

CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) IMPLEMENTATION FOR INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY

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Received: 17 November 2022

Accepted: 23 February 2023

Abstract

This paper aims to investigate CLIL implementation for English teaching in Indonesia, particularly how this approach can be used in the EFL learning context considering that in most cases CLIL is implemented for bilingual education. To get the information and learn the phenomena in depth, a study case was conducted. The data was collected through classroom observation of two English teachers who have implemented CLIL in their teaching practice. It was then followed by a focus group discussion with those teachers to confirm the CLIL application and get more comprehensive data. This study found that CLIL was quite significant to be implemented for teaching English as it was not only able to improve students' language skills but also broaden their insight globally. From this study, it was also highlighted that teachers must carefully select the materials and consider students' level of proficiency to make a meaningful and effective learning process.

Keywords: CLIL implementation; English teaching; EFL learners; challenges

INTRODUCTION

The theories of EFL teaching methodologies have been developed and will always evolve to meet the 21st century's demands. One of the significant language teaching approaches is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL as a teaching approach integrates a particular content course with language skills practice and in its process, this integration enables teachers to prepare students for their academic lives and future careers (Khoiriyah & Soepar-to, 2022). CLIL is not simply teaching the language by using a wider range of content or the learning content simply translated from the mother tongue into a different language or code, it has specific elements which contain both language and subject matter aspects (Coyle, 2006).

Several previous studies found that CLIL was effective and suitable to promote students' English language competencies and contribute to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Delgado-Gutierrez, 2020; Lastra-Mercado, 2016; Sánchez-García & Pavón-Vázquez, 2021; Vasquez, 2019). Even the combination of CLIL with another teaching method like Project-based Learning (PjBL) would also help students to face the future's challenges (Sanz Navarro, 2020).

CLIL is a teaching method that involves students' simultaneous use of the target language when learning the content or subject matter (Coyle et al., 2010). Content topics are adapted and taught in the target language to explore the content and at the same time improve foreign language skills. Content and language are seen as integral parts of the whole (Marsh, 2002). Krahnke (1987) defines a Content-Based Instruction program (GBI) as a teaching approach where the content or knowledge is taught by using the language being learned; the language and content are not taught separately in the learning process. Coyle et al. (2010) specify it as CLIL or *Content and Language Integrated Learning*, where it facilitates students with two main objectives which are teaching students with academic content and English language practice simultaneously.

CLIL is the methodology of an active student-centered where students are encouraged to participate and take their different characteristics into their learning (Grenfell, 2002). There is a great need for teachers to implement teaching methodology relevant to 21st-century demands and CLIL can be a solution and teaching language strategy reference. CLIL was created by David Marsh in 1994 as a teaching approach where the subject is taught through a foreign language; it proposes two main aims, namely learning the content and simultaneous language practice (Marsh, 2002). CLIL integrates four basic components (4 Cs) which are content, communication, cognition, and culture within a context (Lesca, 2012 in Sanz Navarro, 2020).

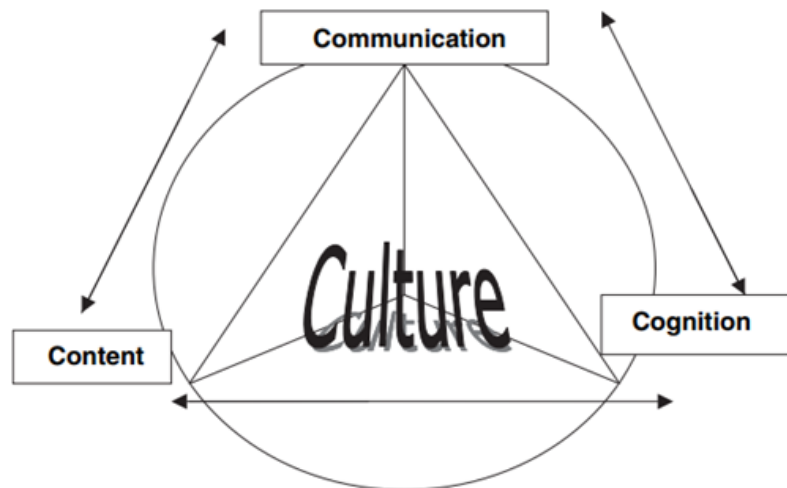


Figure 1. CLIL 4 Cs Conceptual Framework (Coyle, 2006)

