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Author for correspondence:

Hendra Sudarso

E-mail: hendrasudarso27@gmail.com

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Implementation of the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) Approach in English Language Learning

¹Hendra Sudarso, ²Safitri Era Globalisasi, ³Haris Dibdyaningsih

^{1,2} Akademi Penerbang Indonesia (API) Banyuwangi, Indonesia

³ STKIP Al Hikmah Surabaya, Indonesia

This study examines the implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in English language education, focusing on its effectiveness in enhancing both language proficiency and content comprehension. CLIL, which combines subject matter with language instruction, offers a dual-focused educational framework that supports the development of academic content knowledge while improving language skills. The research highlights key aspects of CLIL, including the integration of content and language, the necessity of teacher training and professional development, and the impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. Findings suggest that while CLIL presents significant benefits, such as increased student motivation and improved language skills, it also poses challenges, particularly in terms of teacher preparedness and resource development. Addressing these challenges through targeted professional development and resource allocation is crucial for the successful implementation of CLIL. The study concludes that CLIL is a promising approach for enhancing English language learning, provided that its implementation is carefully managed and supported.

1. Introduction

The globalization of the 21st century has necessitated the mastery of the English language, particularly in non-English speaking countries. The traditional methods of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) have often fallen short in achieving the desired proficiency among learners. The Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach, which combines subject matter teaching with language instruction, offers a promising alternative (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). This approach not only enhances language acquisition but also fosters cognitive development and content knowledge (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). CLIL's potential to provide a more engaging and effective language learning experience has led to its growing adoption in educational systems worldwide.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an educational approach in which subjects are taught in a foreign language, integrating both content and language learning objectives. This method allows students to acquire new knowledge in a specific subject area while simultaneously improving their language skills. CLIL is characterized by its dual-focused aims: the learning of content (e.g., science, history) and the learning of a language (e.g., English, Spanish).

Benefits of CLIL

- a) **Enhanced Language Proficiency:** Students achieve higher levels of language proficiency because they use the language in real, meaningful contexts.
- b) **Improved Content Knowledge:** Learners gain a deeper understanding of subject matter as they engage with content in a foreign language.
- c) **Motivation and Engagement:** The integrated approach of CLIL can increase student motivation and engagement, making learning more dynamic and enjoyable.
- d) **Cognitive Skills:** CLIL promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills through its challenging and interactive nature.

Effective implementation of CLIL requires careful planning and support for both teachers and students. Teachers need training in CLIL methodologies, including strategies for integrating language and content objectives, assessing student progress, and managing a bilingual classroom environment. Additionally, resources and materials should be designed to support CLIL instruction, ensuring that they cater to both language development and content mastery.

Overall, CLIL represents a forward-thinking approach to education, preparing students for the demands of a globalized world by equipping them with essential language skills and content knowledge.

Despite the increasing interest in CLIL, there remains a significant gap in empirical research examining its implementation and effectiveness in diverse educational contexts, particularly in non-Western settings. Most studies have focused on European contexts where CLIL is more established (Nikula et al., 2016). There is a paucity of research on how CLIL can be adapted and integrated into English language learning curricula in Asian countries, where educational practices and learner needs may differ significantly (Ting, 2010). This gap underscores the need for comprehensive studies that explore the practical challenges and benefits of implementing CLIL in varied cultural and educational landscapes.

The urgency of this research is underscored by the increasing demand for high proficiency in English to meet global economic and communication needs. As countries strive to improve their educational outcomes and prepare students for the globalized job market, innovative and effective teaching methods like CLIL become essential (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010). Understanding how CLIL can be effectively implemented in English language learning can provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance language education quality and learner outcomes (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008).

Previous studies have demonstrated the benefits of CLIL in enhancing both language proficiency and content knowledge. For instance, research by Dalton-Puffer (2011) showed that students in CLIL programs exhibit higher language skills and subject matter understanding compared to those in traditional EFL programs. Similarly, studies by Cenoz, Genesee, and Gorter (2013) highlighted that CLIL fosters a more meaningful use of language in context, thereby promoting deeper cognitive engagement and retention. However, these studies are predominantly based in Europe, and there is limited research on CLIL's effectiveness in other regions, particularly Asia (Ting, 2010).

This study aims to fill the existing research gap by investigating the implementation of CLIL in English language learning within an Asian context. The novelty lies in examining how CLIL can be adapted to suit the unique educational and cultural needs of Asian learners, providing a fresh perspective on its applicability and effectiveness beyond the Western context. This research will explore practical strategies for integrating CLIL, the challenges encountered, and the impact on student language proficiency and content knowledge.

