

Teaching Vocabulary under CLIL Approach in Indonesian Primary Schools: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study sheds light on the roles of teachers and challenges they face in implementing CLIL approach in Indonesian primary schools since this approach has the feasibility to carry out at primary level. This study is a literature review that gains data related to the topic from journal articles and relevant books. This study reveals that teachers play a vital role in balancing the integration of content and language, designing a CLIL teaching materials and employing scaffolding vocabulary learning, a variety of vocabulary instruction and assessment. However, they face challenges such as limited English proficiency, cultural differences and contextual relevance, students' motivation and engagement, the suitable teaching materials and resources, and assessment technique. Therefore, teachers are required to enhance their competences by participating in professional development programs, collaborating with colleagues, and seeking support from educational institutions and resources. This study provides insight to policymakers in Indonesia to provide the necessary support and resources to empower primary school teachers in effectively implementing the CLIL approach and fostering students' vocabulary development, leading to improved learning outcomes and the preparation of globally competent learners.

Keywords: *Teaching Vocabulary, CLIL Approach, Primary Schools*

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Introduction

Currently, the new educational policy in Indonesia has altered English as a non-compulsory or an extra-curricular subject at primary schools. However, some primary schools still teach English as an additional language skill that requires English teachers should develop and design their own materials and assessment (Sulistiyo et al., 2020). In this case, English teachers are free to implement a variety of teaching methods due to the lack of government regulation related to the English teaching and learning process at primary school level (Khoiriyah et al., 2022). It shows that teaching English as a locally-tailored school subject in Indonesian primary schools entails teachers' creativity to find the suitable teaching approaches or methods in improving students' English skills.

In learning English, students are required to master four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Besides, to master the English skills, vocabulary becomes the crucial aspect because students are unable to communicate effectively in English unless they have vocabulary

mastery. Students cannot convey or receive communications successfully without vocabulary (Saputri, 2022). Students may encounter difficulty in comprehending written and auditory materials due to a lack of vocabulary. Consequently, it is essential for students to develop a comprehensive vocabulary and to master the forms and meanings of words (Munikasari, Sudarsono, & Riyanti, 2021). In a nutshell, vocabulary aspect is the core of language.

Moreover, in Indonesian context, there are some issues that make students get difficulty to learn English such as a lack of vocabulary which causes the students endeavor to understand the meaning of each word and the chosen media to teach vocabulary is not appealing in which the students are demanded to write vocabularies and memorize the words. In addition, it is found that English teachers still use drilling and dictation techniques to teach vocabulary, so that they are bored and not motivated to learn English (Permana, 2020). Whereas, teachers should amplify students' motivation and enthusiasm in learning English because learning motivation is the root of ideal teaching and learning activities (Yulfi & Aalayina, 2021). It also becomes one of the factors that determine students' outcomes in English vocabulary learning (Setiawan & Wiedarti, 2020). Due to this fact, teachers should create enjoyable learning to motivate students to learn vocabulary.

Furthermore, teaching vocabulary for young learners differs from teaching for adult learners because young learners have different characteristics. They can receive new knowledge quickly, but easily get distracted and bored during the learning process (Harmer, 2007). Thus, teachers play important roles in providing the students with cheerful and meaningful learning to make them motivated to learn. Young learners will be interested in learning if the learning situation is fun and can catch their attention because they tend to love to play (Pradini & Adnyayanti, 2022). It indicates that teachers are required to select vocabulary teaching approach or method that enables students to learn vocabulary through meaningful learning with fun learning activities.

There are numerous studies that emphasize the merits of CLIL on the improvement of students' English proficiency, motivation and enthusiasm in learning English after implementing the CLIL approach (Lyu, 2022). Similarly, Merino & Lasagabaster (2017), (Olsson, 2021) and (Sotocorominas et al., 2023) found that CLIL students had more linguistics outcomes, vocabulary, and receptive and productive skills because they experienced more English exposure, which affected their English skills. Therefore, it can be assumed that CLIL approach can be applied in teaching vocabulary at primary schools to cope with students' problems in learning vocabulary.

