

# CLIL in teaching Spanish for specific purposes in Thailand: Courses and pedagogical proposals

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**ABSTRACT:** This qualitative study examines how Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is implemented in Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS) courses at four public universities in Thailand and proposes context-sensitive improvements. The methodology combined document analysis of 32 course guides with classroom observation and reflective field notes to triangulate findings. The research is guided by three questions: (1) Which contextual and institutional factors hinder or facilitate CLIL? (2) How are SPS courses distributed across professional sectors and language proficiency levels? (3) To what extent do current courses incorporate CLIL's 4Cs and Bloom's LOTS/HOTS taxonomy, and what pedagogical measures could enhance that integration?

Results reveal that 34% of SPS courses focus on tourism/hospitality, 31% on translation/interpreting, and 19% on business, with only 3% each dedicated to healthcare and law. Five main constraints were identified: limited teacher training, scarcity of contextualized materials, heterogeneous student proficiency, dual assessment complexity, and culturally-influenced learning styles. To address these challenges, five interconnected strategies are proposed: ongoing professional development, collaborative creation of localized materials, integration of educational technology, dual-focused assessment, and intercultural pedagogy. CLIL thus emerges not only as a methodological framework, but as a pedagogical vision that unifies linguistic, disciplinary, and intercultural aims and enhances graduate employability.

**Keywords:** CLIL, Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS), Higher Education, Bloom's Taxonomy, Thailand.

## AICLE en la enseñanza de EFE en Tailandia: asignaturas y propuestas didácticas

**RESUMEN:** Este estudio cualitativo examina cómo se implementa el enfoque de Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (AICLE) en las asignaturas de Español con Fines Específicos (EFE) en cuatro universidades públicas de Tailandia, y propone mejoras contextualizadas. La metodología combina el análisis documental de 32 guías docentes con observaciones de aula y notas de campo reflexivas para triangular los resultados. La investigación se orienta a partir de tres preguntas: (1) ¿Qué factores contextuales e institucionales dificultan o facilitan la aplicación de AICLE? (2) ¿Cómo se distribuyen las asignaturas de EFE según los sectores profesionales y los niveles de competencia lingüística? (3) ¿En qué medida los cursos actuales incorporan los 4Cs de AICLE y la taxonomía de Bloom (LOTS/HOTS), y qué medidas pedagógicas podrían favorecer esa integración?

Los resultados muestran que el 34 % de las asignaturas se enfocan en turismo y hostelería, el 31 % en traducción e interpretación, el 19 % en negocios, y solo un 3 % en sanidad y derecho respectivamente. Se identificaron cinco limitaciones principales: formación docente insuficiente, escasez de materiales contextualizados, heterogeneidad en el nivel de los estudiantes, complejidad de la evaluación dual y estilos de aprendizaje influenciados culturalmente. Para afrontar estos retos, se proponen cinco estrategias interrelacionadas: formación continua del profesorado, creación colaborativa de materiales localizados, integración de tecnologías educativas, evaluación con doble enfoque y pedagogía intercultural. El enfoque AICLE se presenta así no solo como un marco metodológico, sino como una visión pedagógica que articula objetivos lingüísticos, disciplinares e interculturales, y que contribuye a mejorar la empleabilidad de los egresados.

**Palabras clave:** AICLE, español con fines específicos (EFE), educación superior, Taxonomía de Bloom, Tailandia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's global context, the ability to communicate in multiple languages is an essential skill for academic mobility and international employability. Thai universities face the critical challenge of preparing students for a globalized world where proficiency in languages such as Spanish provides significant opportunities in tourism, business, and diplomacy.

Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS) courses in Thailand, however, encounter distinctive challenges. Chief among these is the limited exposure to authentic Spanish in classroom communication. Although Spanish-language textbooks are incorporated, Thai frequently remains the primary medium of instruction, which restricts the development of students' oral fluency and pragmatic competence (Suwannoppharat & Chinokul, 2015).

The absence of effective communicative strategies to foster authentic interaction between teachers and learners further undermines SPS goals, which prioritize professional competence in specialized domains (Floriano Ramos & Fuertes Gutiérrez, 2021). This issue is compounded by a lack of methodological preparation among instructors in innovative approaches such as CLIL, hindering effective integration of disciplinary content and foreign language learning (Nieto et al., 2023).

From a sociocultural perspective, characteristics of the Thai learning style—including collectivism, pronounced respect for authority, and a tendency towards reflective learning—also contribute to limited classroom participation (Srivoranart, 2016; Hofstede, 1991; Alejaldre Biel & Álvarez Ramos, 2018).

Against this backdrop, the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach emerges as a promising pedagogical methodology capable of addressing these constraints. Recent studies demonstrate that CLIL enhances not only language skills but also critical thinking, learner autonomy, and meaningful knowledge acquisition (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Huilcapi et al., 2021).

