

Vietnamese Teachers' Perspectives of CLIL in Primary Schools – Promoting Lifelong Learning and Questioning over Inclusive Education and Teachers' Intercultural Competence: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract. This article explores teachers' perspectives of CLIL in Vietnamese context by using a semi-structured interview with six teachers coming from two private primary schools in Hanoi, Vietnam. Findings of the paper point out both positive and negative points of CLIL in primary schools. Due to the fact that CLIL embraces culture as one of its 4Cs, it can help students to relate what they learn to the reality (i.e., meaningful learning). Hence, CLIL is a practical educational approach to facilitate students' deeper learning, which is the foundation of lifelong learning. CLIL also helps teachers to manage the tempo of the class as well as lower the anxiety of students by preparing them with enough language for the content. However, there is concern over the content to support students' pleasure of learning a foreign language. This poses a question of choosing and exploiting the content to make an inclusive CLIL classroom, which might need to be tailored to students' interest and strengths. In addition, content and language teachers are required to have lifelong learning ability and intercultural communicative competence to collaborate with each other and apply CLIL effectively.

Keywords: CLIL, inclusive education, deeper learning, sustainable development, intercultural competence, Vietnam, stakeholders.

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Introduction

After the implementation of the Open-Door Policy in 1986, Vietnam has established and developed a rising number of economic and political relations with other countries in the world. As a result, the country has shifted from a centrally planned socialist economy to a socialist-oriented market economy (Zhu & Fahey, 2000). The change in the country's economy influences the education system so as to ensure the

economic growth in the orientation of a socialist oriented market economy. Consequently, modernizing education system is one of primary strategies of the country. To reach that goal, Vietnam's "Socio-economic development strategy for 2011-2020" has targeted at enhancing human capital development, encouraging enrollments in higher education, and meeting the requirements of the country in a global (and globalized) environment (WENR, 2017).

In this context, English has played a vital role, and significant concern has been invested in revolution in teaching and learning English in recent years (e.g., Diep, 2017; Nguyen, 2011; Van, 2016). Acknowledging the significance of English, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) issued the implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach for bilingual education in high schools for gifted students in formal national education system as a part of the National Foreign Languages Project 2020 (Nguyen, 2016), as well as encouraged public high schools and junior high schools to implement the content-language integrated learning (CLIL) approach if they meet the governmental requirements (MOET, 2018). Nevertheless, there is not yet an official document issued by MOET regarding the implementation of CLIL in schools, and it is still in its first steps of implementation (Normand-Marconnet, 2013), receiving both arguments and support. In addition, in the Circular of Promulgating General Education Program issued by MOET (2018), there is not any information regarding the application of CLIL in primary education, which is a component of general education in Vietnam. However, the fact that MOET has not mentioned the application of CLIL in primary education does not mean that primary schools in Vietnam have not applied CLIL in their school curriculum. In fact, there are (not all) primary schools applying CLIL to teach some subjects or content in their school curriculum as one of advantages to compete with other schools and attract parents. However, there are only a few studies (Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018; Pham & Unaldi, 2021) researching the implementation of CLIL (its constraints and its facilitation) and its effects in primary schools in the context of Vietnam, especially from the perspectives of teachers who are the ones directly involving in students' education and/or delivering the CLIL lessons. In addition, there are not many studies which analyse the implementation of CLIL in Vietnam from stakeholders' perspectives in the light of sustainability. This is the gap that this study seeks to cover¹.

This paper aims to explore primary teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding CLIL in primary schools in Vietnam, and more specifically to find out and describe the challenges and opportunities, as well as the potential benefits and drawbacks of CLIL in Vietnamese primary schools for sustainability from teachers' perspective. For this purpose, two research questions (RQs) have been formulated:

- RQ1: From primary teachers' perspectives, what are the strengths and weaknesses of CLIL toward sustainability in primary schools in Vietnam?
- RQ2: From primary teachers' perspectives, what are external factors (opportunities and threats) that affect CLIL for sustainability in primary schools in Vietnam?

