The Implementation of CLIL at Primary School: Teacher’s Perspectives and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has adopted CLIL especially for bilingual schools and those using an International curriculum. Many studies describe the advantages of CLIL. However, it turns out that only a few have presented research on how the teacher’s perspective on CLIL is and what the challenges are. This study aims to explore the teacher’s perspective on CLIL implementation and the challenges of its implementation. This qualitative study aims to investigate and explore primary school teacher’s perspectives and challenges of CLIL implementation in primary school. She is actually science teacher but have pretty good skill in English. Data was obtained from a teacher through open-ended question and semi-structure interview about her perspectives and challenges during implementation of CLIL. The result of this study are clearly demonstrated that teacher’s perspectives were aimed toward CLIL characteristics, CLIL implementation, and students’ knowledge of the topic and language. Furthermore, the challenges arise were mostly on the side of both teachers and pupils. This study reinforces previous study about teacher perspective of implementation CLIL but in this study explore what are the challenges too because CLIL uses target language such or foreign language so it will be arise challenges during implementation. Therefore, this article will be an afterthought for schools that will use CLIL.

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1. PENAHULUAN

There are numerous national and international schools in Indonesia that each have their own unique curricula but all have the same objective of educating students to be skilled human resources. The teaching-learning process is presented in a novel way at these institutions. A bilingual program has been used to structure the teaching-learning process in
almost all of these institutions. The main goals of the bilingual program are to give students the tools they need to not only comprehend the material, but also to become familiar with and develop proficiency in a second language, typically English (Heliawati, Rubini, & Firmayanto, 2020). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is one of the strategies that has been frequently used in their bilingual curriculum. Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL means that teaches contents or subjects through English or other target languages. Coyle, (2013) presented a straightforward definition of CLIL, stating that it combines topic and language learning. CLIL entails students learning one or more subjects while conversing in the target language. CLIL is a methodology that was initially introduced in the 1990s and has grown in popularity in Europe over the previous two decades. CLIL was formally established as a legitimate technique by the European Commission in 2003. CLIL, according to the (da Costa, da Silva, George, & de Assis, 2017), is the use of a foreign language to teach a curriculum subject. Furthermore, CLIL is widely recognized as an educational strategy that employs an additional language to teach both topic and and language (Coyle, 2013). CLIL allows both teachers and students to specifically extensively investigate materials by integrating subject and language linked to the material, even if neither is fluent in the additional language.

Since there are migrant families in certain counties, CLIL is frequently used. There are elementary schools in Switzerland that employ CLIL, and some of the pupils enrolled there are from Italian immigrant families. Italian and German were employed as the target language or second language (L2) for instruction in those schools (Serra, 2007). In the US, CLIL was implemented to educate pupils, particularly immigrant kids with inadequate English proficiency (Verdugo, 2011). There are primary schools that provide a CLIL program in French as well. They teach English as a second language. One of their program’s goals is to make it easier for immigrant pupils who speak French at home (Bailey, 2015).

CLIL is sometimes used interchangeably with other terminology such as bilingual education, content-based instruction, immersion programs, and English-medium instruction (da Costa et al., 2017). These terms are occasionally used interchangeably with CLIL. However, according to certain experts, such as (Silberman, Carpenter, Takemoto, & Coyne, 2020) CLIL may share some basic beliefs and methods, but they are not synonymous. CLIL, in other words, has distinguishing qualities or characteristics that set it apart from other forms of bilingual education. When teachers use CLIL as a strategy, they should focus on the distinctive qualities.

In order to consolidate CLIL issues, (Christiane Dalton-Puffer, 2011) adds that a European CLIL think tank developed a set of "goals" or "potentials" that should advance CLIL in the twenty-first century. Similar to this, (Pokrivcakova, 2015) notes that a CLIL lesson plan consists of four different principles that take into account the 4Cs (content, communication, cognition, and culture) Framework: content is the subject matter; communication requires learners to use the language; cognition involves higher-order thinking and comprehension, problem-solving, and accepting challenges and reflections in students; and culture is alertness, uniqueness, nationality, and the development of cultural awareness.