### 1.1. Objectives of the study

**General objective:** To examine the opportunities and constraints in adopting CLIL within Thai SPS programs and to propose context-sensitive strategies for improvement.

## Research questions

**RQ1.** Which contextual and institutional factors hinder or facilitate effective CLIL implementation in Thai SPS programs?

**RQ2.** How are SPS courses distributed across professional sectors and degrees of linguistic specialisation in the four universities analysed?

**RQ3.** To what extent do existing SPS courses incorporate CLIL's 4C components and Bloom's LOTS/HOTS taxonomy, and what pedagogical or teachertraining measures are required to strengthen that integration?

## 2. WHAT IS CLIL

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both subject content and language. Rather than teaching the language as an isolated objective, CLIL positions it as a vehicle for accessing disciplinary knowledge, encouraging a more meaningful, contextualized, and motivating learning process (Coyle et al., 2010).

This method is especially effective in environments with limited language exposure, as it greatly expands opportunities for authentic, functional language use. CLIL also fosters cognitive, communicative, and intercultural skills fundamental to comprehensive education in today's globalized world (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Pérez-Cañado, 2018).

### 2.1. The 4C components of CLIL

The 4C model, proposed by Coyle et al. (2010), forms the theoretical foundation of the CLIL approach by integrating four interdependent dimensions—Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. Effective CLIL practice requires balancing these elements to foster a transformative and impactful learning experience.

**Content** refers to disciplinary knowledge and subject-matter expertise taught through the medium of a foreign language. The objective is not solely language acquisition but gaining relevant knowledge within the chosen domain (e.g., tourism, business, health) via the target language.

**Communication** designates the use of language as both a learning tool and a vehicle for expression. Students build receptive and productive skills by engaging in real-world communicative tasks that require authentic interaction.

**Cognition** involves nurturing higher-order thinking skills—including analysis, synthesis, and problem-solving—through active engagement in knowledge construction, using language as a tool for thought.

**Culture** underscores the importance of understanding the social and cultural contexts in which the language is used. CLIL promotes intercultural awareness, respect for diversity, and critical reflection on one's own identity in relation to others.

Overall, the 4C model supports holistic learning. It ensures that students develop not only linguistic competence, but also cognitive, disciplinary, and social skills necessary for effective functioning in diverse professional and multicultural contexts.

## 2.2. Application of HOTS and LOTS in CLIL for SPS

Integrating Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) within the CLIL approach is essential for designing teaching and learning processes that systematically develop both basic and advanced cognitive skills. Two skill categories are distinguished in this framework:

- **LOTS** (Lower Order Thinking Skills): foundational abilities such as remembering, understanding, and applying knowledge.
- **HOTS** (Higher Order Thinking Skills): advanced abilities including analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

These dimensions are complementary and should be incorporated in a balanced way into SPS courses. For contexts like Thailand, where students often demonstrate an intermediate (B1) language proficiency, it is advisable to progressively foster HOTS development, while continuing to reinforce the essential skills provided by LOTS.

## 2.3. Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS)

LOTS provide the cognitive foundation upon which higher competences are established. In the context of SPS, LOTS-related activities allow students to:

- **Memorize** technical terminology specific to fields such as tourism or business.
- **Understand** instructions, descriptions, and authentic professional texts.
- **Apply** grammatical structures and vocabulary in practical situations, for example, providing client information, composing emails, or completing forms.

These capabilities ensure a firm grasp of basic content and create the groundwork for tackling more cognitively demanding activities (Bloom, 1956).

## 2.4. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

HOTS enable students to employ language as a tool for critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. In SPS instruction, HOTS are developed through tasks such as:

- **Analyzing** cultural or economic practices in Spanish-speaking contexts, for example, comparing hospitality models between Mexico and Thailand.
- **Evaluating** the effectiveness of advertising campaigns for specific audiences, using both linguistic and professional criteria.
- **Creating** original projects, such as business plans, tourist itineraries, promotional materials, or conducting simulated job interviews.

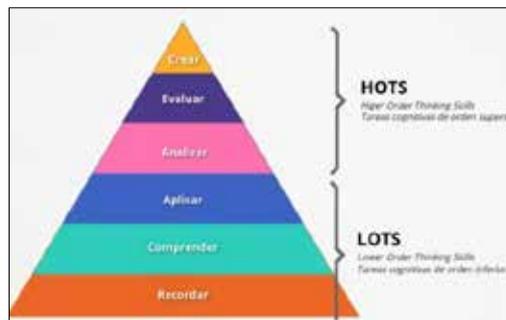
Engaging in these activities not only deepens language proficiency but also fosters greater autonomy, creativity, and professional competence in learners.

## 2.5. Implementation in SPS

The purposeful integration of LOTS and HOTS in SPS courses enables the design of coherent, scaffolded didactic sequences that systematically build both foundational and advanced competences. A typical instructional progression may look like:

- **LOTS:** Learning technical vocabulary → understanding professional texts → applying expressions in basic simulations.
- **HOTS:** Analyzing real-world cases → evaluating professional procedures → creating innovative solutions in Spanish.

