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Teachers' strategies in implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the international classroom program of elementary schools

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has gained increasing attention in elementary education for its potential to integrate subject learning and foreign language development. However, there is still a dearth of research about the strategic application of CLIL by early education teachers in EFL contexts. This study aims to explore teachers' strategies in implementing CLIL at elementary schools. This study used a qualitative case study design and involved two elementary school teachers who taught science and math using English. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and lesson plan analysis, and then were analyzed thematically. The results showed that the teachers employed five primary types of strategies which include teaching content-specific vocabulary to strengthen students' subject-related terminology, applying scaffolding techniques, implementing translanguaging, employing active learning, and utilizing multimodal resources. These strategies were employed flexibly to address students' linguistic limitations while maintaining content objectives. This study contributes to the understanding of how CLIL teachers in early education balance linguistic and cognitive demands in EFL contexts, particularly in Indonesia.

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1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the growing need for bilingual and multilingual competencies has prompted the adoption of innovative educational approaches. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) emerged as a key pedagogical approach to fostering language learning with content from other subjects. Originating in Europe in the mid-1990s, the initial establishment of CLIL was in response to the increasing need for multilingualism (Coyle, 2007; Hemmi & Banegas, 2021). Martens, Mettewie, and Elen (2023) highlight the dual focus of CLIL, which aims to teach content and language simultaneously as one of its key features. In this approach, the foreign language serves as a medium of instruction for gaining subject knowledge (Bekiroglları et al., 2022; Nikula, 2016). The multifaceted emphasis on content and language

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makes CLIL an appealing pedagogical approach, distinguishing it from conventional classroom instruction.

The CLIL approach has become essential in contexts of English as a foreign language (EFL). Several schools, beginning with the elementary level (Gilanyi et al., 2023), have adopted CLIL to give children a solid foundation in language and content mastery from an early age. These institutions recognize that integrating the dual-focused approach enables students to enhance their foreign language skills, in this case, English, while deepening their understanding of various subjects (Daraini et al., 2021).

In the context of Indonesia, the government has prepared Indonesian students to navigate the global world by providing high-quality education and English competencies. It has been strengthened by the Decree of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 12 of 2024, which mandates English in primary schools as an elective subject that can be organized based on the readiness of the Education Unit and will transition to a compulsory subject in the 2027/2028 academic year. The response to these education policies has resulted in more introduction to English, either by incorporating it early in the curriculum, making it the primary language of instruction, or doing both. In this matter, some Indonesian Elementary schools have been providing English lessons consistently. The delivery model of English lessons also varies; one way is teaching certain content subjects through English (Khoiriyah et al., 2024). CLIL has mostly been implemented in bilingual schools and international class programs, where particular subjects, like science and math, are taught in English.

Beyond its contextual adoption, existing studies indicate that CLIL implementation has yielded significant benefits for students. It enables students to understand content deeply, go beyond experimental observation, reflect on learning, and retain knowledge (Rachmajanti et al., 2023). Studies have shown that the CLIL approach positively impacts learning outcomes, with CLIL students performing better on tests than non-CLIL students (Mattheoudakis, 2023). Besides improving scientific knowledge (Huang, 2020), CLIL also creates a more dynamic learning environment and encourages active learning, critical thinking, and cultural competence, positively impacting students' attitudes (Cruz et al., 2021). Additionally, in terms of students' language competence, CLIL provides greater exposure to English, improving language proficiency, especially in academic vocabulary (Merino & Lasagabaster, 2017). All things considered, CLIL promotes a more comprehensive and effective educational experience by helping students achieve better content knowledge and language proficiency.

Despite its influence on students above, the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) presents substantial challenges at the instructional level. A clear picture of the difficulties in implementing CLIL is shown in the research of Štefková et al. (2021) and Segura (2023). Both studies highlight

a general lack of teachers' language proficiency and methodological preparedness as a central weakness, despite teachers demonstrating strong motivation and positive attitudes toward CLIL and recognizing the importance of foreign language competence for both learners and educators. Segura (2023) further emphasizes that this unpreparedness is a result of inadequate teacher training programs, limited resources for CLIL, and a lack of institutional or stakeholder support. In the same vein, Štefková et al. (2021) highlight that students' low language proficiency poses a significant problem, as it can hinder comprehension, reduce engagement, and thereby hinder participation in CLIL-based lessons. This situation reveals a clear gap between the theoretical potential of CLIL and its practical implementation in classrooms. Therefore, the current study plays a crucial role in examining teachers' strategies in implementing CLIL within the context of the Indonesian International Class Program, as it seeks to provide insights into how teachers navigate those challenges and to support the development of effective CLIL implementation.

This gap highlights the need for empirical studies that explore adaptive strategies of CLIL employed by teachers at the elementary school level. Addressing this gap is particularly important as Indonesian elementary students are increasingly exposed to English-medium instruction at an early age. Teachers are therefore required to employ adaptive strategies that support both content understanding and language development. By focusing on elementary education, this research offers insights into how CLIL can be meaningfully implemented for young learners in EFL settings.

