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## **KONTENT VA TILNI INTEGRALLASHGAN O'QITISH (CLIL) VA MADANIYATLARARO KOMMUNIKATIV KOMPETENSIYA (MKK): XORIJIY TIL DARSLARIDA SINERGISTIK MODEL**

**Jakbarova Nasibaxon**

Namangan davlat chet tillari instituti, katta o'qituvchi (PhD)

### **Annotatsiya**

Kontent va tilni integrallashgan o'qitish (CLIL) va madaniyatlararo kommunikativ kompetensiya (MKK) zamonaviy xorijiy til ta'limida o'zaro parallel ravishda rivojlanib kelgan ikkita ta'sirli konseptual tizim sifatida e'tirof etilgan. Ushbu maqolada ularning bir-biridan ajratib o'rganilishi nazariy jihatdan asossiz va pedagogik nuqtai nazardan zararli ekanligi dalillanadi; shuningdek, CLIL metodologiyasining 4Cs tizimi (Kontent, Kommunikatsiya, Kognitiv faoliyat, Madaniyat) MKKning tarkibiy-komponentli qurilmasi bilan tizimli uyg'unlashtirishga asoslangan sinergistik model taklif etiladi. Tadqiqot CLIL sinf xonalarida olib borilgan empirik tadqiqotlar, madaniyatlararo muloqot nazariyasi va o'quv dasturlarini loyihalash sohasidagi nazariy ishlar asosida ushbu ikki tizim o'rtasidagi tarkibiy uyg'unliklarni aniqlaydi, MKK bilan boyitilgan CLIL ta'lim loyihasi modelini ishlab chiqadi hamda asosiy tatbiq etish muammolarini va ularga oid ilmiy dalillarga asoslangan yechim strategiyalarini ko'rsatib beradi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** CLIL; madaniyatlararo kommunikativ kompetensiya; 4Cs tizimi; sinergistik model; til-kontent integratsiyasi; madaniyatlararo ta'lim; xorijiy til metodikasi; o'quv dasturini loyihalash.

## **ПРЕДМЕТНО-ЯЗЫКОВОЕ ИНТЕГРИРОВАННОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ (CLIL) И МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАТИВНАЯ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЯ (МКК): СИНЕРГЕТИЧЕСКАЯ МОДЕЛЬ ДЛЯ УРОКОВ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА**

**Жакбарова Насибaxon**

Наманганский государственный институт иностранных языков, старший преподаватель (PhD)

### **Аннотация**

Предметно-языковое интегрированное обучение (CLIL) и межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция (МКК) сложились как два самостоятельных, но взаимно влияющих концептуальных направления в современном обучении иностранным языкам. В настоящей статье обосновывается, что их разграничение теоретически неоправданно и педагогически нецелесообразно; предлагается синергетическая модель, в которой структура 4Cs методологии CLIL (Содержание, Коммуникация, Когнитивная деятельность, Культура) системно согласуется с компонентной архитектурой МКК. На основе эмпирических исследований в CLIL-классах, теоретических работ в области межкультурной коммуникации и проектирования учебных программ в исследовании выявляются структурные взаимодополнения двух концептуальных рамок, разрабатывается дидактическая модель проектирования учебного процесса в формате CLIL, обогащённая МКК, а также определяются основные трудности внедрения и стратегии их преодоления, опирающиеся на имеющиеся научные данные.

**Ключевые слова:** CLIL; межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция; структура 4Cs; синергетическая модель; интеграция языка и содержания; межкультурное образование; методика обучения иностранным языкам; проектирование учебных программ.

## **CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) AND ICC: A SYNERGISTIC MODEL FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS**

**Jakbarova Nasibaxon**

Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages, Senior Lecturer (PhD)

### **Abstract**

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) have developed largely in parallel as influential frameworks in contemporary foreign language education. This article argues that their separation is theoretically unwarranted and pedagogically costly, and proposes a synergistic model in which CLIL's 4Cs framework (Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture) is systematically aligned with ICC's component architecture. Drawing on empirical research in CLIL classrooms theoretical contributions from intercultural communication and curriculum

design scholarship, the study maps the structural complementarities between the two frameworks, develops an ICC-enhanced CLIL instructional design framework, and identifies the principal implementation challenges together with evidence-based mitigation strategies.