Content refers to the thematic learning topic/material that students learn. *Communication* is the way students learn which is through interaction by using the target language. In the process of learning, students develop their *cognition* and gain more knowledge. The content and the language that students learn contain the *culture* that could enrich their understanding of the world (Coyle et al., 2010). In other words, the teaching and learning process must establish and link

the learning content (subject matter), cognition (thinking and learning process), communication (interaction and language practice), and culture (intercultural and global understanding). Students develop their knowledge, understanding, and skills while interacting with their teachers and peers by using the target language (Coyle, 2007; Coyle et al., 2010; Sanz Navarro, 2020).

Regarding teaching practice, some studies suggest teachers connect students' language learning with their context, culture, and reality. Herod (2002) in Vasquez (2019) argues that teaching materials must be taught within the context and used in real daily life. Contextualizing learning activities makes the lesson more visible, meaningful, practical, and understandable for students. The contextual teaching method considers the needs of students, learning purposes, and preferences. Context gives the background for language use (Harmer, 1991). Studies highlight that in order to build new knowledge, students need to connect the lesson with their prior experience or real-life issues.

In the process of contextual learning, students should learn through *feeling, watching, thinking, and doing* embedded with relevant content within the appropriate learning context (CORD, 1999 in Vasquez, 2019). As a part of the language teaching area, cultural awareness and global understanding have been a concern of many educators, practitioners, and researchers. When first-time children learn their native language, they develop their oral language by understanding spoken language which helps them with their linguistics and social development. CLIL has been considered a significant way to learn L2 or FL in a more meaningful way. As a teaching methodology, CLIL is flexible and can be adjusted to students' needs, language proficiency, and academic achievement level (Cinganotto et al., 2019).

Considering the importance of acquiring these 21st-century skills, this study needs to be done. This study offers CLIL as the approach to enrich students' knowledge, increase their cognition, and improve their English competencies. CLIL is often used to increase exposure to the use of a foreign language (Pladevall-Ballester, 2019). CLIL is one of the most effective teaching language approaches (Llanera et al., 2018 in Sanz Navarro, 2020). CLIL has increased its popularity in many countries, especially in Europe. It has been used in bilingual classes and multilingual societies. Remembering that CLIL is frequently used in bilingual classes or taught as a second language and anticipating that Indonesian students might find some difficulties in learning, especially students who rarely use English in their academic and daily life, the researchers intend to study the implementation and challenges of CLIL in English language teaching.

Although numerous studies explain the effectiveness of CLIL-based education in Indonesia (Arham & Akrab, 2018; Izzah et al., 2018; Sarip, 2019; Simbolon, 2020; Sumartana et al., 2019; Wijirahayu, 2019), not many explain in detail how CLIL can be implemented in the classroom. The implementation of CLIL in each research can vary depending on the context and circumstances. However, in this study, the researchers intend to share one of the experiences of CLIL implementation for EFL learners in Indonesia. Particularly, this study aims to investigate how CLIL is implemented in improving students' cognition and English skills and what the challenges faced by students and the teacher in its implementation.

METHODS

This study applied a case study as the research design and a qualitative method as the research approach. A case study was conducted since it could help the researcher to understand the case

or phenomenon in depth. It includes a very comprehensive and holistic investigation where the data can be gathered over a period of time according to the actual context (Hamied, 2017). The data were taken from classroom observation for twenty meetings in two different classes, beginner and intermediate. The class selection was based on students' language skill differences. Each class level provided different learning content and had different learning experiences.

During the observation, the researchers noted how CLIL was applied in the classroom, how students responded to the lessons, and what obstacles students and teachers faced during the application of this learning approach. Field note is crucial to describe all aspects of the situation being observed, including what is seen, heard, and experienced on-site. It contains clear, detailed, and comprehensive descriptive and reflective information that the researcher captures personally during the observation. Direct observation in the case study allows the researchers to explore the phenomenon from different perspectives, evaluate the relation among all aspects, and experience the process in its actual context (Hamied, 2017).