This approach ensures that students develop not only linguistic competence, but also the critical and creative capacities essential for effective performance in future professional environments. The synergy between CLIL and Bloom's Taxonomy provides a robust and adaptable pedagogical framework, particularly suited to multicultural contexts like Thailand (Coyle et al., 2010; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).



**Figure 1.** *Revised Bloom's Taxonomy*

*Note:* The Flipped Classroom. "Planificación didáctica en el entorno flipped." Retrieved April 2025, from The Flipped Classroom website.

## 3. CURRICULAR NEEDS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SPS IN THAI UNIVERSITIES

The inclusion of SPS courses in Thai universities is driven by academic, economic, and sociocultural demands that establish these courses as vital components of the university curriculum.

Thailand's robust economic growth and growing integration into global markets have increased the need for professionals with foreign language, notably Spanish, skills. Sectors including tourism, hospitality, energy, food, and construction — areas where Thailand maintains active collaboration with Spanish-speaking nations — increasingly require personnel who can engage confidently in Spanish (Iampramoon, 2013; ICEX, 2020).

Tourism serves as a cornerstone of the Thai economy. According to recent figures from the Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2023), the first post-pandemic year saw Thailand welcome over 150,000 visitors from Spain and around 90,000 from other Spanish-speaking countries. This growing international presence is driving strong demand for Thai professionals

able to deliver tourism services in Spanish, further underlining the strategic importance of specialized language instruction in this sector.

Spanish has also emerged as a globally significant language for both professional and academic communication. The Instituto Cervantes (2023) notes that Spanish is the world's second-largest native language and one of the principal languages in international contexts, used by nearly 600 million people globally. Its instruction thus serves not only employability goals but also advances institutional objectives of internationalization among Thai universities.

SPS courses play a foundational role by combining language learning with the development of specific skills tailored to concrete professional domains. Unlike standard Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL), SPS is oriented toward real-world occupational tasks such as customer service, technical documentation, medical interpretation, and business negotiations (Vranić Petković & Georgijev, 2019).

Finally, SPS courses help strengthen graduates' professional profiles by preparing them for work in intercultural, multilingual environments. In an increasingly competitive international landscape, SPS training is not a mere elective but a strategic imperative for Thai universities committed to comprehensive and career-oriented education.

#### **4. IMPORTANCE AND TYPES OF SPS COURSES IN THAI UNIVERSITIES**

Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS) courses are essential components of Spanish language programs in Thailand, as they bridge language acquisition with real-world professional demands. Their inclusion in university curricula is motivated not only by employability criteria, but also by the need to deliver contextualized instruction relevant to authentic workplace scenarios

Unlike general Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) courses, SPS programs center on developing communicative competencies tailored to specific sectors such as tourism, hospitality, commerce, healthcare, and translation. These competencies include mastery of sector-specific terminology, comprehension of specialized texts, skilled oral and written production in formal registers, and the ability to adapt language use to socioprofessional contexts (Srivoranart, 2011).

This curricular focus enables Thai university students to acquire transferable skills directly applicable to future careers. For instance, in courses like "Spanish for Business" or "Spanish for Hospitality," students practice writing business emails, engaging with international clients, and presenting products to Spanish-speaking audiences, thus fostering meaningful learning and boosting motivation (Floriano Ramos & Fuertes Gutiérrez, 2021).

Beyond language abilities, SPS courses nurture intercultural competencies vital for success in a globalized world. Training in SPS encourages students to explore the cultural aspects of Spanish, contrast them with their own, and develop the intercultural awareness needed to interact effectively with native speakers from diverse backgrounds (Coyle et al., 2010).

This specialized curricular approach also signals a shift towards competence-based teaching models, where language is acquired as a vehicle for action—not just knowledge. SPS course design aligns well with both international higher education guidelines and Thai university internationalization strategies (Nieto et al., 2023).

Ultimately, SPS courses serve as strategic pathways for consolidating Spanish as a career tool in Thailand, moving beyond its former status as an optional foreign language. Their

continued development depends on meticulous didactic planning, targeted teacher training, and context-appropriate educational resources.

## 5. ECONOMIC AND PROFESSIONAL RELEVANCE OF SPANISH IN THAILAND

As an emerging Southeast Asian economy with expanding global connections, Thailand increasingly requires professionals adept in multilingual and cross-cultural communication. Within this dynamic context, Spanish has attained strategic significance as a language of cultural, academic, and professional exchange.

Rapid growth in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, foreign trade, gastronomy, and renewable energy is driving demand for Spanish-speaking professionals. As of 2020, ICEX reports that over 90 Spanish companies operate in Thailand, notably in infrastructure, food, and energy, creating tangible opportunities for graduates equipped with language proficiency and technical-communicative skills (ICEX, 2020).