**Keywords:** CLIL; intercultural communicative competence; 4Cs framework; synergistic model; language-content integration; intercultural education; foreign language methodology; curriculum design.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has, since its emergence as a coherent educational framework in Europe in the 1990s, attracted sustained attention from researchers, curriculum designers, and classroom practitioners worldwide. By positioning subject-matter content as both the medium and the goal of language learning, CLIL responds to a longstanding critique of traditional foreign language instruction: namely, that decontextualised language exercises fail to provide the cognitive engagement and communicative authenticity required for meaningful language acquisition (Coyle et al., 2010). Two decades of empirical research have broadly confirmed that CLIL learners demonstrate advantages over non-CLIL peers not only in content knowledge retention but also in various dimensions of linguistic and communicative competence (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Lo, 2020; Nikula et al., 2016).

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has, over the same period, established itself as the leading framework for conceptualising the cultural and social dimensions of effective language use (Byram, 1997, 2021; Deardorff, 2006; Kramsch, 2014). ICC scholarship argues, with growing empirical support, that linguistic proficiency divorced from cultural knowledge, attitudes, and reflexivity is insufficient preparation for the intercultural encounters that constitute the dominant context of professional and civic life in the twenty-first century (Deardorff & Jones, 2022; Risager, 2023).

Despite these parallel trajectories, the relationship between CLIL and ICC has received surprisingly limited systematic attention. CLIL's foundational 4Cs framework explicitly includes Culture as one of its four pillars, but empirical studies consistently find that the cultural dimension is the least developed in actual CLIL classrooms (Cenoz et al., 2014; Nikula et al., 2016). Conversely, ICC scholarship has produced sophisticated theoretical frameworks but has sometimes been criticised for paying insufficient attention to the disciplinary content contexts in which intercultural communication most consequentially occurs in professional and academic life (Llinares et al., 2012).

This article argues that these two gaps are structurally complementary: CLIL has undertheorised culture precisely where ICC has its greatest conceptual strength, while ICC has underspecified content-discipline contexts precisely where CLIL has its greatest practical experience. A synergistic model that combines the strengths of both frameworks is therefore not merely desirable but theoretically necessary. The remainder of the article develops this model, evaluates its instructional design implications, and addresses the implementation challenges that any serious attempt at CLIL-ICC integration must confront.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employs a theoretical synthesis design, combining a systematic review of the CLIL and ICC literatures with conceptual mapping of their structural relationships. The methodology is consistent with integrative review approaches in educational research (Torraco, 2016), which aim not merely to summarise existing findings but to identify productive conceptual connections between bodies of scholarship that have not previously been brought into sustained dialogue. The product of the analysis is a synergistic model presented through three analytical tables, each addressing a different dimension of the CLIL-ICC relationship.

### Source Corpus

Sources were selected through a two-stage process. In the first stage, foundational texts in each framework were identified: for CLIL, the seminal works of Coyle et al. (2010), Mehisto et al. (2008), Dalton-Puffer (2011), and Llinares et al. (2012); for ICC, the canonical frameworks of Byram (1997, 2021), Deardorff (2006), Kramsch (2014), and Liddicoat and Scarino (2013). In the second stage, empirical studies addressing either framework in classroom contexts were reviewed, with particular attention to studies documenting outcomes across both content/language and intercultural dimensions. Recency was prioritised: where updated editions or recent meta-analyses were available, these were preferred over original foundational texts. The corpus also includes policy-relevant sources, notably the Council of Europe (2020) Companion Volume to the CEFR, which formally integrates mediation and intercultural competence as distinct assessment categories.

### Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded through three steps. First, the CLIL 4Cs framework and the ICC component architecture were placed in structural correspondence by examining the definitional content of each element and identifying conceptual overlap and complementarity. Second, this correspondence was used to generate an ICC-enhanced CLIL instructional design framework by specifying how each standard CLIL design dimension would need to be extended or modified to incorporate ICC goals. Third, implementation challenges reported in the empirical literature were catalogued and matched with mitigation strategies proposed in curriculum design scholarship. All three steps are represented in the analytical tables that structure the Results section.