After twenty times of observations, the researchers conducted a focus group discussion with the two teachers in those classes. The researchers asked several things regarding the implementation of CLIL in the classroom such as the benefits of CLIL as a teaching approach, what obstacles occurred, and how to handle them. By having a focus group discussion, researchers could intensively ask and discuss the facts that had not been captured and understood during observation. The data obtained was explained and presented in the form of categories and narratives according to the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings in this study were divided into three categories: 1) the implementation of CLIL in English language teaching, 2) the benefits of CLIL as an English teaching method, and 3) the challenges of CLIL implementation in English language teaching.

The Implementation of CLIL in English Language Teaching

It is like a teaching approach in general; CLIL implementation requires preparation. Topic selection and learning activities design must fulfill the CLIL principle itself. Students' learning programs are planned by considering the dimensions of language, content, learning, environment, and culture (Coyle, 2007). The content topics of student learning materials were very diverse; discussion topics were adjusted to the student's proficiency level. The contents presented in this learning program focus on environmental, cultural, and other current issues such as "Should plastic bags be outlawed?", "Are electric cars really green?", "stunting prevalence in Indonesia", "All about Indonesia", "Indonesian culture", "Stages of Human Development", "Media literacy", "Toxic masculinity", "Quarter-life crisis", etc.

The learning process was designed by considering the language competence that students must require. Based on English language arts standards, nowadays students are required to master these six language skills which are speaking, listening, reading, writing, reviewing, and presenting (Donoghue, 2009; Kettler et al., 2021). During the observation, the researcher asked one of the students in the class. She told the researcher that before the class started, she had been informed about the topic that would be discussed. Students must watch a YouTube video where the link to the video could be found in the module. Students were directed to watch You-

Tube videos before class so that they would have the basic idea or information about the topic for their learning. It was also a part of listening practice and time efficiency so that when they entered class, they would be more focused on speaking practice. The student also added that every time before the class started, she always searched for information using Google regarding the topic and made some important notes about the opinion she wanted to convey regarding the issue of the topic to be discussed. This activity subconsciously trains students' writing skills, how they review information from various sources, and how they organize their ideas. From these several activities, students had been directed to gradually improve their listening, reading, writing, and reviewing skills which were also good to train them to do some preparation before attending the class.

In its implementation, the CLIL approach focuses on two things: 1) learning the content by using the language, and 2) practicing the language by using the content (Coyle et al., 2010; Marsh, 2002). These two focuses are integrated with the expectation of two outputs which are enriching students' knowledge and perspectives of the content being studied and at the same time improving students' English language proficiency. Integration is a significant teaching strategy that protects the content being taught and at the same time promotes language learning as both a learning medium and a learning goal (Coyle, 2002).

To achieve both learning objectives, learning was designed with several rules including 1) both teachers and students must maximize their use of English in the classroom; all contents were presented and discussed in English; 2) in order to give each student an equal chance to speak, classes were limited to five students and one mentor; 3) the quality of student learning was centered on communication and ideas and content arguments which conveyed by students; 4) grammar was not the main focus of learning, however, feedback and corrections toward students' grammatical mistakes would be given by the mentor at the end of the learning session; and 5) after four meetings, there would be one meeting where students were allowed to present the topic areas they master to their classmates. They would be given five to ten minutes for presentation, followed by three to five minutes for discussion and answering questions from their classmates.

The learning design for each meeting was quite the same as classroom learning in general, there were pre-activities, while-activities, and post-activities. In pre-activities, students were provoked to convey their ideas to several questions and statements related to the issues discussed. It was designed to see their background knowledge, perspective, and position on the issue. It was also part of the review and opening activity to make students well-prepared for the material to be studied. Meanwhile, while-activities consist of several activities such as 1) discussing the videos they had watched before, including answering several questions related to the information conveyed in the video; 2) discussing new phrases and vocabulary that students hardly ever use, including also making complex sentences using the phrases and vocabulary they had learned; 3) discussing and expressing opinions related to the topic; 4) discussing the moral values or lessons which can be drawn from the content that had been learned.

In post-activities, students were asked to give their closing statements regarding the issue. They were also given feedback regarding their speaking performance; several corrections and advice in terms of grammar and word choices were given by the mentor in a polite and friendly manner. By maintaining positive and supportive vibes, students were encouraged to use English

without any worry and fear of making mistakes. Outside of the class, students were also given the opportunity to use and develop their English independently, as simple as telling some daily activities to mentors via voice notes in WhatsApp or simply asking several things that had not been understood in class. The relationship between students and mentors was really well maintained since it would affect the activeness, willingness, and openness of students in participating in learning programs.