Many researchers discovered that using an additional language (such as English) was recognised by both teachers and students (Floris, 2014), and that classroom CLIL activity is exciting (Puspitasari, 2016) such that students are excited (Fitria & Susilawati, 2019). These findings clearly show that the deployment of CLIL is well received by both teachers and students. However, Artini (2013) discovered that the adoption of English as the language of instruction has been hampered by the fact that the majority of teachers do not speak English fluently. These studies, however, concentrate on the intermediate and tertiary stages of CLIL application.
CLIL implementation has already been used as an innovative teaching. CLIL is a recommended method for teaching subjects in a second language, according to (Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2015). According to Zarobe and Catalan (2009), using a foreign language to teach other school subjects helps students attain two goals: subject content and foreign language proficiency. According to (Eurydice: & Europe, 2009), CLIL is not limited to language teaching; rather, it is a novel methodological approach that emphasizes both content and language. This is consistent with (da Costa et al., 2017), who affirms that the European Commission defines CLIL as a viable teaching style. Language is used not only as an instructional tool in CLIL, but also as a communicative tool in delivering subject matter (Susanti et al., 2017).

Additionally, some study found that CLIL can be used to boost and increase students' enthusiasm, engagement, and certain language abilities like speaking. The lesson may be grasped by the students, and the teacher could develop confidence (Mede & Çinar, 2019) this method was regularly considered to be an engaging and effective teaching tool (Ito, 2019). Additionally, according to certain studies (Agudo, 2019) CLIL programs led to increased exposure to the foreign language and a development of oral competence. This demonstrates that using CLIL as a teaching strategy in the classroom is valuable and effective especially in primary school.

Furthermore, (Pokrivcakova, 2015) believes that CLIL is not just a strategy that integrates content and foreign language, but that it also generates a natural learning context. The goal of the CLIL application in primary school is to prepare students for intense foreign language instruction. Pokrivcakova also mentions that successful implementation of CLIL at the primary level should consider: emphasizing communication, using active listening, encouraging fluency over accuracy in communication, encouraging students' creativity, paying special attention to physical movement or motoric activity, focusing on various learning styles, and connecting the teaching process with the real world. The Erasmus+ European project 4Cs-CLIL for Children (2015) recognized the need to classify the advantages of using CLIL with primary school children. Improved subject knowledge and language, enhanced cognitive abilities, intercultural communication, and knowledge development, active learning encouragement, the development of learning, communication, and social strategies, and assisting children in becoming independent learners are all advantages of primary schools.

Studies on the use of CLIL in primary schools have been conducted. (Prasetianto, 2014) paid a visit to a Malang elementary school and chatted with the teachers about the CLIL program’s curriculum and English resources. He realized that CLIL can serve as a bridge between English materials and other classes. CLIL content is appealing to students and English teachers because it helps them to grasp technical terminology in certain subjects. As a result, CLIL can assist students in two ways: it can help them enhance their English skills while also increasing their subject knowledge. They uncovered two crucial factors of children's English development: school infrastructure and student interest. (Puspitasari, 2016) looked at classroom activities in the CLIL program and discovered that the four-grade primary school students responded favorably during the CLIL class. (Harvey, Tihinen, Mäittä, & Uusiautto, 2013) did research on CLIL’s use in primary schools. He/she investigated and observed how CLIL concepts were utilized in practice in this study, and he discovered that language and content.

Setyaningrum, Setiawan, Anam, and Retnaningdyah (2020) investigated the application of CLIL in primary schools using the Cambridge, national, and ISMUBA curricula (Al-Islam, Kemuhamadiyyahan dan Bahasa Arab). They spoke with a science teacher to learn about CLIL’s experiences teaching science during the COVID-19 pandemic. CLIL is founded on constructivist and sociocultural notions from a pedagogical standpoint, in which the learning
process allows students to provide more detailed feedback and output in the target or second language. Deswila, Kustanti, and Suwandi (2020) looked into the usage of CLIL to improve students’ English skills and scientific learning in junior high school in West Sumatera. They discovered that using a CLIL program in a science lesson is a beneficial way and strategy for improving students’ English skills and revealing in science after observing and interviewing two classes. (Heliawati et al., 2020) investigated the efficacy of using CLIL to teach content subjects in scientific literacy. According to the findings of this study, teaching content subjects was an effective strategy to improve students' scientific literacy and English skills.

Even though many prior studies have discussed the advantages, benefits, and effectiveness of CLIL in developing students’ English ability and subject comprehension, CLIL implementation is inextricably linked to challenges, especially when CLIL is implemented in elementary schools. CLIL is a difficult strategy to implement since students must build two things, content and language target. Although the results of the previous studies were encouraging, there has yet to be a study that looks into the problems of implementing CLIL. The researcher will look into one of East Java’s primary schools that offers scientific content in English. This research aimed to know and explore the CLIL perceptions and challenges of the implementation CLIL in primary school.