## RESULTS

### 1. Structural Complementarities: Mapping the 4Cs onto ICC

Coyle's 4Cs framework was formulated as a heuristic for CLIL curriculum planning that foregrounds four interdependent dimensions: Content (the subject matter being studied), Communication (the language through which content is accessed and constructed), Cognition (the higher-order thinking skills activated in content-driven inquiry), and Culture (the intercultural and pluricultural awareness that content study can promote). Coyle et al. (2010, p. 41) explicitly state that the four dimensions are "interlocking rather than sequential," meaning that effective CLIL lesson design must attend to all four simultaneously rather than treating them as a checklist.

Byram's (1997, 2021) ICC model, developed independently within applied linguistics and intercultural communication, posits five components: *savoirs* (knowledge of self, other, and their interaction), *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating), *savoir apprendre* (skills of discovery and interaction), *savoir être* (attitudes of respect, openness, and curiosity), and *savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness). Deardorff's (2006) process model complements this taxonomy by emphasizing the developmental and affective nature of ICC: it begins with attitudes, proceeds through knowledge and skills, generates internal transformations, and ultimately produces observable communicative effectiveness.

The structural correspondence between these two frameworks is striking. CLIL's Content dimension maps directly onto Byram's *savoir*: both are concerned with the knowledge base that the learner must acquire about the target culture and its ways of organising disciplinary understanding. CLIL's Communication dimension maps onto ICC's sociolinguistic and discourse competence components: both are concerned with how language functions in context, how meaning is negotiated between participants, and how pragmatic appropriacy is achieved. CLIL's Cognition dimension maps onto ICC's *savoir s'engager*, or critical cultural awareness: both require learners to analyse, evaluate, and make judgements about cultural phenomena rather than merely describe them. Most significantly, CLIL's Culture dimension maps directly onto ICC's *savoir être*, or intercultural attitudes: both are concerned with the dispositions of openness, respect, and curiosity that enable genuine intercultural engagement (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Risager, 2023).

Table 1 presents this structural mapping in a form designed for practical use in curriculum planning, extending each correspondence to identify the synergistic learning activities that the combined framework suggests.

**Table 1. Structural mapping of the CLIL 4Cs framework onto ICC components with synergistic activity examples**

4Cs Element	CLIL Definition	ICC Component Engaged	Synergistic Learning Activity
<b>Content</b>	Subject-matter knowledge from a non-language discipline	Cultural knowledge & awareness (Byram's <i>savoir</i> )	Comparative analysis of how disciplines are framed differently across cultures
<b>Communication</b>	Language used to learn and learned through use	Sociolinguistic & discourse competence	Disciplinary genre tasks with target-culture interlocutors
<b>Cognition</b>	Higher-order thinking: analysis, evaluation, creation	Critical cultural awareness ( <i>savoir s'engager</i> )	Socratic debate comparing cultural approaches to disciplinary problem

4Cs Element	CLIL Definition	ICC Component Engaged	Synergistic Learning Activity
<b>Culture</b>	Intercultural and pluricultural awareness embedded in content	Attitudes ( <i>savoir être</i> ): respect, openness, curiosity	Intercultural simulation; cultural autobiography linked to content

Table 1 reveals both the scope of the correspondence and its most important implication: the activities generated by a synergistic reading of the two frameworks are qualitatively richer than those produced by either framework alone. A standard CLIL content task might ask learners to analyse a scientific concept in the target language; a synergistic CLIL–ICC task asks learners to compare how that concept is framed, valued, and applied differently across two or more cultural-scientific traditions—a cognitively demanding and culturally illuminating activity that advances both content understanding and intercultural awareness simultaneously. This aligns with Nikula et al.’s (2016) finding that the most effective CLIL classrooms are those in which content and language goals are treated as genuinely interdependent rather than as parallel but separate concerns—a principle that the synergistic model extends to the cultural dimension.