Moreover, it has been proven that CLIL approach is worthwhile to young learners' language development (Tsuciya & Murillo, 2019). Additionally, it is stated that CLIL approach has potential to be applied at primary school because it is identifiable effective to improve students' English skills particularly listening and speaking (Diezmas, 2016). In line with Sari et al. (2024), it was found that CLIL approach had a positive impact on students' English acquisition in primary school. This was due to the high level of English exposure and input received by CLIL students from content-subject materials. Furthermore, CLIL is feasible to be implemented in the teaching of English to young learners (TEYL) as an innovative approach because it benefits the learners with higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving ability (Setyaningrum & Purwati, 2020). Thus, CLIL approach can be applied to improve students' vocabulary mastery in order to communicate effectively in English. As a consequence, teachers are supposed to have good linguistics competence and knowledge about content of subjects to make effective learning process. In this case, teachers play a vital role in making successful vocabulary learning through implementing CLIL approach.

Accordingly, this study sheds light on the roles of teachers and challenges faced by teachers in teaching vocabulary under CLIL approach in Indonesian primary schools since it is considerable that the implementation of CLIL approach at primary level is challenging for non-native teachers in Indonesia.

Literature Review

The term ‘Content and Language Integrated-Learning’ (CLIL) was invented by David Marsh in 1994 and adapted within the European context to describe and further design good practice as achieved in different types of school environment where teaching and learning take place in additional language. CLIL is defined as a dual-focused educational approach in which a foreign language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. That is, in the teaching and learning, there is a focus not only content, and not only on language (Coyle et al., 2010).

Besides, CLIL can be described as an educational approach where curricular content is taught through the medium of a foreign language, typically to students participating in some form of mainstream education at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Moreover, CLIL refers to approach that integrates the content learning or content capacity from subject curriculum with non-native language (Novi & Subyantoro, 2018). In other words, CLIL tends to be seen as an educational approach that uses a foreign language as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning process in which teachers focus on teaching both language and content simultaneously. The situations of CLIL focus on a subconscious acquisition of the language when students are aware of the content learning (Renau & Martí, 2019). In this sense, it is necessary for teachers to provide students with understandable input.

Furthermore, there are four principles (4Cs framework) of CLIL approach that should be considered when it is embedded in language learning as follow (Coyle et al., 2010). *Content* refers to the subject matter, theme and topic that provides the basis for learning and determines progression in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding (e.g. science, IT, arts, etc.). *Communication* refers to the language use in learning process. Students learn to use target language in learning the language itself (e.g. stating facts about sun, giving instruction on using software and describing emotions in response to music). *Cognition* is developing students’ thinking skills which link concept formation, knowledge and language to build their own interpretation of content (e.g. remembering, understanding, evaluating, critiquing, reflecting and creating). *Community* or *Culture* refers to the ways of students to interact and engage with knowledge, experience and the world (e.g. classroom conventions for learning and classroom interaction).

Additionally, CLIL approach holds that knowledge and culture are embedded in language and accessing knowledge is not possible without using the language. The role of language in CLIL is actualized in Coyle’s ‘language triptych’ concept (see Figure 1).

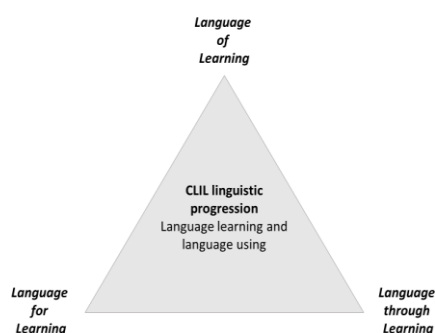


Figure 1. Coyle’s Language Triptych

These three types of language can be defined as follow. First, language of learning is the language needed for students to access concept and skills related to the subject. Second, language for learning is the language needed to operate in foreign language classroom or in a foreign environment. In this case, the language needed to complete the task. Third, language through learning is the application of

language that is acquired beforehand which cannot be controlled or predicted (Coyle et al., 2010). It is well-acknowledged that the core of CLIL approach is the integration of knowledge, social interaction and culture.