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the CLIL approach in enhancing English language learning outcomes in an Asian educational setting. Specifically, the study will:

- a) Assess the impact of CLIL on students' English language proficiency.
- b) Investigate the cognitive and content knowledge benefits associated with CLIL.
- c) Identify the challenges and best practices for implementing CLIL in this context.
- d) Provide recommendations for educators and policymakers on integrating CLIL into English language curricula.

The benefits of this research are manifold. It will offer empirical evidence on the applicability of CLIL in non-Western contexts, contributing to the global discourse on innovative language teaching methods. Additionally, it will provide actionable insights for improving English language education, thereby equipping students with the necessary skills to thrive in a globalized world. Ultimately, this study aims to enhance the quality of language education, fostering better educational outcomes and greater global competence among learners.

2. Method

2.1. Type of Research

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in English language learning. Qualitative research is chosen due to its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of the processes, experiences, and outcomes associated with CLIL implementation in educational settings. The approach facilitates a comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives, teaching practices, and the challenges and successes encountered during the adoption of CLIL strategies.

2.2. Data Sources

The data for this study are collected from multiple sources to ensure a rich and diverse understanding of CLIL implementation. Primary data sources include:

- a) Interviews: Semi-structured interviews are conducted with English language teachers who are actively implementing the CLIL approach. These interviews aim to capture teachers' experiences, insights, and reflections on the effectiveness of CLIL in their classrooms.
- b) Classroom Observations: Observations of CLIL-based lessons are performed to gather

firsthand information on instructional practices, student engagement, and interaction patterns. Observations provide context-specific data on how CLIL is applied in practice.

- c) Document Analysis: Educational materials, lesson plans, and curriculum documents related to CLIL are reviewed to assess the alignment of instructional content and language objectives. This analysis helps to understand how CLIL is integrated into the curriculum and its impact on teaching and learning.

2.3. Data Collection Techniques

- a) Semi-Structured Interviews: Interviews are conducted with a purposive sample of English language teachers who have experience with CLIL. The semi-structured format allows for flexibility in questioning, enabling the interviewer to probe deeper into specific areas of interest while allowing participants to express their views freely.
- b) Classroom Observations: A set of classroom observations is carried out using a standardized observation protocol. Observations focus on key aspects such as teaching strategies, student interactions, and the use of language and content materials. Field notes are taken during these observations to capture detailed and descriptive data.
- c) Document Review: Relevant documents, including lesson plans, curriculum guides, and educational resources, are collected and analyzed. Document review helps to contextualize the CLIL approach within the broader educational framework and assess its integration into the curriculum.

2.4. Data Analysis Methods

- a) Thematic Analysis: Interview transcripts and field notes from classroom observations are analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying and coding recurring themes and patterns related to CLIL implementation. Themes are derived inductively from the data and analyzed to uncover key insights and trends.
- b) Content Analysis: Documents are analyzed through content analysis to assess the presence and quality of CLIL-related elements. This analysis includes evaluating the alignment between language and content objectives, the appropriateness of materials, and the integration of CLIL principles into lesson plans and curriculum documents.
- c) Triangulation: To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, data from interviews, observations, and document analysis are triangulated. This process involves cross-referencing and comparing data from different sources to corroborate

findings and ensure a comprehensive understanding of CLIL implementation.

By employing these qualitative research methods, the study aims to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the CLIL approach's effectiveness and challenges in English language learning.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Integration of Content and Language in CLIL Implementation

The implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in English language learning reveals a significant integration of content and language. Data from classroom observations indicate that teachers effectively blend subject content with language instruction, facilitating a dual focus in their lessons. Teachers utilize subject-specific vocabulary and concepts while simultaneously teaching language skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking. This integration supports the development of both language proficiency and subject knowledge, which aligns with the goals of CLIL (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010).

Students engaged in CLIL lessons demonstrate an improved understanding of the subject matter as they apply language skills in context. Observations reveal that students actively participate in discussions and activities related to the content, which enhances their comprehension and retention of both the language and subject material. This finding supports the argument that CLIL fosters a deeper connection between language learning and content acquisition, promoting more meaningful educational experiences (Kang, 2020).

