIL and Non-CLIL self-evaluation questionnaire.

Then, after the formative assessment cycle of the experimental phase students of both groups were asked to complete a post-intervention questionnaire in which the students had to express their opinions about the learning process (both groups) and also the benefit of the experimental phase (the CLIL group). It too underwent the procedure of data reduction using pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) where codes resulted in categories 'named' by a specific name and then aiming to reduce the number of categories, similar concepts with common characteristics were clustered into themes (the same pattern coding procedure was applied to the data gathered by the pre-intervention questionnaire). This questionnaire provided some additional, more qualitative data on the efficiency of the CLIL method when applied in the specified ESP academic context.

Not surprisingly, CLIL and non-CLIL learners' answers coincided in certain categories related to the learning process in general themes like "1.The impact of the course on Students' ESP communicative skills", "2.Developing students' intercultural communicative competence along with the language competence", "3.Practical application of acquired ESP skills (the practice-oriented focus of language classes, "4.Using authentic materials in class" or "5. Experiencing a positive attitude due to the CLIL teaching intervention". Looking closely at the table, the students' answers towards their belief for the CLIL benefits coincided to be similar in some of the codes (e.g. 1.4; 2.1; 3.3).

What differed was (a) the effect of that choice in the experimental group, and (b) the intensity of that choice which made the students from the experimental group feel more engaged and enjoy the class participation more than their Non-CLIL peers.

However, upon completion of the program, the positive attitude of the students exposed to the innovative teaching approach in the CLIL intervention phases had grown significantly compared to that of their peers in the control group.

Considering the overall attitude of the students towards the learning process in their ESP course, it can be concluded that the implementation of the CLIL approach in their Business English classes was highly successful, making the learning process much more engaging and motivating for the students from the experimental group when compared to Non-CLIL group. The CLIL immersion approach was 1.30 times more effective (or 30.45 percent higher) when compared to teaching English as a curricular subject (in the Non-CLIL group). The mean value of the control group, in both Pre- and Post-intervention stages was 1.20 (20.87 percent), while in the experimental group it was 2.6667 (33.33 percent), meaning that the overall difference of mean was 2.22 (Experimental Group versus Control Group $2.6667 / 1.20 = 2.22$) times more effective in favor of the experimental group (the CLIL group).

[An Overview of the Research](#)

This current research study has been undertaken at the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana, Albania with the main aim of helping ESP students better acquire Business English communicative competence and successfully master the subject-specific terminology related to their future professional career, through the application of the CLIL methodology.

The following hypotheses were tested in the research study:

- When applied in an academic ESP context, CLIL promotes better performance on part of the ESP learners by developing their profession-related communicative skills and leading to better mastery of subject-specific terms.
- CLIL instruction helps in creating a more positive attitude in the students towards learning ESP compared to non-CLIL instruction.

Aiming to provide the right answers to these research inquiries, I worked from the following assumptions:

- The range of ESP courses at the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana does not fully meet the academic and professional needs of the learners.
- Restricting the teaching only to one single, more or less method limits the ESP learners in the acquisition of the communicative skills and the specific terms they will need in their future professions.
- Teaching through authentic, profession-related materials and activities is considered important for ESP learners as it may help them to function more effectively in any work-related context – they enhance their ESP communicative competence and develop their cultural awareness when dealing with situations of intercultural communication.

The dissertation has been divided in seven chapters roughly corresponding to the stages of the research work, and organized into two main parts: *Part II.* - related to the critical theoretical review of relevant literature on the topic and defining the basic concepts underpinning the study, and *Part III: The Empirical Research* - presenting the research methodology employed for the collection of the research data, the results of the analysis of the data from the pedagogical experiment, and some implications related to the implementation of the CLIL approach in the specified ESP academic context.

The literature review covered the contextual background of the study and it first outlined the specifics of the ESP teaching situation, worldwide and in Albania. ESP (including its sub-branches) was differentiated from EGP, and some pedagogical aspects to be considered when teaching ESP were discussed (e.g. ESP syllabus and course design, ESP teaching materials/activities and the role of ESP practitioners). The process of needs analysis and its importance for the success of any ESP course were also reviewed. Then was presented the conceptual framework of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach – the

methodological approach in the focus of current research study – and its benefits for the acquisition of ESP communicative competence were highlighted, based on relevant publications and reports of similar studies to the current investigation.

The *Theoretical Research* chapter underpinned some of the main features of the CLIL approach which was defined as the “umbrella term” which pioneered the language teaching and learning process in a faster and more practical way.

Through the medium of CLIL approach learners are provided with the opportunity of language learning for specific purposes, with the relevant material knowledge and skills required for a globalized world. Otherwise, CLIL is also known as second/foreign language-mediated higher education as it is implemented in a wide range of disciplines, starting from hard sciences like engineering up to business and humanities. The CLIL approach is widely applied at undergraduate and graduate levels, although the latter is the most common context.