2. METHODS

General Description

This study used qualitative research with in depth. After interviewing instructors on the problems of CLIL implementation, the researcher utilized a descriptive method to summarize and analyze the study’s findings. According to (Creswell, 2007), qualitative research is commonly used to identify and comprehend the people involved in a social issue. According to (David, 2013), in order to do a case study, researcher may investigate an activity, event, or program that involves individuals.

Participants

This study conducted at one of full day Islamic primary school in Sidoarjo, East Java. That’s International standart school which implemented CLIL with three curriculums such as National curriculum, Ministry of Religion curriculum and Cambridge curriculum. English used as medium instruction or daily communication language in that school. There are some students that come from another country such as New Zealand and Malaysia. The participant of this study were a female teacher who graduated from science department at one state university in East Java. Although she graduated from science major, she be able to speak English. She teaches acceleration class.

Instrument and Procedures

An open-ended questionaires and a semi-structured interview was utilized to collect and examine detailed data on the teacher’s perspectives and challenges in the use of CLIL into their teaching and learning processes. It is used to collect information about people's sentiments, attitudes, and beliefs in a given circumstance in their own words. It is also utilized to better comprehend people’s experiences and how they interpret issues (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2013). The interview was used by the researcher to study a teacher’s perspectives and challenges of implementation of CLIL during science class. As well as to show the perspectives and challenges associated with its implementation.

The teacher interviewed lasted around 30-45 minutes. Furthermore, all of the interview were audio-recorded to make data gathering more efficient and to eliminate distractions when writing notes during the interview process. Following that, the data were transcribed.
and examined in order to be interpreted inductively. That is, the researcher thought on the words, phrases, or sentences made by the teacher in the relevant data, compared them to the study questions, summarized key insights from her, and eventually concluded based on the results and discussion.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The current qualitative research is primarily designed to determine topic teacher’s perspective and challenges in regard to CLIL implementation. The teacher was seasoned topic teachers at their school. Their short profiles and related CLIL lesson planning components were customized for the process of teaching and learning at her schools. Aside from that, she had already included CLIL into their daily teaching activities. CLIL implementation was also varied by utilizing pair or group work. Based on the findings, the open-ended questionnaire responses from the samples may be further separated into two categories: perspectives of CLIL implementation, and challenges of CLIL implementation. First, prior understanding of CLIL was extended in two areas: understanding of CLIL and frequency of implementation. Second, perceptions of CLIL implementation were focused on: CLIL characteristics, CLIL implementation, and students’ knowledge of material and language. Finally, the findings indicated the difficulties in applying CLIL.

According to the results of the open-ended questionnaire, the teacher perspectives of CLIL implementation are basically relatively comparable. She has a knowledge of the CLIL qualities, despite the fact that it is still generic. She stated that the traits are clearly visible in the usage of English in content topic teaching. Her key focus in terms of execution was on introducing the topic subject by learning associated content vocabulary. She also saw that after implementing CLIL, students were interested about learning subject in English, and the majority of them who had prior English skills learned the content enthusiastically.

The questionnaire results show the challenges of applying CLIL. The teachers state that acquiring topics in English as an additional language can have both beneficial and bad effects on her teaching and students. Her teaching became more entertaining, which motivated their students, though struggling kids had to work more. CLIL adoption could entice kids to learn, however it was difficult for a few students who were unable to understand the information in English. Teacher was also asked to offer their instruction in such a way that it matched the students’ comprehension of both the material and the language. The CLIL-based teaching strategy was well-liked by the samples as well.

The open-ended questionnaire’s findings were largely used to design the semi-structured interview. The researcher sought out the specific information required for this case study. The guided questions were thoughtfully designed to concentrate the data collection on thorough information about the teacher’s perspectives and challenges with applying CLIL. The study concerns were anticipated to be answered by the questions, therefore more thorough and precise data were anticipated to be collected. The information gathered from the questionnaire, was mostly triangulated using the questionnaire’s results. The following is a presentation of the interview’s findings.