Tourism remains a national economic engine. In 2023, Thailand welcomed more than 150,000 visitors from Spain and approximately 90,000 from Latin America (Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand, 2023), underscoring industry needs for Spanish-trained tour guides, hotel employees, and service managers.

At a global level, Spanish continues to rank as one of the world's most influential languages—it is the second most spoken native language worldwide and occupies third or fourth position in internet usage, key in international business and mobility (Instituto Cervantes, 2023).

SPS instruction in Thai universities thus responds to both national and international market needs. It boosts graduates' employability, intercultural readiness, and access to professional and academic networks across the globe. Spanish should therefore be recognized not simply as an elective foreign language, but as a strategic tool for economic development and global integration.

## 6. ACADEMIC OFFER OF SPS IN THAI UNIVERSITIES

In direct response to the increasing demand for professionals with specialized Spanish-language skills, Thai universities have progressively integrated Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS) courses into their curricula. This shift reflects a movement away from a purely generalist language approach toward one that addresses authentic professional and sectoral needs—aligning with both national economic priorities and international labor market standards.

A review of academic offerings at four leading public universities—Chulalongkorn, Khon Kaen, Ramkhamhaeng, and Thammasat—reveals a diverse and growing SPS portfolio targeting sectors such as tourism, hospitality, business, translation, medicine, and business communication. These courses are carefully designed to meet student interests and, critically, to mirror the country's evolving socioeconomic landscape and graduate employment trends.

By embedding SPS in their programs, these institutions are preparing students not only for generic language competence but for real-world application in Thailand's key industries and transnational professions.

**Table 1.** *Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS) courses at four Thai universities*

University	Representative courses	Predominant professional orientation
Chulalongkorn	Traducción I & II; Basic Interpreting; Spanish for Business; Spanish for Law; Spanish for Tourism	Translation, business, tourism
Khon Kaen	Spanish for Hospitality; Spanish for Tourism; Spanish for Business; Business Communication; Interpreting; Service-Industry Spanish	Tourism, hospitality, translation
Ramkhamhaeng	Spanish–Thai Translation 1 & 2; Business Spanish 1 & 2; Spanish for Tourist Guides 1 & 2; Spanish for the Service Industry	Translation, tourism, business
Thammasat	Spanish for Tourism & Hospitality; Spanish for Business Administration & International Trade; Spanish for Medical Purposes	Tourism, commerce, healthcare

Across these four institutions, a total of 32 SPS courses have been identified: seven at Chulalongkorn, thirteen at Khon Kaen, eight at Ramkhamhaeng, and four at Thammasat. Thematic analysis indicates that tourism and service-oriented subjects constitute the largest share (34% of all courses), followed by translation/interpreting (31%), with business, healthcare, and law accounting for the remainder.

This distribution highlights two important trends:

- Thai universities are actively shaping Spanish language offerings to prioritize sectors central to the national economy, most notably tourism and hospitality.
- The prominence of specialized courses in translation and business reflects an expanding recognition of Spanish as a professional asset beyond leisure industries.

The recent inclusion of medical Spanish at Thammasat, though currently limited, demonstrates ongoing curricular diversification in line with Thailand’s growing healthcare sector.

## 7. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and reflective design to examine how Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS) is delivered across Thai universities. The methodology draws upon two principal sources of evidence: (i) a documentary review of official institutional materials and (ii) the authors’ systematized teaching experience at four universities.

The institutions selected—Chulalongkorn, Khon Kaen, Ramkhamhaeng, and Thammasat—were chosen for their established Spanish programs and comprehensive SPS course offerings. Data collection spanned public sources, including university websites, curricular documents, and catalogues, supplemented where possible with internal planning documents and informal consultations with academic coordinators.

SPS courses identified were categorized by sectoral orientation (e.g., tourism, business, medicine) and by degree of linguistic specialization. Drawing directly on their classroom experience, the authors closely analyzed each course within a CLIL framework—paying particular attention to the design of tasks, learner outcomes, and how the 4C model was incorporated.

Documentary analysis was conducted using a comparative-descriptive strategy, supported by open thematic coding that enabled grouping of courses by functional objectives. This process followed the transparent protocol described by Helms, Pitner, and Adams (2023). Only programs with explicit references to professional contexts were included, ensuring alignment with the study's aims.

Although the article does not utilize primary empirical data (e.g., interviews, quantitative surveys), it is anchored in documented instructional practice and critical pedagogical self-reflection. This exploratory qualitative stance values context-bound knowledge over broad generalization, generating insights with transfer potential for comparable SPS-CLIL settings in Asia and beyond

## 8. SPS COURSES AT FOUR THAI UNIVERSITIES

In addressing RQ2, our mapping exercise identified a total of 32 undergraduate SPS courses distributed among four major Thai public universities: Chulalongkorn, Khon Kaen, Ramkhamhaeng, and Thammasat. The resulting course catalogue demonstrates a marked shift from general Spanish instruction toward professionally focused offerings that align with Thailand's strategic development sectors—most notably tourism, hospitality, translation, business, and, more recently, healthcare.