Theoretical framework

Content and language integrated learning

According to Marsh and Frigols Martín, "Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" and "CLIL represents a holistic approach to learning which is heavily

¹ This was part of a more extensive research project about teachers' perspectives of bilingual education in primary schools in Vietnam, focusing on two aims: (i) Vietnamese teachers' perspectives of bilingual education in primary schools in Vietnam in general, and (ii) their perspectives of CLIL as an approach to bilingual education in primary schools in Vietnam in particular. The first part was published in a journal article in 2022.

cognitive-based and which draws on an interplay of the theoretical foundations of constructivism and second language acquisition” (Marsh & Frigols Martín, 2012, p. 1).

Mentioning CLIL, it is necessary to refer to 4Cs and 3As frameworks, which entail the main pillars of CLIL. According to Coyle (2008), the 4Cs are Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture: (i) content is the subject or the project theme, (ii) communication is the channel for communication and for learning, including both learning to use language and using language to learn, (iii) cognition relates to all the mental processes students need to put into practice in order to acquire both the language and the content in which learners can construct their own understanding and be challenged, and (iv) a CLIL lesson needs to consider cultural elements in order to develop learners’ intercultural competence which is one of the targets of teaching a foreign language.

On the other hand, the 3As refer to Analyze, Add and Apply, which are three stages to plan a CLIL lesson (Marsh & Frigols Martín, 2012):

- i. Stage 1: Analyze content for the language of learning.
- ii. Stage 2: Add to content language for learning (this includes meta-cognitive strategies, classroom talk, discussion, task demands).
- iii. Stage 3: Apply to content language through learning (where the language which emerges through the learning context is built on to assure that there is cognitive and cultural capital).

In addition, according to Coyle et al. (2010), language of learning is the language learners need to understand the content; the language for learning is the language learners need to communicate and work in the foreign language class where their first language is not used as the medium; and the language through learning is the language emerging when students learn the content. When students learn new content, they might need to activate their previous knowledge, reason and explain, which can be related to terms or language of reasoning to give causes and effects. It is notable that ‘not all the CLIL language needed can be planned for. As new knowledge, skills and understanding develop, then so too will new language’ (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 63). Language through learning can come from students’ new ideas or new questions in their learning process (Coyle et al., 2010). The 4Cs framework provides a guide for teachers to plan a CLIL lesson while the 3As tool can be used for more detailed lesson planning (Coyle, 2008).

Beyond CLIL: the pluriliteracies approach for the interface between language and learning

Coyle and Meyer (2021) proposed the pluriliteracies approach for the interface between language and learning, which is the follow up to CLIL. The pluriliteracies approach focuses on disciplinary literacies and textual fluency, especially putting content language integrated learning in the context of deeper learning. The concept of textual fluency that Coyle and Meyer mention is not restricted in the area of text but multiple modes of communicating, such as visuals, audio. According to Coyle and Meyer (2021), deeper learning is the process via which a person could apply what they learnt into a new situation or the ability of transferable knowledge, which is the foundation of lifelong learning. In addition, according to Meyer (2015, p. 5):

Since learning cannot be separated from language, and learner progress must be expressed through an individual’s ability to communicate knowledge and demonstrate understanding by being able to:

- extract information from increasingly complex texts in all relevant modes
- use more genres and genre moves (= sub-parts of a genre)
- express a deeper understanding of relevant concepts within those moves
- communicate his/her understanding in a wide variety of subject specific modes (charts, maps, tables, formulas, drawings, etc., using both analogue and digital media).

Therefore, textual fluency helps learners not only to learn or form conceptual understanding but also to communicate their knowledge.

CLIL for sustainability

In 2015, the United Nations introduced its Agenda for Sustainable Development vision 2030 with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). The goal number 4 is devoted to education. One of the targets of this goal is ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Does equitable quality education mean to provide education equally to everyone? The problem with the word “equal” is that it seems to give the same things for different people and forgets the diversity of human society. Humans are naturally different for their biological features and living conditions, which can lead to their differences in various domains, including their capacity and needs.

According to the Field et al. (2007), equity in education has two dimensions: fairness and inclusion. Fairness means “making sure that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential” (Field et al., 2007, p. 11). Inclusion refers to “ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all – for example that everyone should be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic. The two dimensions are closely intertwined: tackling school failure helps to overcome the effects of social deprivation which often causes school failure” (Field et al., 2007, p. 11). Therefore, CLIL for sustainability needs to concern inclusion, fairness and foster lifelong learning. To ensure inclusion, this means everyone should achieve a basic minimum standard of CLIL education. Fairness means that CLIL is not for privileged groups, instead socio-economic status or ethnic origin should not be the challenge to get access to CLIL education. To foster lifelong learning means that CLIL needs to help students with their deep learning.