In Indonesian context, CLIL approach has been adapted in bilingual or international international-based curriculum schools where English is used as the medium of instruction to teach other subjects (Deswila et al., 2020). However, teachers find it challenging to undertake CLIL in the classroom since the status of English in Indonesia as a foreign language. Meanwhile, the majority of primary school teachers do not have an English credential. It is possible that teachers who teach English without an English education background may not have the opportunity to be trained as English for Young Learner (EYL) teachers (Sulistiyono et al., 2020).

Methods

This study employs descriptive analysis as the framework. Library research was used to obtain data. Library research is defined as the use of library sources to gather information (Zeid, 2004). In this case, journals and books related to the implementation of CLIL approach in EFL were consulted as references. After that, findings and results were drawn and a conclusion was synthesized. Furthermore, the limitations of the library research are that the data was not collected from the field and that the data was collected from various references.

Result and Discussion

The implementation of Content and Language Integrated-Learning (CLIL) approach in teaching vocabulary at primary schools in Indonesia is not straightforward because it requires qualified teacher to guide the students on the practice in order to meet the pedagogical principles of CLIL namely making the learning content understandable by providing students with comprehensible input and prompting productive language for students to use (Escobar Urmeneta, 2019). Thus, teachers should be well-prepared in implementing CLIL approach in the learning process since it is challenging for non-native English teachers.

The Roles of Teachers in Teaching Vocabulary under CLIL Approach at Primary Schools

Teaching vocabulary for young learners encourages teachers to consider their holistic needs. Besides, it should be engaging where teachers should always try to create contexts for their students in which the target words are useful and meaningful. Moreover, it might be argued that some students may find it hard to negotiate the meaning of new words, so this places a huge responsibility on the teacher, as they need to make the students feel less anxious about that (Saleh & Ahmed Althafaqi, 2022).

In addition, teachers should be aware that young learners like discovery activities where they can use their imagination to find answers to questions. They can be involved in doing puzzle, making and drawing things, games, songs and physical movement (Harmer, 2007). It is also essential that teacher encourages independence, uses logical explanations and analogies, relates to the students' experiences, uses subject-centered focus, provides group activities, models, dolls, action figures, painting, realia, CDs and videotapes (Santrock, 2005, 2013). In this sense, teachers should increase students' motivation towards language learning and building their confidence about using the target language (and L1) in relevant content areas. If they have been prepared adequately, highly naturalistic learning of the target language, it is possible that it is similar to the way of L1 is being learned (Saleh & Althafaqi, 2022).

To respond this, in undertaking CLIL approach, teachers should have the idealized competencies to be a good CLIL teacher as follow. (a) Language or communication; sufficient target language knowledge and pragmatics skills for CLIL and knowledge of the language used, (b) theory;

comprehension of the differences and similarities between the concept of language learning and language acquisition, (c) methodology; ability to identify linguistic difficulties, to use communication or interaction methods that facilitate the understanding of meaning, to use strategies (e.g. repetition, echoing, etc.) for correction and modeling good language usage, and to use dual-focused activities which simultaneously cater for language and subject aspects, (d) the learning environment; ability to work with students of diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds, (e) materials development; ability to adapt and exploit materials and to select complementary materials on a given topic, and (d) assessment; ability to develop and implement evaluation and assessment tools (Marsh et al., 2001). Nevertheless, one of the most important competencies of a CLIL teacher is linguistic competence since teacher should be responsible for teaching content subject using the target language as a medium of learning instruction. Thus, it suggests that teachers who have limited linguistic competence should be well-prepared in designing a lesson plan in order to be more confident.