## 2. The ICC-Enhanced CLIL Instructional Design Framework

The structural correspondence identified above provides the theoretical basis for an ICC-enhanced CLIL instructional design framework. Standard CLIL practice, as documented in Coyle et al. (2010) and Mehisto et al. (2008), involves specifying learning objectives across content and language dimensions, selecting discipline-specific texts in the target language, designing tasks that activate higher-order thinking, and scaffolding both linguistic and cognitive demands. The ICC-enhanced framework retains all of these elements but extends each one to explicitly incorporate the intercultural dimension.

The most consequential extension concerns learning objectives. Lo (2020) argues, based on a large-scale review of CLIL outcome studies in Hong Kong, that the absence of explicit intercultural objectives from most CLIL lesson plans is the primary structural reason why the cultural dimension remains underdeveloped. When intercultural awareness and cultural reflexivity are specified as measurable learning outcomes alongside content knowledge and language proficiency, they are more likely to receive sustained instructional attention and to be assessed. The Council of Europe’s (2020) Companion Volume to the CEFR addresses this gap at the policy level by introducing mediation and pluricultural competence as distinct assessment categories, thereby providing institutional legitimacy for the inclusion of ICC objectives in CLIL assessment frameworks.

The extension of material selection criteria is equally important. Gilmore (2011) demonstrated through meta-analysis that authentic materials—texts produced by and for members of the target cultural community, rather than materials designed specifically for language teaching—generate stronger gains across both linguistic and cultural dimensions. In an ICC-enhanced CLIL framework, authentic materials are selected not only for their disciplinary relevance and linguistic appropriacy but also for their capacity to reveal the cultural values, assumptions, and perspectival commitments embedded in disciplinary knowledge. A science article from a German journal, for example, may reveal assumptions about objectivity and the relationship between researcher and data that differ systematically from those of a comparable article from a Brazilian or Japanese source—and these differences are themselves valuable content for instruction (Kramsch, 2014; Risager, 2023).

Table 2 presents the full ICC-enhanced CLIL instructional design framework, specifying for each design dimension both the standard CLIL practice and the ICC-enhanced version.

**Table 2. ICC-enhanced CLIL instructional design framework: standard and extended practice compared**

Design Dimension	Standard CLIL Practice	ICC-Enhanced CLIL Practice	Key Sources
<b>Learning objectives</b>	Content mastery + language fluency	Content + language + intercultural awareness + reflexivity	Coyle et al. (2010); Byram (2021)
<b>Material selection</b>	Discipline-specific texts in target language	Authentic cross-cultural disciplinary	Gilmore (2011); Risager (2023)

Design Dimension	Standard CLIL Practice	ICC-Enhanced CLIL Practice	Key Sources
		texts revealing value differences	
<b>Task design</b>	Content-based language tasks (TBLT)	Intercultural inquiry tasks requiring perspective-taking	Ellis (2018); Liddicoat & Scarino (2013)
<b>Teacher role</b>	Content specialist + language facilitator	Intercultural mediator + reflective co-inquirer	Mehisto et al. (2008); Fantini (2020)
<b>Assessment</b>	Content tests + language proficiency ratings	Portfolio + ICC rubrics + reflective journals	Deardorff (2006); Lo (2020)
<b>Scaffolding</b>	Linguistic and cognitive scaffolds	Linguistic + cognitive + cultural scaffolds	Dalton-Puffer (2011); Nikula et al. (2016)

Table 2 is intended as a practical planning tool rather than a prescriptive checklist. Mehisto et al. (2008) caution against CLIL implementation models that overspecify what teachers must do in every lesson, arguing that genuine CLIL expertise develops through reflective experimentation rather than rule-following. The same principle applies to ICC integration: the framework should function as a lens that draws teachers' attention to dimensions of their practice that are easy to overlook, not as a template that constrains professional judgement. Dalton-Puffer's (2011) extensive classroom research supports this view: the most effective CLIL-ICC integrations she observed were characterised by teachers who had internalised the dual framework and were able to deploy it flexibly in response to emerging classroom dynamics, rather than by those who were mechanically implementing a prescribed model.