CLIL in Vietnam from the stakeholder's perspectives

There are some studies investigating CLIL in Vietnam from the stakeholders' viewpoints, such as Nguyen (2016), Nguyen and Nguyen (2018), Pham and Unaldi (2021), to name but a few. While the studies of Nguyen (2016) and Pham and Unaldi (2021) point out teachers' perspectives of CLIL in Vietnam, the study of Nguyen and Nguyen (2018) explores the opinion of not only teachers but also school managers, regarding the application of CLIL in Vietnam.

In terms of teachers' perspectives of CLIL and its application in schools, Nguyen (2016) carried out a case study in Quoc Hoc Upper – Secondary School for gifted students in Hue City (a city in the center of Vietnam) with the aim of exploring teachers' viewpoints of CLIL, the way CLIL was applied, and difficulties that teachers faced in their application of CLIL. The findings showed that although CLIL was a top-down policy, requiring teachers to apply it in their class, most teachers taking part in the interview showed their understanding and approval for the application of CLIL. In addition, while most teachers believed that both content and language were equally vital, the language focus was not concerned as much as the content due to the fact that most teachers teaching CLIL were content teachers. The teachers also saw that they needed to improve their English proficiency in order to deliver lessons better in English. In terms of difficulties that teachers faced in their practice, the study reported the lack of CLIL materials, as well as the traditional method that teachers still used when applying CLIL. The main activity of the class was ‘teacher asks – students answer’ and more time was spent for teacher talking.

Pham and Unaldi (2021) pointed out that from teachers' perspectives, their role in each CLIL class was in their discipline, either language or subject content rather than a dual role focusing on both content and language. In addition, there was still a shortage of training and supervision in terms of conducting the CLIL program, and the co-operation between the language teacher and the content teacher lacked consistency and systematicity due to heavy workload, schedule and motivation (Pham & Unaldi, 2021).

Nguyen and Nguyen (2018) found that among 41 teachers teaching in two private primary schools in Hanoi – the capital of Vietnam, nearly a half of the number of teachers supported the teaching of basic subjects, such as Mathematics in both Vietnamese and English, however, they did not believe that

teaching a subject in English was the best way to learn English for Vietnamese students, and 10 percent argued that teaching a subject in English was not realistic in the context of Vietnam. In addition, the authors reported that the school managers still highly valued the importance of the mother tongue, which is Vietnamese, and both school managers and teachers were also worried that if applying CLIL for many subjects in the first grades of primary education could worsen students' Vietnamese proficiency.

Although the current research still investigates Vietnamese stakeholders' perspectives of CLIL education, the study focuses on analyzing those perspectives from the lens of education for sustainable development in the context of Vietnam. This provides an insight to contribute to CLIL for sustainability in the case of Vietnam in particular, and CLIL for sustainable development in general.

Methods

Subjects

Convenience and snowball sampling (Jager et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2019) was used for recruiting participants. Eligibility criteria include teachers from primary schools that applied English as a language of teaching a subject, and their experience as either language teachers or teachers in primary schools in Vietnam. The participants were informed of the consent and the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary without receiving any compensation. A total of six primary teachers accepted to participate in the semi-structured interview, working in two private primary schools in Hanoi, Vietnam (three teachers for each school): BGS y CGD. At the time the interviews were conducted (in 2020), all teachers were under 30. Their profiles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Code	Gender	Age	Profile
CGDS1	Female	26	Vietnamese language arts teacher
CGDS2	Female	26	Vietnamese language arts teacher
CGDS3	Female	26	English teacher
BGS1	Female	26	Primary teacher
BGS2	Female	29	Primary teacher
BGS3	Female	24	Primary teacher and English teaching assistant of the English program following international standard, oriented by Cambridge English curriculum

About the context of teaching, CGD School was an experimental school, providing the experimental Vietnamese curriculum instead of following the national curriculum for primary education provided by MOET. BGS School applied the official national curriculum that MOET supplied. The two schools did not offer bilingual programs. Instead, they offered advanced English programs which outsourced two organizations teaching English in Hanoi.