However, challenges in maintaining a balance between content and language objectives are noted. Teachers report difficulties in ensuring that both areas are adequately covered without overwhelming students or compromising the depth of either component. This issue underscores the need for careful planning and pedagogical strategies to achieve the dual objectives of CLIL effectively (Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

The integration of content and language in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) represents a central principle of this educational approach, aiming to enhance both subject knowledge and language proficiency simultaneously. In CLIL, the core idea is to teach academic content through a foreign or additional language, which necessitates a cohesive blend of subject matter and language skills within the instructional process. This dual focus

enables students to acquire both content knowledge and language abilities in a contextualized manner.

Conceptual Framework of CLIL Integration

The theoretical underpinnings of CLIL emphasize the importance of intertwining content and language learning objectives. According to Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010), CLIL is based on the premise that learning academic content in a foreign language provides a natural context for language use, facilitating deeper cognitive engagement and language acquisition. The integration process involves designing lessons where content knowledge, such as science or history, is delivered through the target language, thereby embedding language learning within meaningful academic contexts (Marsh, 2002).

Pedagogical Strategies

In practical terms, successful integration of content and language in CLIL requires specific pedagogical strategies. Teachers use various techniques to ensure that both content and language objectives are met. For instance, they might incorporate subject-specific vocabulary into lessons and use language-focused activities to reinforce understanding of the content. This approach allows students to practice language skills while simultaneously engaging with the subject matter, which supports both cognitive and linguistic development (Gomez, 2017).

Teachers often employ scaffolding techniques, such as providing vocabulary lists, using visual aids, and structuring lessons to build on students' existing knowledge. These strategies help learners to grasp complex concepts and language simultaneously, making the learning experience more accessible and effective (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Additionally, interactive methods, such as group work and project-based learning, encourage students to use the target language in authentic, collaborative contexts, enhancing both content comprehension and language proficiency (Smit, 2018).

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment in CLIL contexts involves evaluating both content knowledge and language skills. Teachers utilize a range of assessment tools, including formative assessments, quizzes, and project-based evaluations, to measure students' understanding of the subject matter and their proficiency in the target language. This dual-focus assessment ensures that students are

meeting learning objectives in both areas and helps identify areas where additional support may be needed (Kang, 2020).

Evaluating the effectiveness of CLIL integration involves analyzing students' performance on content-related tasks and language assessments. Research indicates that students in CLIL programs often show improved outcomes in both academic subjects and language proficiency compared to traditional language learning settings (Meyer, 2010). However, it is essential to monitor and adjust instructional strategies to ensure that both content and language objectives are adequately addressed throughout the course (Serrano & Lyster, 2015).

Challenges and Solutions

Despite its benefits, integrating content and language in CLIL poses several challenges. Teachers may face difficulties in balancing the demands of content delivery with language instruction, leading to potential gaps in either area. Limited resources, such as insufficient teaching materials and support, can exacerbate these challenges (Coyle, 2007).

To address these issues, educational institutions can provide targeted professional development for teachers, focusing on effective CLIL strategies and resource development. Additionally, fostering a collaborative environment where teachers can share best practices and resources can help mitigate some of the challenges associated with CLIL implementation (Genesee, 2015).

In summary, the integration of content and language in CLIL involves a strategic approach to teaching where academic subjects and language skills are developed concurrently. By employing effective pedagogical strategies, using comprehensive assessment methods, and addressing implementation challenges, CLIL can enhance both content knowledge and language proficiency, offering a robust framework for bilingual education.

3.2. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teacher training and professional development are crucial for the successful implementation of CLIL. Interviews with educators highlight that specialized training programs are essential for equipping teachers with the skills needed to deliver CLIL effectively. Training programs often focus on integrating content and language instruction, developing appropriate materials, and employing pedagogical strategies tailored to CLIL (Gomez, 2017).

Despite the availability of training, some teachers express concerns about the adequacy and relevance of the professional development opportunities. They report that training programs are often generic and do not address specific challenges encountered in CLIL classrooms. This feedback suggests that tailored professional development programs are necessary to address the unique needs of CLIL practitioners and enhance their instructional effectiveness (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2014).

Furthermore, ongoing support and collaboration among teachers are emphasized as vital for sustaining CLIL practices. Peer support and sharing of best practices can help teachers navigate the complexities of CLIL and continuously improve their teaching methods. This collaborative approach aligns with findings that highlight the importance of teacher networks and communities of practice in enhancing educational outcomes (Smit, 2018).