The scaffolding dimension deserves particular attention. Research by Nikula et al. (2016) and Llinares et al. (2012) identifies linguistic scaffolding—vocabulary support, sentence frames, graphic organisers—as the most consistently implemented CLIL support mechanism, and cognitive scaffolding (think-pair-share, concept mapping) as the second most common. Cultural scaffolding—providing learners with frameworks for recognising and interpreting cultural difference rather than merely encountering it—is, by contrast, almost entirely absent from documented CLIL practice. The ICC-enhanced framework treats cultural scaffolding as a non-negotiable design element: learners require structured support for the cognitively and emotionally demanding work of cultural perspective-taking, particularly in the early stages of intercultural development.

### 3. Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

The proposed synergistic model, however compelling in theory, faces significant implementation challenges that any rigorous analysis must address. Empirical studies of CLIL implementation across diverse national contexts have identified a consistent cluster of barriers, most of which are amplified by the additional demands of ICC integration. Table 3 summarises these challenges, their evidential basis, and the mitigation strategies supported by the literature.

**Table 3. Implementation challenges in CLIL-ICC integration and evidence-based mitigation strategies**

Challenge	Evidence from Literature	Mitigation Strategy
<b>Dual-trained teacher scarcity</b>	Most CLIL teachers are either content or language specialists, rarely both (Mehisto et al., 2008; Llinares et al., 2012)	Co-teaching models; sustained team-teaching professional development integrating CLIL methodology with ICC frameworks (Coyle et al., 2010)
<b>Assessment misalignment</b>	Standardised exams reward content recall and grammar, not cultural reflexivity (Lo, 2020; Deardorff & Jones, 2022)	Portfolio-based, longitudinal assessment with explicit ICC rubrics validated across institutional levels (Deardorff, 2006)

Challenge	Evidence from Literature	Mitigation Strategy
<b>Marginalisation of culture in CLIL</b>	Empirical studies show the 4th C (Culture) is the least implemented (Nikula et al., 2016; Cenoz et al., 2014)	Explicit ICC integration protocols embedded in lesson plan templates; cultural component treated as non-negotiable design criterion
<b>Learner cognitive overload</b>	Simultaneous content, language and cultural processing strains working memory (Dalton-Puffer, 2011)	Graduated scaffolding: begin with cultural comparison as a light overlay on content tasks before advancing to full intercultural inquiry
<b>Institutional resistance</b>	Timetabling, assessment regimes and disciplinary silos obstruct integration (Llinares et al., 2012; Xolmatova, 2020)	Policy alignment from programme level downward; ICC integration written into course specifications and accreditation criteria

Of the challenges listed in Table 3, teacher preparation is arguably the most fundamental. Mehisto et al. (2008) observe that CLIL demands dual expertise—subject-matter knowledge and language pedagogical competence—that is rarely cultivated in either content-teacher or language-teacher preparation programmes. Adding ICC to this requirement creates a triple-expertise demand that the vast majority of current teacher education systems are structurally unprepared to meet. Fantini (2020) proposes that the solution lies not in producing universally proficient “super-teachers,” but in building collaborative professional communities in which content specialists, language teachers, and cultural educators engage in sustained team-teaching arrangements, each contributing their respective expertise to a shared CLIL–ICC instructional project. The assessment challenge is equally pressing. Cenoz et al. (2014) found that even in schools explicitly committed to CLIL, assessment practices lagged significantly behind instructional ambitions: teachers assessed content and language but not culture, primarily because they lacked validated rubrics for doing so. Deardorff’s (2006) process model provides a conceptual foundation for ICC rubric development, and its operationalisation through portfolio-based and reflective journal assessment formats is increasingly documented in the literature (Deardorff & Jones, 2022; Lo, 2020). The key institutional requirement is that these assessment innovations be formally sanctioned at the programme and institutional levels, rather than remaining isolated practices of individual teachers, since learners’ motivation to engage in cultural reflexivity is closely tied to whether such engagement is recognised in assessment outcomes.