This evolution reflects both regional labor-market priorities and the growing recognition of Spanish as a key asset for graduates seeking roles in internationally oriented industries.

### 8.1. Course portfolio by institution

**Table 2.** *Flagship Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS) courses by university*

University	Representative courses	Dominant professional orientation	Linguistic specialization
Chulalongkorn	Translation I & II; Basic Interpreting; Spanish for Business; Spanish for Law; Spanish for Tourism	Translation, business, tourism	Intermediate–Advanced
Khon Kaen	Spanish for Hospitality; Spanish for Tourism; Spanish for Business; Business Communication; Interpreting; Service-Industry Spanish	Tourism, hospitality, translation	Intermediate–Advanced
Ramkhamhaeng	Spanish–Thai Translation 1 & 2; Business Spanish 1 & 2; Spanish for Tourist Guides 1 & 2; Spanish for the Service Industry	Translation, tourism, business	Basic–Intermediate
Thammasat	Spanish for Tourism & Hospitality; Spanish for Business Administration & International Trade; Spanish for Medical Purposes	Tourism, commerce, healthcare	Intermediate–Advanced

## 8.2. Sector-level distribution

An aggregation of the 32 identified courses yields the following sectoral profile: tourism and hospitality constitute the largest share (34%), followed by translation and interpreting (31%). Business-oriented courses represent nearly one-fifth of the portfolio, while healthcare and law remain marginal areas.

This distribution reflects the strategic alignment of SPS offerings with Thailand's economic priorities, particularly in tourism and service industries, and signals an increasing institutional recognition of the relevance of Spanish language training for professional and specialized contexts.

**Table 3.** *Distribution of SPS courses across professional sectors in four Thai universities (n = 32).*

Sector	Courses (n)	% of total
Tourism / Hospitality	11	34.4 %
Translation / Interpreting	10	31.2 %
Business	6	18.8 %
Spanish as FL Pedagogy	3	9.4 %
Law	1	3.1 %
Healthcare	1	3.1 %

## 8.3. Interpretation of institutional profiles

Institutional data reveal distinct curricular identities. Chulalongkorn University specializes in legal and commercial Spanish; Khon Kaen and Ramkhamhaeng focus on the intersections of tourism and translation, reflecting their regional service economies; and Thammasat is the sole institution pioneering medical Spanish, signaling diversification into the healthcare sector.

From a CLIL perspective, these sector-specific offerings provide fertile ground for integrated syllabi where Spanish mediates professional content. For example, "Spanish for Tourism" can combine route-planning exercises with customer-service dialogues, while "Spanish for Business Administration" can culminate in simulated business-plan pitches—all evaluated through dual (language plus content) rubrics. This approach aligns program content with real-world professional practice and enhances employability.

## 8.4. Challenges and opportunities

Successfully harnessing the promise of SPS programs in Thai higher education requires attention to several foundational gaps:

- Development of curricular coherence that scaffolds Spanish acquisition and professional competences across educational levels.
- Investment in CLIL-focused teacher training to ensure that educators are equipped to deliver integrated disciplinary and language instruction.

- Creation of locally relevant instructional materials, customized for Thai socioeconomic and professional contexts.

As highlighted under RQ1, these remain the most significant obstacles to maximizing the impact of SPS education. Nevertheless, the establishment of 32 distinct SPS courses at leading institutions marks a decisive transformation: Spanish instruction in Thailand is increasingly functional, targeted, and responsive to evolving economic and intercultural demands (Vranić Petković & Georgijev, 2019). This alignment signals strong potential for further integration of global CLIL best practices and sectoral specialization.