In terms of the advanced English program in the two schools, the experimental school CGD applied English as a compulsory subject when grade 1 (G1) students come to the second semester of the academic year with seven lessons per week (35 minutes for each lesson). For BGS primary school, this school offered an advanced English program (eight lessons per week) following Cambridge English curriculum. With this program, students not only learned English language, but also Science and Mathematics in English as the language of instruction. Science and Mathematics were used as the content and context to learn English.

Due to the fact that the method of sampling is convenience sampling, the subjects of the study are from the same context: two private primary schools in Hanoi that offered English as the language of instruction to teach a subject. Therefore, the sample is not representative of the primary teachers in Vietnam. However, the sample carries typical attributes of teachers in private primary schools in Hanoi – the capital

city. Unlike teachers in the public sector, private primary schools in Hanoi often recruited teachers that were young, then they were exposed to the school environment with the curriculum emphasizing English programs as the competitive advantage to attract parents. Therefore, it is noteworthy to listen to their insight of CLIL, which is often used as an ideal offer to recruit students from private schools in big cities in Vietnam.

Procedure

In order to explore primary teachers' perspectives of the application of CLIL in primary schools, the interviews were conducted with the six aforementioned teachers. The semi-structured interview includes the following key questions:

- What do you think about Bilingual Education in primary schools?
- What do you think about teaching content (such as Mathematics, Nature and Society, Arts, Physical Education) in a foreign language, such as English? In your opinion, what could be the benefits and drawbacks that this trend can bring?
- There is an approach applying to teach content in a foreign language called CLIL, including four dimensions: content, cognition, communication, and culture. Have you ever heard about it? (Both the explanation of CLIL and an example of applying CLIL to teach the theme 'Types of Habitats' are from *The CLIL tool kit: transforming theory into practice* (Coyle et al., 2010). They were prepared in both English version and Vietnamese translation to help teachers imagine how to prepare the CLIL lesson in case that they have not known about CLIL).
- Will you be willing to receive some training for applying CLIL?
- Will you be willing to apply this approach in your class?

After the data was collected, the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis (Samejima et al., 2006) with the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were applied to analyze the data in depth. With the Grounded Theory, the data was firstly broken down and conceptualized into categories, then different categories were checked to find out if there were any intersecting categories and to make connections among categories. Based on the connections identified among different categories and the intersecting categories found out, categories were then integrated to form core categories.

Results

Both the teacher participating in the advanced English program of BGS School and the English teacher of CGD reported that they had not had a clear understanding of CLIL. They had heard and seen the term 'CLIL' in some coursebooks but they had not thoroughly understood what CLIL stands for and what it means. They also said that they had never been trained about CLIL and its application. Only an English teacher from CGD said that she had taught the content in English before, and she found online resources mentioning CLIL and had tried to apply it. Therefore, all the teachers were provided with either an English version (for English teachers) or the Vietnamese translation of the example of preparing a CLIL lesson with the theme *Types of habitats* from *The CLIL tool kit: Transforming theory into practice* (Coyle et al., 2010) in order to help them imagine the preparation of a CLIL lesson.

Strengths of CLIL in primary schools

The first strength of CLIL is that it provides context for students to learn both content and a foreign language – which is English in the context of this research. An English teacher coming from the experimental school CGD emphasized the role of context in fostering students' making meaning and encouraging students to learn a foreign language.

A Vietnamese language art in CGD School (CGDS2) also compared CLIL with the traditional English learning. In her opinion, the content made English learning not boring. She shared her experience in

learning English in a traditional way by memorizing words and grammar without any interesting content to be engaged in. Therefore, the content of other subjects made English learning become more interesting.

Second, it considers the language that students need in order to learn the content as well as the language they may use for successfully cognitive achievement during the lesson (language of learning, language for learning and language through learning), therefore, it can reduce the language difficulties and anxiety that students face during their lessons, and help teachers actively control and regulate the tempo of the lesson as well as handle arising situations. An English teacher of the BGS school said:

The fact that teachers need to think of 3As can benefit both students and teachers. Students are prepared with enough language to follow a lesson, while teachers become more confident because they had thought about the arising situations of the lesson and prepare for them. (BGS3)