## DISCUSSION

The synergistic CLIL–ICC model proposed here advances a specific theoretical claim: that the two frameworks are not merely compatible but mutually necessary for achieving their respective educational goals. CLIL without ICC produces disciplinarily informed yet interculturally illiterate language users—learners who can discuss quantum mechanics or contract law in the target language but are unable to navigate the cultural assumptions embedded in those disciplines when interacting with interlocutors from different epistemic traditions. ICC without CLIL, conversely, risks producing interculturally sensitive but disciplinarily underdeveloped communicators—learners who demonstrate appropriate intercultural attitudes but lack the content expertise and cognitive rigour required for meaningful professional application of those attitudes.

Kramersch’s (2014) concept of *symbolic competence* is particularly illuminating in this context. Symbolic competence denotes the capacity to reflect on and reshape the symbolic systems—languages, genres, disciplines, and cultural codes—through which meaning is constructed in any given context. This notion simultaneously represents the highest aspiration of CLIL (the ability to think in and through disciplinary concepts mediated by a foreign language) and of ICC (the ability to critically engage with the cultural assumptions embedded in communicative acts).

The most significant practical implication of the proposed synergistic model concerns teacher education. If CLIL–ICC integration requires a form of triple expertise—disciplinary, linguistic, and intercultural—then teacher preparation programmes must be restructured accordingly. This does not necessarily imply a proportional expansion in programme duration; rather, it necessitates a reconceptualisation of how existing training time is utilised.

Fantini (2020) and Deardorff and Jones (2022) argue that ICC development in teachers, much

like in learners, should be understood as a continuous developmental process rather than a fixed outcome. Such development requires sustained, reflective, and longitudinal engagement rather than isolated training interventions. Consequently, pre-service teacher education programmes should incorporate structured intercultural encounters, cultural autobiography practices, and reflective portfolio components from the outset. These elements should not be positioned as optional enhancements but as core components of professional training.

This study has two principal limitations. First, the synergistic model presented here remains a theoretical construct grounded in secondary literature review; it has not yet been empirically validated as a fully integrated curriculum design. Its claims regarding pedagogical effectiveness rely on the cumulative findings of CLIL and ICC research considered separately, rather than on direct empirical evidence of their integration in the form proposed.

Second, the analysis does not fully account for the substantial variation in CLIL implementation across different national and institutional contexts. The empirical base drawn upon is primarily derived from European and Hong Kong settings. Therefore, the applicability of the proposed model in alternative contexts—including resource-constrained educational environments or systems characterised by strong centralised curriculum control—requires further investigation.

### CONCLUSION

This article has proposed a synergistic model for the integration of CLIL and ICC, grounded in a systematic analysis of the structural complementarities between the CLIL 4Cs framework and the ICC component architecture. The mapping presented in Table 1 demonstrates that the two frameworks are not only compatible but mutually reinforcing: each addresses conceptual and practical gaps inherent in the other, and their integration generates pedagogical possibilities that neither framework can achieve independently. The ICC-enhanced instructional design framework outlined in Table 2 operationalises this theoretical integration into practical tools for curriculum planning, while the analysis of implementation challenges and corresponding mitigation strategies in Table 3 provides a realistic perspective on the conditions required for effective application. The central argument of this study can be articulated succinctly: CLIL's fourth component—Culture—is not a peripheral or decorative element within a content-and-language curriculum, but rather the dimension that confers educational significance upon the other three. Learners acquire content knowledge, develop communicative competence in a foreign language, and engage in higher-order cognitive processes with a purpose; in the context of the twenty-first century, that purpose is inherently intercultural. The synergistic model proposed in this study offers both a theoretically grounded and practically applicable pathway toward a form of CLIL practice that is fully aligned with this reality. Future research should focus on empirical validation of the model through longitudinal classroom-based studies. Such research should examine learners' concurrent development across three domains—content knowledge, language proficiency, and intercultural communicative competence—within CLIL programmes designed according to the proposed framework. These investigations will be essential not only for substantiating the theoretical claims advanced in this study, but also for generating detailed implementation guidelines capable of supporting educators and curriculum designers in translating the model into effective pedagogical practice.

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