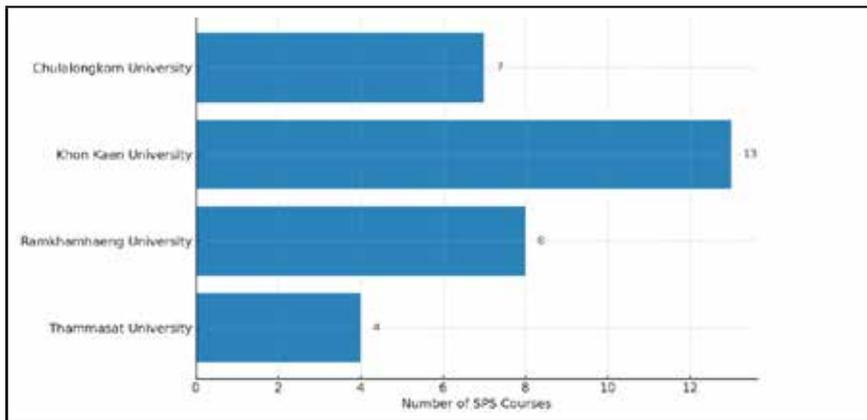


Figure 2. Number of SPS courses offered at four Thai universities

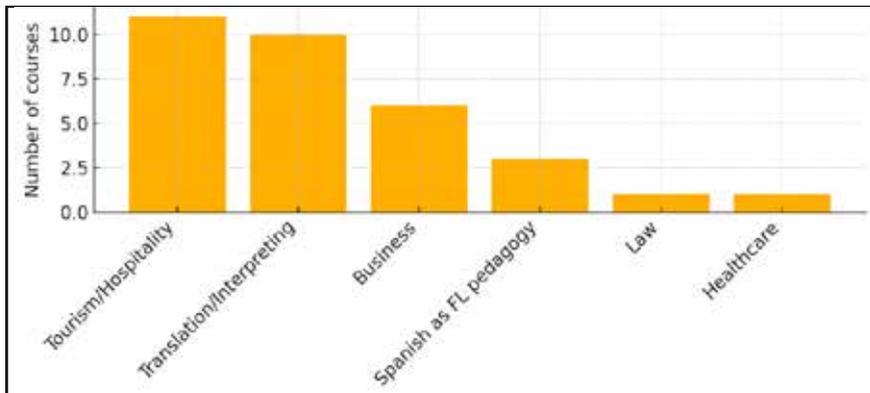


Figure 3. Distribution of SPS courses across sectors (n=32)

## 9. ANALYSIS OF THE ACADEMIC OFFERING

In reference to RQ2, Table 3 highlights a predominance of tourism/hospitality (34% of all SPS courses), closely followed by translation/interpreting (31%), and business (19%),

with healthcare and law each representing only 3%. These patterns are visualized in Figure 3 (sectoral distribution) and Figure 2 (institutional spread).

Three structural trends are evident:

1. **Sectoral concentration:** Thai universities emphasize tourism and service-oriented SPS courses. This mirrors Thailand's workforce needs, especially in light of tourism accounting for 12% of national GDP in 2023. Courses such as Spanish for Hospitality and Spanish for Tourist Guides directly address market-driven communicative tasks.
2. **Institution-specific strengths:** Each university exhibits distinctive curricular specialization. Chulalongkorn prioritizes legal and commercial Spanish; Khon Kaen and Ramkhamhaeng focus on tourism and translation; Thammasat stands out for pioneering medical Spanish.
3. **Intermediate proficiency focus:** Most programs require B1–B2 level entry (see Table 2), a pragmatic choice to build functional competence among Thai learners. Only a few syllabi aim toward advanced (C1) proficiency, indicating potential for deeper curriculum development.

Despite these advances, three persistent structural gaps limit the overall impact of SPS programs:

- **Materials gap:** Most textbooks and resources originate in Spain or Latin America, with minimal contextual adaptation for Thailand's professional realities. This undermines the practical relevance of language instruction.
- **Teacher training gap:** Many instructors lack specific CLIL methodology training, leading to variability in integration and classroom outcomes.
- **Trajectory gap:** Sometimes, course objectives and tasks are not fully aligned with students' likely career needs—syllabi may emphasize abstract theory over job-related communication practice.

These challenges suggest an urgent need for tighter integration among curriculum planning, educational resources, and market demands. The CLIL approach provides a promising path forward, as it encourages synergy between linguistic and disciplinary learning, enhances student engagement, and builds future employability.

## 10. INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE CASES

Comparative evidence from diverse multilingual contexts attests to the adaptability and effectiveness of CLIL beyond Europe. In Kazakhstan, Satayev et al. (2022) implemented team-taught Biology CLIL classes, reporting parallel improvements in both subject mastery and English proficiency. At the Indonesian primary level, Azis et al. (2023) leveraged active learning and scaffolding within CLIL frameworks to boost pupils' communicative competence. Most recently, Helms et al. (2023) developed a CLIL–TBLT Spanish-for-Nursing course in the United States: role-play activities and specialized medical terminology were closely mapped to core professional competencies, offering a replicable model for Thai healthcare Spanish instruction.

Collectively, these cases demonstrate that CLIL is a flexible, evidence-based pedagogical approach capable of promoting simultaneous advancement in discipline-specific knowledge and language proficiency across educational stages and cultural settings. Their outcomes reinforce the viability of applying CLIL to Thai SPS contexts, offering valuable methodological models for teacher professionalization, instructional material development, and integrated assessment.

## **11. ADVANTAGES OF THE CLIL APPROACH IN SPS INSTRUCTION**

Building on the international case studies discussed in Section 10 and insights from Thai SPS course design, this section outlines five principal advantages of deploying the CLIL approach in SPS education. While not all benefits are fully realized in current Thai offerings, these advantages underscore CLIL's capacity to enhance language acquisition, deepen disciplinary engagement, and better prepare students for professional realities.