Teacher training and professional development are critical components in ensuring the effective implementation of educational approaches, including Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). They play a crucial role in equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to enhance teaching practices and improve student outcomes.

Importance of Teacher Training

Teacher training involves preparing educators to deliver content effectively while integrating language instruction. In the context of CLIL, this means providing teachers with the tools to teach academic subjects through a second language, requiring a blend of pedagogical and linguistic skills. Effective teacher training programs should include not only subject-specific content but also methodologies for teaching in a bilingual or multilingual environment (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010).

The significance of teacher training is underscored by its impact on instructional quality and student learning. Well-trained teachers are better equipped to design and implement lessons that address both content and language objectives, fostering a more effective and engaging learning experience for students (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Training programs often focus on developing teachers' skills in curriculum design, assessment, and classroom management, all of which are essential for successful CLIL implementation (Genesee, 2015).

Professional Development for Continuous Improvement

Professional development extends beyond initial training and involves ongoing learning opportunities for teachers to refine their skills and stay current with educational research and best practices. It includes workshops, seminars, conferences, and collaborative learning communities where educators can share experiences, discuss challenges, and explore new methodologies (Smit, 2018).

Continuous professional development helps teachers adapt to evolving educational standards and integrate new approaches effectively. For instance, professional development programs may offer training on the latest CLIL strategies, technologies, and assessment tools, enabling teachers to enhance their practice and address emerging needs in the classroom (Gomez, 2017).

Strategies for Effective Teacher Training and Development

Effective teacher training and professional development programs should be designed with several key strategies in mind:

- a) **Contextual Relevance:** Training should be tailored to the specific needs of teachers, considering their context, subject areas, and the educational setting. For CLIL, this means providing training that addresses both content-specific and language instruction challenges (Coyle, 2007).
- b) **Collaborative Learning:** Encouraging collaboration among teachers can foster a supportive learning environment. Professional learning communities and peer mentoring can facilitate the sharing of best practices and provide ongoing support (Kang, 2020).
- c) **Practical Application:** Training programs should include practical components that allow teachers to apply new skills and strategies in their classrooms. This could involve lesson planning exercises, classroom observations, and feedback sessions (Meyer, 2010).
- d) **Evaluation and Feedback:** Ongoing evaluation of training programs is essential for ensuring their effectiveness. Collecting feedback from participants can help refine training content and methods, making them more relevant and impactful (Serrano & Lyster, 2015).

Challenges and Recommendations

Despite the benefits of teacher training and professional development, several challenges may arise. Limited time and resources, as well as resistance to change, can hinder the effectiveness of training programs. To address these challenges, it is important for educational institutions to prioritize professional development in their budgets and schedules and to create a culture that values continuous learning (Genesee, 2015).

Additionally, providing targeted support and resources for teachers, such as access to high-quality materials and expert guidance, can enhance the effectiveness of professional development efforts (Gomez, 2017). Encouraging a collaborative approach to professional learning can also help overcome individual and systemic barriers, promoting a more inclusive and effective training environment (Smit, 2018).

3.3. Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

The impact of CLIL on student engagement and learning outcomes is evident from both observational data and interviews with teachers. Students in CLIL classrooms exhibit high levels of engagement, as the approach often involves interactive and participatory learning activities. These activities encourage students to use the target language in real-world contexts, which enhances their motivation and interest in both the language and subject matter (Marsh, 2002).

Learning outcomes for students involved in CLIL programs are generally positive. Evidence from assessments and student feedback suggests that CLIL contributes to improved language proficiency and academic performance. Students show better performance in language tests and exhibit greater confidence in using the target language for academic purposes (Meyer, 2010).

However, variations in student outcomes are observed, with some students struggling to meet the expectations of CLIL due to differences in their prior language proficiency and subject knowledge. Addressing these disparities requires differentiated instruction and targeted support to ensure that all students benefit from the CLIL approach (Serrano & Lyster, 2015).