The present study investigated CLIL in one of the private laboratory elementary schools in Malang, East Java. The elementary school chosen in this present study integrates the synergy of the Indonesian National Curriculum with International Frameworks. Through its International Class Program (ICP), the school has implemented CLIL since 2007. This study was conducted during the 2025 academic year. The main focus of this study is teachers' pedagogical strategies in CLIL implementation. Hence, this study aims to investigate the teaching strategies employed by elementary school teachers to effectively implement CLIL, which promotes content mastery and language development. By providing empirical insights into classroom practices, this study seeks to enhance understanding of how CLIL is enacted in elementary education. The analysis is guided by the 4Cs Framework, which conceptualizes CLIL through the integration of content, communication, cognition, and culture, and serves as the main analytical framework for examining teachers' instructional strategies. In addition, Meyer's (2010) CLIL teaching principles inform the identification of strategies related to scaffolding, interaction, and learning sustainability in classroom practice. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: What strategies do primary school teachers use to implement CLIL effectively in content and language instruction?

2. Methods

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study research design. The purpose of a case study is to give an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon by investigating processes, activities, and events in the natural context (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, this research design is particularly suited for the current study as it enables the capture of teachers' experiences and voices directly, which is crucial for understanding teacher strategies in implementing CLIL.

The study was conducted in a private elementary school, specifically at one of the Laboratory Elementary Schools in Malang, East Java. The International Class Program (ICP) at this school offers a well-established CLIL program, which has been running since 2007. It utilizes the national curriculum combined with the international curriculum, with an emphasis on subjects, namely Mathematics and Science. They are taught using English as the language of instruction.

The study involved two elementary school teachers selected through purposive sampling. Although the number of participants was limited, this aligns with the qualitative case study design, which prioritizes depth of understanding over breadth. The study involves two female teachers as information-rich cases, selected for their direct experience in CLIL implementation and over five years of teaching practice. Teacher A holds a Master's degree in Mathematics Education with six years of experience, while Teacher B holds a Bachelor's degree in Physics Education and has taught Science for 15 years.

Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. These three data collection techniques aim to provide sufficient information relevant to the research objective of this study. An interview guide was developed, consisting of 20 open-ended questions. These questions cover some of the areas of classroom practice in CLIL teaching from the existing literature (Coyle et al., 2010; Meyer, 2010; Metlí & Akıs, 2022). The initial part of the interview begins with five introductory questions. This section aims to gather information about the teachers' educational background, teaching experience, and knowledge of CLIL. Additionally, the second section of the interview consists of 15 questions aimed at exploring the teachers' strategies for practicing the approach, for example, in terms of selecting and using materials, designing activities, language support, and student engagement. As such, they provide a relevant and focused lens of classroom dynamics to examine teachers' practice of teaching strategies in CLIL classrooms. The researcher did face-to-face interviews with the two teachers taking place at the school to build rapport and create a comfortable atmosphere. This interview was conducted in Indonesian to avoid misinterpretation. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

In addition, classroom observations were conducted to obtain a clear and comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning process in CLIL classrooms that can provide a deeper understanding of the strategies teachers

apply in their daily practice, offering valuable details to support the data acquired from interviews. To systematically investigate the classroom process, the researchers used a structured observation protocol along with detailed field notes. Classroom observations were carried out over six sessions, with each teacher observed three times, and each session lasted approximately 70 minutes.

Besides interviews and classroom observation, this study also used documentation, such as lesson plans, which provide a structured overview of the 4Cs CLIL principles integrated into the lesson plans. Incorporating documentation as a data source is necessary as it allows for objective and concrete analysis of instructional practices beyond what is described in interviews and what can be observed in the classroom. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent and were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation. To protect participants' confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for all teachers (e.g., Teacher A, Teacher B), and the name of the school was not disclosed.

Before data collection, the research instruments were validated by an expert in the CLIL context to ensure their clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed methodological and source triangulation. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and lesson plan analysis. Findings from classroom observations were compared with teachers' interview responses and instructional documents to verify consistency across data sources. This triangulation process allowed the researcher to confirm emerging patterns and reduce potential researcher bias, thereby enhancing the credibility and dependability of the study.

Lastly, sequential steps in qualitative data analysis, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018), were employed to analyze the data. The stages include preparing the data, reading the data, coding the data, generating the themes, and representing the themes and descriptions. Initially, all the collected data was prepared and organized. This entails making the interview transcription and scanning materials from the observation notes. The step also includes classifying and organizing the data according to different information sources. The second step was reading or looking at the data to obtain a thorough comprehension of the data. The reading process was done thoroughly and repeatedly to become more familiar with the data. Afterward, the researcher began coding all the data in the third step. It involves systematically labeling and organizing the data to extract meaning and identify patterns. From the coding process that has been done, the next step was generating the description and themes. In qualitative investigations, these themes were the significant findings. The final step was representing the themes and descriptions, which entails writing a report of the conclusions of the

analysis process. The objective of this step was to succinctly convey the meaning that I have extracted from the data.