A higher-level class would have a more serious and important discourse topic; more vocabulary and phrases were taught with some additional learning sections such as idioms and other identical words. As a further action, the mentor would send a weekly student learning progress report as reading material for students to improve their language competence and be more fluent in English. The activities which had been carried out in these two classes considered the principles of CLIL implementation and language learning. In the preparation stage, students were directed to practice their listening, reading, writing, and reviewing skills; they watched the videos and learned the topics before having the class. While in the classroom, students were trained to improve their speaking skills, critical thinking, and a sense of respect for other people's opinions. In another meeting session, students were also given the opportunity to practice their presentation and speaking skills. These language competencies are very crucial and relevant, especially in the 21st-century era like today.

The Benefits of CLIL as an English Teaching Method

Language learning using CLIL had given a positive impact on improving students' knowledge and English language proficiency. One of the teachers mentioned that once one of their students expressed her gratitude for the learning because the vocabulary and themes that she learned had greatly helped her to pass the TOEFL exam. It was because the content of the material studied at CLIL was very diverse and up to date with issues that may be present in the TOEFL. The TOEFL test covers a variety of topics, including those learned in CLIL-based learning. Those topics are such as history, culture, economics, literature, biology, and others.

Moreover, both teachers and students admitted that learning English with the CLIL approach had helped them to improve their speaking competence. CLIL offers interactive and entertaining speaking practices that also promote systematic feedback and involvement among peers, teachers, and students (Swain, 2000 in Coyle, 2007). CLIL encourages interpersonal interactions such as peer collaboration since it fosters a positive classroom atmosphere that encourages interaction among students while students' motivation, language competence, and learning improvement were successfully realized due to the implementation of CLIL (Bower et al., 2022).

Another benefit of learning with CLIL was that students not only learn about the topic and practice their English but they were also taught to explore the wisdom and moral value of the material being studied. For instance, when they talked about "social media", they did not just talk about its positive and negative effects; they were also told to learn more about how to use social media more wisely. Also, when they learned about "Indonesian culture", they did not only learn about several cultures, traditions, and customs in Indonesia but also how to preserve them for the future. In the context of foreign language instruction, the CLIL fundamental learning framework has been successful in fostering students' intercultural awareness and civics education (Bower et al., 2022; Porto, 2021). In addition, several topics in the CLIL program

also try to prepare students to think globally and interact with the wider community. One of the topics that students learned was “working abroad”. This topic not only shared the perspectives and prospects of working overseas but also discussed how to prepare young Indonesians to be ready for global competition. Learning instructional design using CLIL prepares students to become global citizens who are skilled with moderate literacy in a multilingual community (Bower et al., 2022).

CLIL-based learning could also train students’ autonomous learning because on several occasions students were faced with unfamiliar materials which encourages them to study and prepare themselves well before the class. The various topics provided in the learning program unconsciously drove them to independently learn the contents. However, on other occasions, students got topics that they like or in line with their interests. It made them excited about the discussion. CLIL offers diverse, meaningful, and adaptive integrated learning (Coyle, 2006).

I think the CLIL learning model is very helpful and beneficial to improve my students’ speaking skills, even for myself as the teacher. We can practice our English while increasing our knowledge and insight into the world. It also trains us to be more independent and disciplined in learning because it is impossible to join the class without preparation, especially if we are completely new to the topic to be discussed (T1)

Learning programs using CLIL can familiarize students with tough topics. Students can learn to look at an issue from various perspectives because, from the discussion activities, students can share and exchange information. This kind of activity is so beneficial to prepare students for the language requirements of the 21st-century demands, where communication in English with still paying attention to cultural, social, and environmental elements would be very much needed.

The Challenges of CLIL Implementation in English Language Teaching

From the observations and discussions with the teachers, the researcher can conclude that the two classes in which CLIL was implemented were all designed for adult learners. It was confirmed by the types of topics and the main learning activities in the form of direct discussions using English. One of the teachers mentioned that CLIL itself can be used for lower levels such as children and adolescents. However, the learning content must be made simpler, and the English language must be practiced more intensively and frequently.

Another CLIL implementation challenge was that sometimes teachers have to put in extra time to make a lot of preparation. English teachers would not focus on teaching grammar, daily expressions, or various types of texts, but rather teaching students to express their ideas related to the contents by using the target language. Teachers were required to have sufficient knowledge of the materials they teach even if it is outside of their area of expertise. Of course, they do not need to become experts on that topic, but at least they need to have general knowledge of the topic being discussed.