### **11.1. Dual learning outcomes**

CLIL facilitates the parallel development of linguistic and disciplinary skills. Within the SPS framework, this enables learners to master job-specific language while simultaneously deepening their understanding of the related professional sector. International evidence, such as Helms et al. (2023), supports this integrated approach. Although many Thai SPS syllabi still separate language and content instruction, their unification holds promise for increased learning relevance and student motivation.

### **11.2. Communicative competence**

CLIL's emphasis on contextualized, real-world tasks enhances students' ability to communicate effectively within professional domains. Studies by Satayev et al. (2022) and Azis et al. (2023) demonstrate improvements in both fluency and accuracy in domain-specific language through CLIL. In contrast, Thai SPS programs often rely on controlled, written exercises; adopting more task-based methodologies aligned with industry needs could markedly boost communicative competence.

### **11.3. Cognitive engagement**

The integration of Bloom's Taxonomy within CLIL, encouraging Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), promotes critical and reflective learning. This is especially important for SPS students, who must analyze case studies, problem-solve, and defend decisions using a foreign language. Although many Thai syllabi focus on Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), a staged shift toward HOTS through scaffolded tasks aligned with professional content is advisable.

### **11.4. Intercultural awareness**

CLIL provides a framework for fostering intercultural competencies alongside language and content learning. Mastery of cultural expectations is crucial in sectors like healthcare,

law, and tourism. While some Thai SPS courses introduce cultural themes, more explicit integration—through comparative case studies and reflective activities—would better equip students for global engagement.

### **11.5. Pedagogical coherence**

A well-implemented CLIL approach ensures alignment among instructional objectives, materials, assessment methods, and real-world applications. Some Thai SPS programs have implemented theme-based modules and project evaluations, yet pedagogical coherence remains inconsistent. Strengthening this alignment would enhance learning outcomes and facilitate smoother transitions from academic environments to professional settings.

## **12. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CLIL IN SPS INSTRUCTION**

A review of 32 Thai SPS course syllabi and systematic teaching reflections reveal five recurring barriers to effective CLIL implementation. These findings address RQ1 and are synthesized below:

### **12.1. Teacher training need**

A major obstacle is the lack of specialized training in CLIL methodologies. While most instructors are proficient in Spanish grammar, many lack the pedagogical skills required to design lessons that meaningfully integrate disciplinary content, language, and cognitive development—a shortfall that undermines the 4C model's potential.

Contextual example: Many Spanish teachers at Thai universities have not received formal training in CLIL or task- and competence-based methodologies, limiting their ability to adapt curricula to integrated learning.

### **12.2. Lack of contextualized teaching materials**

Existing resources are often designed for native Spanish-speaking contexts and fail to address Thai cultural, economic, or tourism realities. As a result, teachers are forced to create their own materials, exacerbating workload and widening resource gaps across institutions.

Contextual example: Spanish for Tourism textbooks frequently depict European settings that do not mirror the practical needs or destinations of the Thai tourism sector.

### **12.3. Heterogeneity in student language proficiency**

Wide-ranging student proficiency levels (A2 to B1+) complicate instructional design and equity in assessment of integrated CLIL tasks.

Contextual example: In a single “Spanish for Hospitality” class, some students simulate fluent tourist interactions, while others struggle with basic professional phrases.

### 12.4. Complex dual assessment

It is challenging to develop assessment tools that measure both content learning and language progress. Many instructors rely on traditional written exams, neglecting the integrated nature of CLIL.

Contextual example: Final assessments often test grammar only and do not include rubrics for evaluating professional skills (e.g., oral customer service or workplace writing).

### 12.5. Sociocultural learning factors

Thai learning culture—marked by collectivism, high power distance, and fear of making mistakes—can inhibit adoption of active, participatory CLIL pedagogies, with students tending toward passive classroom roles.

Contextual example: During debates or mock job interviews, students may avoid speaking for fear of making mistakes or drawing attention to themselves.

## 13. STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES

Turning to RQ3, our analysis of practice indicates only partial integration of the 4Cs and LOTS/HOTS to date. The following targeted strategies address gaps and promote systemic improvement:

### 13.1. Ongoing and specialized teacher training

Establish professional development programs centered on CLIL, emphasizing:

- Planning and sequencing integrated didactic units.
- Designing contextually authentic tasks for Thai learners.
- Mastering dual (language and content) assessment practice.
- Training should interweave linguistic, pedagogical, and disciplinary strands, prioritizing active, learner-centered methodologies.

Recommended actions:

- Conduct regular workshops on the 4C model and its classroom applications.
- Facilitate lesson observation cycles and guided reflective practice.
- Prepare mentorship pairings between experienced and novice CLIL educators.

### 13.2. Collaborative development of contextualized material

Foster interdisciplinary teams—pairing Spanish instructors with sector specialists (e.g., tourism, business, health)—to create locally relevant resources.