Third, CLIL is related to culture, which can broaden students' horizons and help them to link the knowledge learnt to the reality, moving from learning by rote to applying their knowledge in the practice. A primary English teacher from BGS contended that broadening students' horizons and relating what students learn to their real life are important to develop students' competence. She said:

Many students just know how to answer a motif of questions. With the same content, but the form of questions is modified, they do not know how to respond. Without broadening their knowledge and relating knowledge to practice in students' real life, they seem to learn by rote without really understanding its meaning and values. (BGS3)

Fourth, CLIL is believed to provide opportunities for teachers to be creative when thinking about the culture related to the content of the lesson. A teacher from CGDS argued:

It is interesting that CLIL contains culture. I have never seen something linking culture to what students learn. This is absolutely an opportunity for teachers to be creative to think of their cultural background and connect it with the lesson. This also seems very practical when considering the cultural background related to the content as well. (CGDS2)

Weaknesses of CLIL in primary schools

All teachers agreed that the first weakness of CLIL is that it requires a lot of time, knowledge and skills to conduct a CLIL lesson. As CLIL requires teachers to relate the content to culture, meaning the content needs to be connected to the reality, requiring teachers to investigate theories but also to link the theories with practice and have a grasp of the local circumstance to plan a CLIL lesson. If teachers are not well-trained to apply CLIL, these lessons can become hard, demanding and even superficial for students and teachers.

Opportunities of CLIL in primary schools

All teachers agreed that CLIL is a trend in the context of Vietnam for some reasons. First, English is highly valued as a key for better education and job opportunities for Vietnamese students in the future. Second, many Vietnamese parents want their children to be exposed to English as much as possible, especially when they are still in their kindergartens or primary schools so that they can absorb a language in an easier way. Third, with the spread of STEAM (Science-Technology-English-Arts and Mathematics) in the country, STEAM in English attracts the concern and investment of parents and the support of many educator managers with competitions organized by different organizations both nationally and internationally, ranging from public organizations such as MOET to NGOs, which can motivate the collaboration between content teachers and language teachers.

Threats of CLIL in primary schools

The first threat to implement CLIL is the lack of teachers mastering not only content and language but also culture. A Vietnamese language art teacher in CGD School believed that teachers need to have broad-minded horizons and interdisciplinary understanding in order to exploit the culture involved in the

content of CLIL. Their interdisciplinary knowledge must be both deep and broad enough to apply CLIL. If the interdisciplinary knowledge is superficial, the CLIL lesson is not as effective as it can be. It is a challenge for many primary teachers in Vietnam.

Second, the content to choose to apply CLIL can also become a threat as it may be the interest of a group of students, but not the rest of the class. For instance, teacher BGS2 argued that some students like learning Mathematics while some do not. Therefore, the content can be the stimulus to facilitate language learning in the students who love Mathematics while it can become the risk to take a way the joy of learning a foreign language of students who do not like that subject, but they are forced to learn Mathematics content in a foreign language. In addition, learning the content in the mother tongue is already challenging, depending on the level of difficulty. Therefore, the CDGS2 teacher also wondered which content to choose and the level of difficulty of the content in order not to make the CLIL lesson discourage students' motivation and joy of learning in both the content and the language.

Third, the co-operation between language teachers and content teachers is quite difficult in some cases due to the fact that they do not have academic knowledge of each other's field, which requires teachers' willingness to co-operate and intercultural communicative competence. The teacher BGS1 believed that for many Vietnamese teachers, to intercultural communicate to other teachers who are not in their field is not easy, it requires the ability of listening, trying to understand and respect instead of looking down on their knowledge in the discipline that they are not trained for. Vietnamese teachers, in some situations, are not willing to share their expertise as well, making the collaboration for CLIL not effective.

Fourth, although teachers agreed that CLIL is a trend in Vietnam, they also showed their worry about the influence of the foreign language on students' first language (Vietnamese). CLIL was new for them. Therefore, only one teacher was willing to apply CLIL in the class, while other teachers showed their consideration of applying CLIL. They argued that teachers should think of the desire of students and their parents to choose either to apply CLIL or not. In addition, a BGS teacher also contended that some parents still wanted their children to develop their first language and learn subjects in Vietnamese instead of English. She said:

When you ask me if I am willing to apply CLIL in my class or not, I would say we should think of the parents and the students, we need to know their desire. If they do not want to learn contents in English, and they want to develop Vietnamese, why should we do that? (BGS3)

Finally, teacher BGS2 concerned about the fee to apply CLIL at school which was quite high, making CLIL become an approach for only wealthy students, emphasizing the inequality in education in Vietnam.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of CLIL in primary schools in Vietnam are summarized in the Table 2 below.