During the interview, questions about the teacher’s perspectives on the implementation of CLIL were asked freely in a one-on-one semi-structured interview. Throughout the interview, the researcher disclosed that her comprehension and characteristics of CLIL were consistent with the questionnaire answers. However, the teacher was unfamiliar with the 4C aspects of CLIL, particularly cognition and culture. She only concentrated on the topic and communication or language that would be taught in her classroom teaching and learning process. The samples also believed that the use of CLIL as a method of activating her class. She also thought CLIL was an excellent technique, especially with the help of her past English ability. Furthermore, according to the interview, the challenges in her CLIL-based teaching-learning process. She perceived CLIL to be extremely difficult since it requires her to be well-prepared before teaching, as well as to give teaching and learning tactics that might activate pupils. At the same time, teaching tactics can motivate students to participate in the teaching
and learning process. The examples also found it difficult to teach non-native pupils with low prior English skills because they had to put in more effort. If the students are not fluent in English, they will be unable to comprehend the information presented. This occasionally forces them to utilize simple language or the pupils’ native language.

Discussion

The findings of the current study were intended to solve the previously defined research problems based on the data acquired by administering the research instruments: open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The current research findings are primarily designed to address the research questions. In other words, the current case study is concerned with determining teacher’s perspectives of CLIL implementation and the challenges of applying CLIL in her classroom teaching and learning process. The following is an expansion of the debate:

Teacher’s Perspectives of CLIL Implementation

The case study focused on the first problem, which investigated teachers’ perspectives. It was fascinating to learn about teacher’s perspectives on CLIL implementation in primary schools. In addition, students attending private elementary schools come from a variety of backgrounds. These factors also influence their attitudes toward the usage of English, whether as a mother tongue or as a second or foreign language. The teachers’ perspectives are elaborated in three areas: CLIL characteristics, CLIL implementation, and students’ grasp of material and language, but the conversation begins with a general knowledge of CLIL.

CLIL, as previously stated, is an approach used to teach content through foreign language (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2011; Coyle et al., 2010; Grieveson & Wendy, 2012; Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010), and its implementation should be based on its context (Ball et al., 2015). English is used as a supplementary language in the CLIL implementation. The teacher guide her teaching and learning. She taught science to her pupils and had no trouble providing the topic in English as the language of teaching. This is due to the fact that she is English Education graduates. The following is an exposition of her thoughts on CLIL characteristics, CLIL implementation, and students’ knowledge of both topic and language.

CLIL is distinguished by the fact that it is more than just teaching content in English. CLIL features are also founded on the Framework of the 4Cs (content, communication, cognition, and culture) (Pokrivcakova, 2015). The samples described her CLIL implementation, emphasizing not only content and communication but also cognition and culture. She also stressed the importance of organizing classes that engaged students’ cognitive or critical thinking. Furthermore, because the students’ origins varied, intercultural awareness among pupils was also a major issue, teaching so that she would be tolerant people living in diversity.

When compared to bilingual education, CLIL has distinct characteristics (Silberman et al., 2020). CLIL has already been applied to the samples based on the features mentioned by (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2011). The examples’ CLIL implementation previously acknowledged the value of teaching material through English, and the implementation of CLIL contextually fit the students’ demands. Students’ social, cultural, cognitive, linguistic, academic, and other learning abilities can be enhanced. Students not only learned the topic and language associated with the learning material, but they also developed social skills that will be beneficial in their next lives.

The samples believed that various criteria were critical to the successful implementation of CLIL at the primary level. She stated that in order to successfully adopt CLIL, she must use various activities that are close to students’ learning styles, and these activities must be developed contextually and closely tied to their surroundings. Because she is educating young learners, she incorporate more physical activity into her teaching and learning process; also, active listening and communicative emphasis were used as the foundation of the learning process. She also stated that teachers should be able to elicit and foster pupils’ inventiveness. These variables were consistent with (Pokrivcakova, 2015).
Furthermore, the teacher agreed that while implementing CLIL, she should not measure the proportion of content and language equally; rather, it should be depending on the teaching emphasis. When teaching science, for example, the topic may be more focused. In addition, contextual instruction and interaction between professors and students, as well as between students, are vital for developing social skills, particularly intercultural awareness (Ball et al., 2015; Silberman et al., 2020). The teacher also mentioned that the utilization of contextual media, such as videos, photographs, or photos, realia, and other media relevant to the learning materials, aided their effectiveness in applying CLIL.

When imparting subject knowledge to their elementary students, The students agreed on the significance of providing basic directions. She discovered that short and concise instructions are essential for supporting the successful application of CLIL and encouraging greater learning of content and language. She went on to say that presenting language linked to the learning topic is critical to ensuring that students understand the subject, particularly when teaching science, which includes a lot of varied and new phrases. Teaching strategies that emphasize pair and group work, as well as games, contributed to the success of her CLIL implementation. The exercises provided in the form of pair and group work, as well as games, allow them to interact, making learning more meaningful and pleasant.