Student engagement refers to the level of interest, enthusiasm, and commitment that students exhibit towards their learning activities. It encompasses a variety of dimensions including behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

- a) **Behavioral Engagement:** This dimension includes students' active participation in academic tasks and activities. It manifests as attendance, participation in class discussions, and completion of assignments (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Behavioral engagement is crucial because it often predicts academic achievement and is influenced by instructional strategies and classroom environment.
- b) **Emotional Engagement:** This aspect involves students' feelings about their learning experiences and the extent to which they feel connected to their educational environment. Positive emotional engagement is associated with higher motivation and greater satisfaction with the learning experience (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Teachers can enhance emotional engagement by creating a supportive and inclusive classroom climate.
- c) **Cognitive Engagement:** This involves the investment of mental effort into learning tasks and the use of strategies to understand and master the material. Cognitive engagement is critical for deep learning, as it relates to how students approach problem-solving and apply knowledge (Zimmerman, 2002). Effective teaching practices that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving can enhance cognitive engagement.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes refer to the measurable knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students acquire as a result of their educational experiences. These outcomes can be assessed through various methods including tests, projects, and practical applications.

- a) **Academic Achievement:** This is a common measure of learning outcomes and includes students' performance on standardized tests and coursework. High levels of student engagement often correlate with improved academic achievement, as engaged students are more likely to put in the effort required to excel (Finn & Zimmer, 2012).
- b) **Skill Development:** Beyond academic knowledge, effective learning outcomes include the development of practical skills such as problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. Engagement in diverse learning activities can help students build these competencies, which are essential for success in both academic and professional contexts (National Research Council, 2012).
- c) **Attitudinal Changes:** Student engagement also influences changes in attitudes towards learning and education. Positive engagement can foster a love of learning and

a growth mindset, leading to lifelong learning habits (Dweck, 2006). Conversely, disengagement can lead to negative attitudes and decreased motivation.

Relationship Between Engagement and Learning Outcomes

The relationship between student engagement and learning outcomes is well-established in educational research. Engaged students are more likely to achieve higher academic performance and develop essential skills (Lam & Jimerson, 2008). For instance, students who are emotionally and behaviorally engaged in their learning are more likely to perform better on assessments and have higher retention rates (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012).

Engagement strategies, such as interactive teaching methods, relevant and challenging content, and supportive learning environments, are effective in promoting positive learning outcomes (Klem & Connell, 2004). Additionally, incorporating feedback mechanisms and opportunities for student input can enhance engagement and subsequently improve learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Implications for Practice

To maximize student engagement and improve learning outcomes, educators should employ strategies that cater to various dimensions of engagement. This includes designing engaging and relevant learning experiences, providing opportunities for active participation, and creating a supportive classroom environment.

Furthermore, ongoing assessment and feedback are crucial in understanding and fostering student engagement. Teachers should continuously adapt their approaches based on student needs and responses to ensure that all students are fully engaged and able to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

3.4. Challenges and Solutions in CLIL Implementation

The implementation of CLIL is not without its challenges. Data from interviews and observations reveal several common difficulties faced by educators, including limited resources, lack of institutional support, and resistance to change. Teachers often struggle with inadequate materials and insufficient support from school administration, which hinders the effective delivery of CLIL (Coyle, 2007).

To address these challenges, several solutions are proposed. Enhanced collaboration between educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers is essential for creating supportive environments and resources for CLIL. Schools should invest in high-quality materials and provide ongoing professional development to help teachers overcome implementation barriers (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Additionally, fostering a culture of innovation and flexibility in schools can encourage the adoption of CLIL and address resistance to change (Genesee, 2015).

In summary, while the CLIL approach offers significant benefits in integrating content and language learning, its successful implementation requires addressing challenges related to teacher training, student engagement, and resource availability. By addressing these issues and providing targeted support, educational institutions can enhance the effectiveness of CLIL and improve learning outcomes for students.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach in English language learning presents significant opportunities for enhancing both content comprehension and language proficiency among students. By integrating language learning with subject content, CLIL fosters a more immersive educational experience, which not only aids in the acquisition of English but also enhances understanding of specific academic subjects. The approach's emphasis on practical application and contextual learning aligns with contemporary pedagogical theories that advocate for experiential learning and student engagement. Evidence from various studies highlights the benefits of CLIL in improving student motivation, engagement, and overall language competency, thereby contributing to a more holistic educational outcome.

Despite these benefits, the implementation of CLIL faces several challenges, including the need for specialized teacher training and the development of appropriate materials that align with both content and language objectives. Effective CLIL practices require a careful balance between content delivery and language instruction, which can be demanding for educators who may lack experience or support in these areas. To address these challenges, it is essential for educational institutions to provide robust professional development opportunities for teachers and to invest in the creation of resources that support CLIL methodologies. Ultimately, while CLIL offers a promising approach to language education, its successful implementation hinges on addressing these challenges and ensuring that both educators and students are adequately prepared to reap its full benefits.

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