Table 2. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of CLIL in primary schools in Vietnam

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of CLIL in primary schools in Vietnam	
Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLIL provides context for students to learn both content and a foreign language, making learning a foreign language more interesting. • CLIL is related to culture, which can help students to link the knowledge learnt to the reality to avoid learning by rote and develop students' competence by applying knowledge learnt in another situation. 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLIL requires a lot of time, interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to conduct a CLIL lesson, especially to have a grasp of the local background. <p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of teachers mastering not only content and language but also culture or the local context.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLIL is the foundation for teachers to manage the tempo of the class and teach contents in a foreign language. • CLIL can lower the level of students' anxiety and prepare enough language for them to study a content in a foreign language. • CLIL can help teachers to be more creative. <p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLIL is a trend that is supported by parents, educational managers with many competitions for teachers to apply CLIL in their classrooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The content to choose to apply CLIL can become a threat for an inclusive CLIL classroom. • The co-operation between language teachers and content teachers requires teachers to have intercultural competence. • Not all teachers are willing to apply CLIL and parents want children to learn contents in their first language. • The fee to apply CLIL is high.
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Discussion

The discussion of this study is based on the concept of education for sustainability, including inclusion, fairness, and lifelong learning.

CLIL and its opportunities for deeper learning

According to Coyle and Meyer (2021), lifelong learning is based on the ability to apply what was learnt in one situation to another situation, or deeper learning. In addition, learning happens when a new regularity is seen, leading to the formation of concepts; at the first stage of learning – the material stage, learners try to connect events, facts, observations – different dots to construct concepts. These authors also argued that in the material phase, things should be concrete and learners should have opportunities to experience the new content with hands-on activities. Following the material phase is the verbal phase with the participation of language; through language learners can express their growing concepts so as to get control over the concepts before they are stored as mental presentations in the mental phase (Coyle & Meyer, 2021). Moreover, the concepts formed also need to be stored in the long-term memory for successful learning. It is noteworthy that:

Committing knowledge into long-term memory does not equal deeper-learning. Teaching which focuses predominantly on factual information and which fails to provide learners with opportunities for using and applying that knowledge will lead to the so-called 'inert knowledge.' (Coyle & Meyer, 2021, p.45).

From the theory of Deeper learning, CLIL from the teachers' perspectives can facilitate deeper learning through the fourth letter C – Culture in the CLIL lesson. The Culture component in the CLIL lesson can help students to link what they learnt to the reality, especially their cultural background to apply the knowledge learnt in another situation. In addition, by linking what is learnt to the reality, CLIL provides concrete and lively materials for students to form their knowledge, which is the first phase of the learning mechanism.

Teachers' ability of deeper or lifelong learning for CLIL education

Teachers' ability of deeper or lifelong learning is also a question raised in this study as from Vietnamese teachers' perspectives, to apply CLIL effectively, teachers need to link the subject content to the reality, especially to connect with the local context, which is the threat for CLIL education in Vietnam as there is a lack of teachers mastering the local context. Previous studies investigating CLIL in Vietnam often reported the inadequacy of teachers whose foreign language proficiency is high (Nguyen, 2011; Nguyen, 2016). However, this current study points out that even content teachers whose foreign language proficiency is high still need to improve their understanding of the local context and their own culture in order to create an effective CLIL lesson, which requires their ability of deeper learning or lifelong learning.

The content to make an inclusive CLIL classroom

All teachers could see the benefits of CLIL in terms of using content to teach a language that can add more values and interesting contents to the acquisition of a foreign language. However, this current study points out that the content at the same time can become a threat for the CLIL lesson as well, because the content can be only the interest of a group of students, therefore, it can take away the joy of learning a foreign language of students who do not like that content. This raises a question to make an inclusive CLIL classroom. According to Pérez (2021), in order to make an inclusive CLIL classroom, CLIL needs to focus on learners:

Deploying student-centered methodologies (such as Multiple Intelligence Theory, Cooperative Learning, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), or Project-Based Learning (PBL)), favoring a variety of classroom organizations which allow for same and mixed-ability groupings, and making use of multimodal materials and ICTs with different types of input. (Pérez, 2021, p. 3)

Although Pérez (2021) did not mention the content to choose for different students, student-centered methodologies could also mean that students can have the choice to choose the content that they like to learn, and teachers and students can co-construct the themes that students want to learn in a foreign language, which is the way of forming the curriculum for children to learn in Reggio Emilia schools (Thornton & Brunton, 2010).