Since the topics used for each meeting are different, I have to learn and prepare myself well. Especially, if the topic discusses science, I need to study more, because my background is non-science. I still remember when I am about to teach “solar system”, “how do planes fly?”, “pregnancy stages”, and “adaptation of living organisms” to my students. I have to learn about those topics before going to class (T1)

Besides requiring well-teaching preparation, the teacher must pay attention to classroom management and how the teacher can keep students excited in the learning session. In addition, students may have a limited vocabulary if the content is unfamiliar to them, which often lowers their confidence in expressing their thoughts and opinions. Surely it is not an easy task because the teacher has to guide the students slowly. So then, they can involve with the topic and participate in the conversation comfortably. They should be given sufficient space and basic vocabulary related to the topics discussed, so then, they know and can express what they want to say to their classmates.

We know that students' mood swings and fluctuate. Especially, if the topic of discussion is new to them, they will tend to be more silent. Therefore, the teacher must be very skilled at stimulating the students' curiosity and enthusiasm. The key is usually at the beginning of the class. If at the beginning the students are already feeling excited about the lesson, then it is usually easier to make them speak. Having questioning skills is very needed here. Teachers may utilize question words like "why", "how", "what if", and others to prompt students to voice their ideas (T2)

The last concern that becomes the challenge of CLIL implementation was students' lack of speaking competence. During the observation, some students seemed to have difficulty expressing their ideas due to their poor speaking skills. This is because the CLIL-based learning model is not very suitable for lower achievers. Not all schools in Indonesia have adopted CLIL, either because of teachers' lack of competence in using the language or due to the focus of our curriculum that is not supporting CLIL implementation.

CLIL will be difficult for students who just learn how to speak English. As the mentor, I have to be patient and it takes more meetings for students like that to get used to this kind of learning method. I often ask those students to learn the learning contents first and then motivate them to not be afraid to speak because everyone in the class has the same goal "We are here to learn and practice the language together" (T2)

Discussion

This study found that CLIL was proven to be able to improve students' language skills and cognition. It was in accordance with several previous studies that state that CLIL is effective to be used for English language teaching (Simbolon, 2020; Sumartana et al., 2019). By implementing CLIL in English language teaching, students not only develop their language competence but also gain their perspectives, awareness, sensitivity, and insight into the world (Bower et al., 2022). When students participate in CLIL-oriented classrooms, they use all learning strategies including memory, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (Khoiriyah & Soeparto, 2022).

There are various learning models to implement CLIL in language teaching around the world. However, how it is implemented in classroom practice would depend on certain conditions and other supporting factors. CLIL program model can be situated and designed as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual instruction based on sociocultural and environmental factors such as language preference, learner's age, and language proficiency level (Beardsmore, 1993; Marsh et al., 2001). Since every country has a different educational system and sociocultural diversity, each country has its own specific ways of implementing CLIL. No particular model can be used consistently across nations (Nikula & Marsh, 1998).

CONCLUSION

This research leads the researchers to the conclusion that CLIL-based language teaching can be used to improve students' language proficiency, particularly their speaking competence. CLIL not only can enhance students' English language competence, but it will also enrich and train students' knowledge and critical thinking. In addition, this teaching approach is very relevant to the needs of this era. When students reach a higher level of education, be involved in a particular workplace, or even interact with people from different parts of the world, the ability to communicate and convey ideas and thoughts in English will be very much needed.

However, no teaching method is perfect. The effectiveness of teaching methods is strongly influenced by conditions, learning objectives, students' language proficiency levels, and their learning characteristics. Although the grammar-translation approach could be better suited for beginners, if students are consistent in their learning efforts, they will eventually be able to participate in language programs that use CLIL as the learning model. This research still has many limitations. Since it is a case study, the results of this research cannot reflect all phenomena in the field. Research results may differ from one place to another. The concept of CLIL implementation can also differ from one study to another. More research on this issue needs to be done. However, with all its limitations, the researchers hope that the results of this study can be useful and informative for English teachers who are interested in CLIL-based teaching.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With all respect, the authors sincerely express their gratitude to *Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan* (LPDP) for sponsoring their study and supporting the publication of this article.

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