She also believed that by implementing CLIL in their primary school, a much more enthusiastic learning environment would be created. She may successfully achieve her pupils’ language and subject comprehension. She stated that her students understood the new vocabulary in the second language, English, much better than she did. She gave praise to CLIL for encouraging students to be literate in the vocabulary associated with the course topics. She emphasized the fact that using CLIL gives students more confidence, especially when she required to speak in front of the class, and that she also make an effort to comprehend the subject matter. She added that, in addition students’ comprehension of the subject and the language advanced quickly, particularly for quick learners.

The Challenges of CLIL Implementation

The second investigation was focused on finding out the challenges faced by teacher in implementing CLIL in their primary classroom teaching. The challenges faced by the teacher relate to how she apply the CLIL-based approach in their primary classroom teaching and learning. The challenges faced by teacher is an important consideration for future teacher wanting to deliver content through a foreign language. The challenges found in this research can also be used to prepare a much better teaching and learning process for both teacher and students in the private primary schools.

The fundamental difficulties or challenges of implementing CLIL in primary schools fall to the teacher, as was previously highlighted in Cambridge ESOL (2011). She/he valued the teacher’s proficiency in communicating the course information in English. Despite having completed her English education, individuals occasionally had trouble explaining the ideas associated with the subject matter. Teacher must therefore deepen and broaden their comprehension of the material they will be teaching. She also said that English should be as plain as possible when used as a language of education in order to maximize student comprehension.

Simple instructions in primary schools could make it easier for students to understand the lesson, especially those who don’t speak English as their first language. Additionally, the teacher concurred that it is challenges enough to adopt CLIL because the pupils speak diverse mother tongues. Students with prior English proficiency might manage the teaching-learning process well, whereas those without such proficiency would find it very challenging to adhere to instructions. In order to help her pupils better understand the information, subject matter experts occasionally try to make instructions simpler. Because of students’ extremely weak language skills, they occasionally needed more time to comprehend the material. The teacher needed to pay more attention to and offer more help to these challenging students. Sometimes the pupils have trouble comprehending both the lesson’s material.
and its language. In order to help difficult pupils learn effectively, teacher should devise more engaging yet straightforward learning activities.

Another crucial and challenges aspect of integrating CLIL in elementary classes is providing students with a variety of learning activities and teaching tools. The attention span of elementary school students is constrained (Dwivedi et al., 2023). It should be possible for teacher to design engaging educational activities. To get the pupils tuned into the learning process, different learning activities such as teaching methods, pair or group work, games, and other classroom management are required. Additionally, the utilization of educational material is quite beneficial for instructing young students. The examples showed that using different instructional medium might inspire students to learn, and they showed greater enthusiasm while being taught and being taught.

4. CONCLUSION

The researcher eventually came to the conclusion that the teachers’ perceptions toward the implementation of CLIL as an approach in primary school were in terms of CLIL characteristics, CLIL implementation, and students’ understanding of content and language. This was after gathering and triangulating the necessary data through data analysis. The teacher think about the 4Cs in her primary teaching classroom’s CLIL application. The development of the students’ social skills is another priority. Additionally, the efficient use of English as the instructional language, diverse learning activities, contextual teaching, various teaching media, and straightforward instructions all play a significant role in the implementation of CLIL. For those who have sufficient prior English proficiency, the students’ understanding also progresses quickly.

The challenges in applying CLIL as a teaching strategy in Bali’s private primary schools primarily relate to the instructors and pupils. As they work with children from diverse nations, teachers face the problem of making instructions simple. Naturally, this becomes more difficult when teaching primary-level students who have little to no prior English language proficiency. Teachers must be innovative in how they present and use diverse learning material since pupils have a very short attention span and are easily distracted. Dealing with diverse pupils, especially struggling ones, is challenging because they must simultaneously grasp topic and language.

This research can be used as a reference of implementation CLIL especially at primary school considering with perspective and challenges. The first thing implement CLIL is make sure the students have target language skill. Teacher should make them rich with target language vocabulary. For the next research it will be interesting study if do research about how the teacher prepared the students’ language skill so theirself and their ability ready to study with CLIL method. At least, the teachers have less challenge of implementation of CLIL.

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