



CONFERENCE ARTICLE

**INTEGRATION OF COMMUNICATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

The growing demand for work-ready graduates has intensified the need to align university English courses with professional communication requirements. This article examines how communicative language teaching (CLT) can be integrated with professional and discipline-oriented approaches within higher education. Using a conceptual and methodological synthesis of key frameworks in communicative competence, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and content-based instruction, the study develops an integrative instructional logic that connects real professional tasks with classroom interaction and assessment. The results clarify the pedagogical conditions under which communicative practice becomes professionally meaningful: when learning objectives are expressed through occupational situations, when linguistic input is organized around genres and discourse functions typical for a field, and when evaluation relies on performance evidence. The discussion outlines implications for curriculum design, teacher roles, and validity of assessment in university contexts where English supports future workplace participation.

KEYWORDS

Communicative language teaching, ESP, professional communication, higher education, genre, task-based learning, competence-based education.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education increasingly treats English not only as a general academic subject but also as an instrument for professional participation. Graduates are expected to negotiate meaning, present solutions, write formal messages, and collaborate in multilingual environments. These expectations make the traditional separation between communicative language teaching and professionally oriented instruction less defensible. CLT prioritizes interaction, meaning-focused practice, and pragmatic appropriateness, whereas professional approaches in language education focus on occupational needs, domain-specific genres, and disciplinary discourse. When taught separately, CLT may remain context-light and insufficiently connected to students' future work, while professional courses may become terminology-centered and underdevelop interactional competence. This article addresses the problem of conceptual and pedagogical alignment by exploring how communicative and professional approaches can be integrated in teaching English at universities.

The purpose of the study is to clarify the rationale and mechanisms of integration and to formulate an instructional interpretation that can guide curriculum design and assessment. The guiding question is how universities can design English courses so that communicative activities simultaneously develop linguistic ability and professional communicative performance.

The study uses qualitative synthesis based on three analytical steps. First, classical and contemporary models of communicative competence and language ability were examined to identify what "communication" entails beyond grammatical accuracy. Second, the literature on ESP and professional discourse was reviewed to determine how occupational needs are described through genres, tasks, and communicative events.

Third, competence-based education and task-based learning sources were analyzed to connect learning outcomes with observable performance. Concepts were compared across traditions, and convergent categories were used to construct an integrative pedagogical model. The validity of the model was checked through internal coherence, practical applicability for course planning, and compatibility with performance-based assessment.

The synthesis shows that integration is best conceptualized as alignment of three elements: professional communication contexts, communicative learning processes, and assessment criteria. Professional contexts provide the "why" and "where" of language use by specifying roles, audiences, constraints, and typical decisions. Communicative processes provide the "how" by organizing interaction, negotiation of meaning, feedback, and strategy use. Assessment provides the "evidence" by defining what counts as successful performance in professional genres and situations.

The results further indicate that professional orientation should not be reduced to vocabulary lists or topic selection. Instead, it should be operationalized through discourse practices and genres that are typical for a discipline, such as problem-solution explanations, data commentary, meeting participation, email negotiation, or project presentation. In an integrated model, language input is selected and sequenced according to communicative functions and genre moves, while classroom tasks simulate professional communicative events. Communicative activities remain central, but they are anchored in realistic professional purposes, so that speaking, listening, reading, and writing develop as coordinated resources for action rather than as isolated skills.

A key outcome of integration is a shift in learning objectives from

language content to performance descriptors. The course aims become statements of what students can accomplish in professional communication, such as clarifying requirements, persuading stakeholders, reporting results, or handling disagreement. Linguistic accuracy remains important, yet it is interpreted as a quality dimension within performance rather than the sole target. The model also implies a new role for feedback: it must address both language form and professional appropriateness, including clarity, politeness norms, register choice, and genre conformity.

The integrated approach resolves several persistent contradictions in higher education language teaching. One contradiction is the tendency for communicative practice to remain generic. Students may speak fluently about everyday topics but struggle with discipline-specific interaction because they have not practiced the genres and pragmatic patterns of their professional community. Another contradiction is the tendency for professionally oriented courses to prioritize informational content over interaction. Students may know specialized terms but cannot manage meetings, explain processes, or negotiate solutions because communicative competence has not been systematically developed.

Integration also improves curricular coherence. If professional contexts are treated as the organizing principle, then communicative tasks become sequenced as a developmental pathway from guided practice to more independent performance. This sequencing supports the pedagogical logic of scaffolding: learners first gain exposure to professional discourse models, then practice controlled participation, and finally demonstrate independent performance in complex tasks. In such a curriculum, CLT principles are preserved because meaning-focused interaction remains the core learning mechanism, yet the “meaning” is now discipline-relevant and goal-oriented.

Assessment is particularly sensitive in integrated courses. Traditional testing can underestimate professional ability if it focuses on discrete grammar points, while purely content-based evaluation can ignore linguistic and pragmatic adequacy. The synthesis suggests that valid assessment should rely on performance tasks aligned with professional genres and should use analytic criteria that capture comprehensibility, appropriateness, discourse organization, and strategic competence. This does not require abandoning standardization, but it does require careful task design and rubric development. Reliability can be strengthened through clear descriptors, exemplars, and rater calibration.

Teacher expertise becomes another critical issue. Integration requires instructors to mediate between language and professional discourse, which may be challenging when teachers lack familiarity with a discipline. The literature supports collaboration between language teachers and subject specialists, and the use of needs analysis to identify authentic communicative events in a field. Even without deep disciplinary knowledge, a language teacher can teach professional genres by focusing on discourse moves, interactional strategies, and communicative norms, while partnering with subject faculty to ensure content relevance.

Finally, the integrated approach aligns with broader trends such as internationalization and employability. University graduates increasingly operate in environments where communication is tied to professional identity and ethical responsibility. Therefore, integration should include intercultural sensitivity, etiquette, and responsible communication practices that are common in professional settings, including transparency, respectful disagreement, and accountability in written documentation.

Integration of communicative and professional approaches in higher education English teaching is not a simple methodological addition but a curriculum-level alignment of contexts, tasks, and

evidence. When professional discourse genres and communicative events become the basis for selecting content and designing interaction, communicative practice gains clear purpose and transfer value. The proposed synthesis supports performance-based outcomes and assessment, offering a coherent path from classroom communication to workplace participation. Further empirical research can validate the model through classroom interventions in specific disciplines and can refine rubrics that reliably measure professional communicative performance.

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