Following many contributions and definitions of CLIL methodology stated by various scholars and researchers, a unique contribution of my study is the fact that the CLIL approach is applied in an ESP academic context (not secondary school). To the best of my knowledge this has not been applied before. This was further confirmed by the results of a needs analysis that was conducted before the start of the experiment – I ensured and double confirmed that my innovative approach to teaching ESP in this context would cater for the needs of all stakeholders concerned.

At the beginning of the research, or at the so-called “pre-training stage”, a needs analysis study was conducted in order to collect some feedback from both the ESP learners and the practitioners in the specified academic context which would help improve the research design of the present study, as well as the overall quality of the teaching on the ESP course. It was based on the theoretical foundations of the study and it was underpinned by the belief that the ESP course should cater for the needs of the major stakeholders concerned. The necessary data were collected through questionnaires (administered to both students and teachers on the Business English course at the university), diagnostic language tests and self-assessment forms, all of which provided some useful data about the current ESP course and the learners’ knowledge of English prior to the start of the experimental phase, as well as their learning requirements, expectations and interests.

Analysis of the pre-training stage findings revealed that the students acquired limited knowledge of English related to their specific field of study, if the traditional (for the university) framework

of the ESP course design was followed to achieve the aims, set in the university-based Business English curriculum. Another difficulty faced was related to the process of material selection where informants acknowledged the role of using real-life, profession-related materials with a special focus on the specific communicative competence needs of the learners. They also addressed the deficiency of the currently used course materials with regard to the lack of activities aiming at practicing specialized business terminology in context. Diagnostic test results also revealed the learners' level of proficiency in English at the start of the experimental phase (B1/B1+). The data from the students' self-assessment forms also implied that learners' expectations and needs were not taken into consideration so far and that – because of that – ESP learners may face a number of learning difficulties (e.g. inability to use ESP terminology appropriately in context).

Drawing on the findings from the needs analysis, the experimental phase of the study was conducted. It was organized into three separate stages:

- First (Pre-) intervention phase
- Second (Sec-) intervention phase
- Third (Post-) intervention phase

The first intervention phase consisted of measuring the learners' spoken skills through a pre-test instrument with some speaking activities provided by an oral presentation platform and by the use of Cambridge English Assessment Form of Speaking Performance at B1 Level (see Appendix XI) which assessed and evaluated based on the above-mentioned four major categories. Besides speaking, the pre-test also included some reading, writing and vocabulary exercises like (gap-filling or words in context activities) for the business English terms (as any standard test).

For the purposes of the formative experiment, the Second (Sec-) intervention phase of the CLIL experiment involved the sample population divided into two groups – the experimental group otherwise called as the CLIL group and the control group named as the Non-CLIL group. There were conducted activities related to real-life, professional situations and materials based on authentic texts from various business resources such as journals, magazines and other coursebooks were selected and were applied in the Business English classes with the experimental group aiming to improve students' mastery of work-related communicative competences and specialized business English terminology. The obtained data were collected through observation of students'

performance and task engagement, through some self-assessment questionnaires and unstructured discussion with the students about their opinion about the CLIL activities.

At the third (Post-) intervention phase, after the formative cycle of the experimental phase, the students from both groups were asked to complete a Post- CLIL intervention questionnaire to express their opinions about the ESP learning process and also about the benefits of the CLIL approach (only the students from the experimental group). This questionnaire provided some qualitative data about the effectiveness of using the CLIL approach in the ESP course where most of the students expressed their satisfaction with the ESP course content and the implementation of the CLIL approach to the learning activities (the students from the CLIL group), and placed a central emphasis on the fact that they have developed their underlying content language knowledge in the specific area of their future profession.

Also, at the Post- CLIL intervention phase a post-test was conducted with the students from the two groups (the control and the experimental) to measure more objectively the overall progress of the learners during the ESP course. The post-test was the same format as the pre-test, and it included the kind of activities that were used during the second phase, i.e. the CLIL-intervention phase, only slightly upgrading their level of difficulty (in comparison to the pre-test) in terms of ESP communicative competences and subject-specific content knowledge measured. When comparing the test results obtained by the two groups, it was clearly revealed that the students from the experimental group (where the CLIL program was implemented) had achieved a significantly higher progress in the acquisition of the targeted communicative skills and Business English terms when compared to the students from the Non-CLIL one.

To sum up, in the post-training phase, it was found that the students from the experimental group (the CLIL group) had developed their overall ESP language competences, especially when working with authentic materials, had better mastered subject-specific terms in the given professional field, and were generally more confident and motivated when using the language when compared to the students from the Non-CLIL group.

Based on the results of the action research case study, a set of instructional implications, recommendations and suggestions were put forward to further enhance the quality of the learning on the university ESP course – they were directed not only towards the learners but also towards

the ESP practitioners, and related to the ESP syllabus design, the use of authentic materials and the methodological approach adopted.