Dealing with planning a CLIL lesson, it demands teachers to consider several stages for planning CLIL units and materials, starting with topic selection and ending with a review of key content and language element based on the principles of the 4Cs-Framework of CLIL (Meyer, 2010). The stages are described as follow.

- 1) Selecting the specific needs of content subject.
- 2) Providing multimodal input and distributing it evenly across the new CLIL unit produces highly differentiated materials which accommodate different learning styles and activate various language skills. Such multimodal input can facilitate the development of new literacies.
- 3) The nature of the selected input (i.e. texts, charts, maps, video clips, etc.) determines how much and what kind of input-scaffolding is needed. It also indicates which subject specific study skills need to be practiced with the students so they can successfully cope with that input.
- 4) Tasks need to be designed to trigger both higher order thinking skills and lead to authentic communication/interaction in different interactive formats (individual work, pair work, group work, etc.).
- 5) The nature of the desired output (poster, interview, presentation, map, etc.) determines how much and what kind of output-scaffolding is necessary.

Moreover, regarding to selecting meaningful materials and activities to teach vocabulary, teachers can provide moral stories taken from children's books about animals, nature, free time, school, friends or family which are popular and more relevant to them. Teachers can use some guiding questions in the selection of useful materials; (a) what vocabulary should be learned? (b) how should vocabulary be taught and learned? (c) how should vocabulary knowledge and growth be assessed? (adapted from Nation & Chung, 2011).

Furthermore, it is necessary for teachers to give vocabulary learning instruction that facilitates students' comprehension about the learning topic. The following steps give a brief summary of how vocabulary instruction can be implemented in of the phases of a lesson (Lovelock, 1996).

- 1) Contextualization

It is a pre-teach vocabulary phase that introduces the students to the new lessons making use of attractive and interesting activities and materials. Teacher makes use of explicit as well as implicit strategies in this phase. Sometimes new words will come in a song or chant, accompanied by pictures, which is less overt than presenting vocabulary with the use of objects or picture cards and/or word cards.

- 2) Focusing

It concentrates on linguistic social, intercultural and/or metacognitive competences. In this phase, which is usually very controlled and teacher-led, explicit instruction is most

commonly positioned. If not already achieved during the phase of *Contextualization*, words and phrases must be made familiar when learners are expected learn about new content. Typical activities in this phase are descriptions of appearance or qualities including variation, ordering or categorization according to set or own criteria.

3) Practice

Input provided in during *focusing* usually creates the content for tasks to be solved during the phase of *Practice*. Activities are scaffolded and very similar to the available input so that accuracy can be achieved easily. Retention can be scaffolded through making explicit connections to already known language, e.g through providing examples making use of synonyms or hyponyms.

4) Use

Use activities usually close a lesson. They should be as authentic and realistic as possible so that the learners feel the connection between the task and real life. Tasks are often open-ended and they have communicative goals. Imagination and playful activities encourage learners to take on various roles, solve problems, or create their own communicative scenes. Lexical notebooks providing the learners with words and phrases to scaffold communicative output are crucial in these activities. Hence, output from *Use* activities is usually less accurate than language produced in the *Practice* phase.

It is worth mentioning that teachers should provide the students with sufficient opportunities to become familiar with words, their meanings, uses and variations by using either explicit or implicit vocabulary instruction in CLIL setting.

In addition, teachers should regularly assess students' vocabulary knowledge and provide timely feedback to support their ongoing development. It is so important to regularly assess what they already know and provide timely feedback to help them continue to learn and improve. Formative and summative assessments can help teachers measure how much students are progressing and inform adjustments to their instruction to ensure they are reaching all learners at their current level.

By fulfilling these roles, teachers in Indonesian primary schools can effectively integrate vocabulary instruction within the CLIL approach, fostering students' language proficiency and content knowledge simultaneously.