Recommended actions:

- Jointly design competence-based teaching units.
- Develop and share digital resource repositories across institutions.
- Participate in regional CLIL professional networks.
- Integrate simulation and role-play tasks addressing sectoral discourse, following proven models such as Helms et al. (2023) for healthcare Spanish.

### **13.3. Gradual integration of educational technology**

Utilize digital technology to increase Spanish exposure through interactive tasks, simulations, and personalized learning experiences.

Recommended actions:

- Employ platforms including Genially, Padlet, Canva, Flip, or Moodle.
- Develop customer-service simulations with avatars/chatbots for task realism.
- Incorporate real Thai tourism videos as learning materials.

### **13.4. Dual and integrated assessment**

Assessment practices should uphold the interdisciplinary core of CLIL, balancing linguistic competence and content mastery.

Recommended actions:

- Develop specific CLIL rubrics for SPS tasks (presentations, simulations, reports).
- Adopt formative, collaborative assessment models.
- Include contextualized oral tasks (e.g., guided tours, hotel service role-plays).

### **13.5. Intercultural awareness and methodological transformation**

Promote inclusive pedagogies that value active participation, encourage learning from mistakes, and foster critical cultural reflection.

Recommended actions:

- Integrate role-plays, debates, and comparative cultural projects.
- Blend Hispanic and Thai cultural content in classroom materials.
- Build safe learning environments that facilitate autonomy and self-expression.

A summary table (Table 4) can be used to align these strategies with the principal challenges identified for CLIL SPS implementation in Thailand.

**Table 4.** *Relationship between challenges and strategies for CLILSPS implementation*

Challenges	Strategies
Lack of specific teacher training	Continuous teacher development and mentoring
Shortage of contextualised materials	Collaborative creation of locally adapted resources
Linguistic heterogeneity	Differentiated tasks & educational technology
Complex dual assessment	Integrated rubrics & functional projects
Passive learning styles	Active methodologies & intercultural awareness

This table provides a clear visual summary for curriculum planners and CLIL practitioners to address each barrier with evidence-informed interventions.

## 14. CONCLUSION

This study mapped the provision of Spanish for Specific Purposes (SPS) in Thai higher education and evaluated the potential of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) for advancing SPS instruction. Four headline findings emerged from the answers to the guiding research questions:

1. Implementation constraints (RQ1). Five persistent systemic barriers—teacher training deficits, scarcity of contextualized resources, linguistic heterogeneity, complex dual assessment, and sociocultural learning norms—currently constrain the depth of CLIL adoption in Thai SPS programs.
2. Sectoral profile (RQ2). Tourism/hospitality and translation/interpreting comprise nearly two-thirds of the 32 SPS courses identified, mirroring Thailand's service-driven economy, with business as a third major focus; healthcare and law remain nascent.
3. Pedagogical leverage (RQ3). When strategically scaffolded, CLIL provides a robust mechanism to align linguistic, disciplinary, and intercultural outcomes. The five proposed strategy bundles (Sections 13.1–13.5) operationalize international best practice for Thai universities.
4. Strategic positioning. Integrating CLIL into SPS reframes Spanish as a core professional competence—rather than a supplementary foreign language—supporting graduate employability and Thailand's internationalization goals.

International reference cases from Kazakhstan, Indonesia, and the United States affirm CLIL's effectiveness in multilingual, multicultural environments. Thai universities should thus view CLIL not merely as a methodology but as an educational vision that fosters student agency, cultivates higher-order thinking, and assures authentic workplace skill transfer.

As an exploratory contribution, this article charts emerging patterns and lays groundwork for future empirical validation through classroom research.

## 15. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Given the exploratory and document-based approach of this study, future research should prioritize empirical evaluation of the proposed CLIL strategies in authentic classroom contexts. Implementing and monitoring targeted interventions—such as integrating the 4C model and differentiated assessment—will enable direct measurement of their impact on language proficiency, professional skill development, and student engagement over time.

A valuable next step involves piloting classroom-based innovations and longitudinally tracking learner progress, ideally using a mix of classroom observation, student interviews, and performance-based assessments (e.g., rubrics, portfolios). Mixed-methods research designs would fill current data gaps, provide more robust evidence of pedagogical effectiveness, and yield actionable insights for further curricular refinement.

Additionally, employer perspectives on CLIL-trained graduates warrant investigation to validate the model's relevance for labor market demands and inform institutional decision-making. Such impact-oriented studies would be instrumental in refining the Thai CLIL-SPS framework and aligning national policy with workforce needs.

This study's limitations include the absence of primary, classroom-based empirical data, the complex challenge of adapting established teaching routines to the integrated CLIL framework, and potential instructional inconsistency across institutions. The reliance on qualitative, reflective methods underlines the need for more systematic, mixed-method research to validate and extend these initial findings.

Ultimately, a research agenda that blends classroom experimentation, stakeholder feedback, and careful assessment can establish evidence-based best practices for CLIL in Thailand and comparable multilingual, multicultural contexts.

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