Many findings and conclusions drawn from this research work, have put forward a set of suggestions and pedagogical implications aiming to improve the ESP teaching quality. The idea of using authentic materials in ESP teaching situations is considered as one of the main characteristics of a specialized language course. However, it is considered to be a challenging task for the ESP practitioner to select effective authentic materials that suit the learners' needs and expectations.

Based on such findings, the ESP teachers need to be fully involved in new situations like choosing the most appropriate tasks that best develop the students' communicative competences in mastering the language and also integrate authentic materials which contribute to the fast learning of the ESP subject-specific profession-related terms.

Moreover, ESP teachers should modify their quality of teaching by undertaking training sessions that may include theoretical and empirical practices in both pre-service and in-service trainings. In addition, intensive and extensive teachers' preparation would highly contribute to the students' performance for a better mastering of subject-specific terminology and communicative skills related to their future professional career.

Due to the nature of Business context and the fast-developing technology the ESP practitioner can easily access to a variety of sources and facilitate the process of authentic materials choice to further enhance the teaching/learning process and to meet the learners' needs. There are many up-to-date materials and documents that come in hand for the teachers who would decide to use authentic materials, like: newspapers, magazines, financial reports, promotional brochures and leaflets, business letters and e-mails, press release, etc.

Furthermore, the application of CLIL approach in ESP classes would highlight the students' performance and their self-confidence towards the acquisition of such ESP subject-specific profession-related terms. The use of the CLIL approach in the ESP course for university students,

named as the “*third millennium*”, aims to facilitate and anticipate the process of language learning in specific given contexts.

General Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of using CLIL activities while teaching Business English in ESP classes at the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana, thus to better equip the students with profession-related communicative skills and specific terminology for their future professional career needs. In the course of the study both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in support of the research hypothesis and the opinions of both students and teachers from the Faculty were unveiled to validate the conclusions drawn.

The initial hypothesis and the research questions intended to examine whether ESP students in their first year of University studies enhanced their learning and performance in Business English, especially in terms of communicative skills and use of subject-specific vocabulary in context, as a result of being taught through the CLIL method. It was assumed that the CLIL immersion would have a positive effect on their progress, especially when the results of the experimental group were compared to those of the Non-CLIL group. The findings at the post-intervention stage of the study showed that the majority of the students who belonged to the CLIL Group performed much better on the post-test activities and were more motivated and engaged in the learning process the students from the control group. This confirmed the hypothesis that using the CLIL approach to complement the teaching strategies and activities in the given ESP context would improve the learners’ ESP competence and performance.

Conveniently, at the pre-intervention stage, the students from both the experimental and control groups were positively oriented toward improving their ESP communicative skills and learning more specific, profession-related terms, and the majority of them were planning in their near future to certify this knowledge by taking an internationally recognized exam like the BEC exam (see chapter V) where the results from the analysis of the pre-intervention questionnaire were presented). During the experimental stage of the study, the students from the CLIL group were exposed to various CLIL-based activities and materials in addition to their regular Business English course syllabus, whereas the classes of the non-CLIL followed the traditional for the university ESP syllabus. At the second- and post-intervention phases of the experiment various

research instruments were used to collect and document the needed quantitative and qualitative research data: e.g. field observation, pre- and post- tests, self-assessment questionnaires and unified assessment grids (like those of the English Language Portfolio).

Furthermore, the data collected through the teachers' needs analysis questionnaire double verified the conclusions drawn in research study, lending further support to the claim that the use of authentic materials and the CLIL approach to activities based on them would better enhance the students' linguistic and cognitive skills and contribute to the acquisition of field-specific content knowledge.

In the light of all the findings it can be concluded the CLIL immersion of the ESP students had a positive effect on their learning progress and their acquisition of Business English communicative skills and subject-specific, profession related terminology.

This research was carried out as an empirical study, where quantitative and qualitative data collection was realized by using some common research methods such as needs analysis, questionnaires, language placement tests, self-assessment grids, quasi-experiment (or an experiment in the format of an action research case study with an experimental and a control group), and pre- and post- tests.

The quasi-experiment was underpinned by the belief in the benefit of the CLIL methodology (as substantiated by the review of the existing literature related to it) for improving the quality of the learning process in the specified ESP academic context (the Business English program at the Faculty of Economy at the University of Tirana). The CLIL experimental syllabus included a variety of CLIL-based activities and authentic materials of professional interest for the ESP students in addition to the traditional (for the university) syllabus for the Business English course. It was hypothesized that the CLIL approach would be very useful for the ESP students at the Faculty of Economy at the University of Tirana in terms of developing their language skills and enhancing their mastery of subject-specific terms, in addition to better motivating them for the learning process.

The results from the empirical data analysis validated the research hypothesis, in other words they showed that the CLIL instruction helped the ESP students (from the experimental group) to adopt

a more positive attitude towards the learning of English as a foreign language for professional communication, and especially better acquire profession-related terminology in comparison to the students from the non-CLIL group.

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