Challenges of Teaching Vocabulary under CLIL Approach at Primary Schools

The CLIL approach combines content learning with language learning providing students with the opportunity to acquire both subject knowledge and language skills simultaneously. Thus, the implementation of CLIL approach requires teachers to teach vocabulary through the foreign language. However, this presents challenges for teachers as non-native English teachers when teaching vocabulary under CLIL approach at primary level as it is often seen as the most difficult stage of language instruction because students at this level typically have limited or no prior understanding of the language being taught. As a result, teachers play a crucial role in determining whether or not the students will reach their learning objectives (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018).

Accordingly, there are several challenges faced by teachers in undertaking CLIL approach in the vocabulary teaching as follow:

a) Language proficiency of teachers

One of the primary challenges in implementing CLIL at primary schools is the language proficiency of teachers. Since CLIL requires teachers to teach subjects in a foreign language, they must possess adequate command of the language to convey subject matter effectively. In many cases, teachers may encounter difficulties with language proficiency that affects their ability to teach and convey vocabulary effectively. Nevertheless, many Indonesian primary school teachers have insufficient English language skills, which can

hinder their ability to effectively deliver content-based lessons and teach vocabulary in the target language (Wahyuningsih et al., 2018).

b) The integration of content and language learning

It is important for teachers to have a strong understanding of the subject matter they are teaching, as well as the ability to relate it to the target language. This can be particularly challenging for teachers who may not have a background in certain subjects or may need to continuously update their content knowledge because teachers must balance the dual focus both content and target language in their instruction in teaching the subject matter (Kim & Lee, 2020). However, teachers often struggle to balance the teaching of content knowledge and the development of language skills, including vocabulary.

c) Cultural differences and contextual relevance

The diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Indonesian primary school students present a challenge to vocabulary instruction under the CLIL approach. Vocabulary taught through CLIL often includes culturally specific terms and concepts that may not be familiar to Indonesian students. Teachers must consider their students' prior knowledge and cultural context when selecting and teaching vocabulary. Besides, teachers must find ways to make these terms relevant and comprehensible within the students' cultural context.

d) Students motivation and engagement

Younger learners might find it challenging to stay motivated if the content is too difficult due to language barriers. Teachers must use engaging and interactive methods to keep students interested while facilitating vocabulary learning (Cenoz et al., 2014).

e) Teaching materials and resources

The lack of appropriate teaching materials and resources tailored to the CLIL approach in Indonesian primary schools can also be a significant obstacle. Therefore, teachers need to provide the high-quality CLIL-based teaching materials including vocabulary resources to make the implementation of this approach effective (Coyle et al., 2010). Besides, the use of appropriate teaching materials at the level of the learner can determine the success of the teaching and learning process (Charunsri, 2019).

f) Assessment

It can be challenging for CLIL teachers to evaluate students' progress in both language and content learning. They should consider developing effective assessment methods that can accurately measure students' vocabulary acquisition and subject knowledge as well as providing constructive feedback that addresses both aspects of the students' learning (Kong & Hoare, 2011).

To respond this, teachers can overcome these challenges by participating in professional development programs, collaborating with colleagues, and seeking support from educational institutions and resources.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that CLIL approach can be an effective approach to carry out in teaching vocabulary at primary level because it can create meaningful and enjoyable learning, and social interaction in the learning process. However, teaching vocabulary under CLIL approach in Indonesian primary schools is quite challenging that requires teachers must consider the balance of the integration of content and language, cultural differences and contextual relevant, students' motivation and engagement, the suitable teaching materials and resources, and assessment technique. Therefore, teachers should have language proficiency, design a lesson plan well and employ scaffolding vocabulary learning, a variety of vocabulary learning instruction and assessment, so that teachers can succeed to implement CLIL approach in teaching vocabulary as well as meet the learning objectives. Moreover, it is suggested that teachers to enhance their competences through participating in

professional development programs, collaborating with colleagues, and seeking support from educational institutions and resources.

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