In addition, the CLIL lesson needs to facilitate students' cognitive engagement and their deeper learning (Coyle & Meyer, 2021) so as they can attract diverse students. The worry of teachers about the content to apply CLIL poses a question of how to exploit the content to engage students, the level of difficulty of the content to suit diverse students, as well as to give students more authority to choose the topic or the content that they like for their CLIL class. Discussing the difficulty level of the content, we also believe that while there should be a minimum level or a standard that all students could meet, this does not mean that teachers should only stop at that minimum level, instead gradually increasing the difficulty level and catering the content and language difficulty for diverse students are necessary to create an inclusive CLIL class and enhance the quality of education.

Intercultural communicative competence for Vietnamese teachers to co-operate in CLIL lessons

The threats of CLIL include the intercultural communicative competence of Vietnamese teachers, their interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as their willingness to share knowledge and collaborate. This is in the line with previous studies (Gómez-Parra & Hà, 2021; Pham & Unaldi, 2021). Gómez-Parra and Hà (2021) already pointed out that Vietnamese teachers are not good at intercultural communicative skills, which requires them to practice more and to expose themselves more in intercultural communication. In addition, Pham and Unaldi (2021) found out that some Vietnamese teachers lack motivation to collaborate with each other in the CLIL lesson. Therefore, in order to help teachers to apply CLIL in their class, Vietnamese teachers need training of not only CLIL but also intercultural competence as well.

Fairness in CLIL education

The results of the study also pointed out the inequality of CLIL education in Vietnam, which makes CLIL become a term, especially for a privileged group with higher socio-economic status because the tuition fee for CLIL lessons is high. This poses a question for the policy makers and education managers to think of solutions to make CLIL affordable for all.

Limitations of the study

The findings presented in this paper are not without any limitations. First, because of the nature of an exploratory study, as a starting point, only six teachers located in one context, Hanoi (Vietnam), were recruited for the interviews. Consequently, the findings may not be applicable to other participants located in different contexts or with different backgrounds. Future research should consider recruiting participants from different schools, regions and sociocultural contexts. Second, the qualitative findings were only

based on self-reported data, so they may be influenced by respondents' subjective opinions about the topic. For this reason, future studies should also consider obtaining data through additional sources (e.g. questionnaires, focus groups, observations) in order to obtain more reliable data.

Conclusions

From the results of this exploratory research, teachers interviewed have understanding about both positive and negative effects of CLIL in primary schools in Vietnam. In terms of the strengths and opportunities of CLIL, this approach provides the context for students to learn a foreign language, which can be more interesting than teaching a language alone. It gives learners many values at the same time: content, language, communication and culture. Furthermore, it also helps students to connect the knowledge that they learn to the reality and their understanding of their own local circumstance through the last C – culture, by this way avoiding students' learning by rote and facilitating their deep learning. In addition, CLIL helps teachers to manage the tempo of the class as well as lower the anxiety of students by preparing them with enough language for their study of the content.

Regarding the weaknesses and threats, the study points out that to carry out a CLIL lesson effectively, teachers need to have the ability of lifelong learning so as to improve their intercultural communicative competence and deepen their interdisciplinary knowledge, especially knowledge of the local context. Furthermore, the study also shows that not all Vietnamese teachers are willing to apply CLIL as there is a favor of developing the first language from the parents, which also agrees with the results of the study by Nguyen and Nguyen (2018) which reported that educational managers and teachers still prefer to use Vietnamese to teach the content. Moreover, there is concern over the content to support students' pleasure of learning language. This poses a question of choosing and exploiting the content to make an inclusive CLIL classroom, which might need to be tailored to students' interest and strengths as well as stimulate their cognitive engagement and deeper learning. In that context, students can play the role as the co-constructor of the theme for a CLIL lesson.

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