3. Results

These findings reveal various strategies applied by the teachers, addressing the research question of this study. Based on the data, five main themes were generated, which illustrate the instructional strategies teachers employed to support content and language learning in CLIL classrooms. The themes and codes from the thematic analysis are presented in Table 1, followed by further subsections outlining each strategy, supported by direct evidence from the field.

Table 1.
The theme and codes of teaching strategies were identified in the study.

Theme	Description	Associated Codes
Teaching content-specific vocabulary strategy	Teachers explicitly introduced key subject-related terms prior to content instruction	Introducing key vocabulary before content delivery, displaying the vocabulary associated with content, highlighting specific terms, and practicing the pronunciation of content vocabulary
Applying the scaffolding strategy to support comprehension	Teachers used temporary instructional supports to facilitate students' comprehension of content and language.	Activating prior knowledge, questioning, providing sentence starters, modeling, and giving immediate feedback
Implementing a translanguaging strategy	Teachers alternated between English and Indonesian to support comprehension.	Switching to L1 for instruction and explanation, introducing key terms in both L1 and L2, and allowing students to discuss tasks in L1
Employing an active learning strategy	Teachers engaged students in interactive activities that required active participation	Group work, discussion, role play, hands-on experiment, game-based task
Utilizing a multimodal resources strategy	Teachers used multiple modes to support content comprehension and language learning.	Using visual, auditory, and gestural modes of written materials

3.1 Teaching content-specific vocabulary strategy

The first, most noticeable strategy implemented by teachers was providing learners with a key vocabulary, which was observed in both math and science classrooms and mentioned by all teachers during interviews. This theme emerged as teachers attempted to present the words or key terms and sentence structures directly related to the lesson topic to help students understand and use the language in the context of the material being studied. This matter was reflected starting from the planning stage, whereby the teacher included teaching

vocabulary and structures in their lesson plans. The following is an example of a teacher's lesson plan excerpt that integrates vocabulary instruction.

Communication

Language of learning

Key mathematical vocabulary:

- Money, Rupiah, coins, banknotes numbers: one thousand (Rp 1.000), five thousand (Rp 5.000), ten thousand (Rp 10.000), etc.
- Buy, sell, price, cost, change
- More than, less than, equal to

Language for learning

"How much is this?" "Which one is more?" "How much is the total?"

Language through learning

- Students will acquire new vocabulary and sentence structures through interaction and contextualized learning activities.
- They will develop listening and speaking skills by engaging in role-play and peer discussions.

To support the above data, further evidence indicated that before introducing the main content, teachers started each lesson by clearly presenting key vocabulary related to the content. The vocabulary teaching was not only focused on teaching students to recognize the meaning, which makes it easier for them to learn the content, but teachers also included pronunciation practice, especially when introducing unfamiliar terms to students. This practice ensured that students could recognize, pronounce, and use the words correctly in both oral and written forms. The finding regarding vocabulary teaching is also in line with the teachers' interview answers in the data below, they said:

> *"I usually highlight specific terms that students will encounter in the lesson. I explain the meanings first because once they know the vocabulary, they find it easier to understand the content." (Interview with teacher A)*
>
> *"The students' vocabulary is still limited, so I teach some terms that become important points repeatedly, for example, when students learn about magnets, the words like attraction and repulsion are taught first, in the hope that they can easily understand." (Interview with teacher B)*

The classroom observation supported these statements, as the teacher consistently wrote key vocabulary on the board and encouraged students to pronounce the terms together before moving to content tasks.

> *The teacher wrote key vocabulary such as root, stem, leaf, and flower on the whiteboard and explained each term while pointing to a plant diagram. Students were asked to repeat the words aloud before the lesson continued. (Classroom observation of the Science subject, meeting 1).*

The vocabulary, like attract and repel, was written on the whiteboard while the teacher explained the meanings. The students were asked to say the words together after the teacher had mentioned them. (Classroom observation of the Science subject, meeting 3).

In a lesson on money, the teacher introduced vocabulary like "coin," "banknote," and "price" using replicas to help students identify values. In the next session, language structures such as "How much does it cost?" "How much is the total?" was taught to prepare students for a role-play activity (Classroom observation of the Math subject, meeting 3).

While both teachers explicitly taught key vocabulary, the science teacher presented terms explicitly on the whiteboard and explained their meanings to ensure students' understanding, whereas the mathematics teacher contextualized vocabulary through real-life role-play activities. In this study, guiding learners through a content-specific vocabulary strategy was an integral part of CLIL teaching. Teachers promoted students' knowledge of content by conveying key terms or phrases and engaging students in practicing to use the language.

3.2 Applying scaffolding strategy to support comprehension

The data revealed that the second strategy teachers practiced was applying scaffolding to teaching content delivered in English. The existence of this scaffolding practice demonstrated that the teacher actively facilitated learning by tailoring levels of assistance to the students. The classroom observations found that teachers began lessons by linking students' prior knowledge to the learned content. Students were asked to recall and share what they knew concerning the material being introduced. In this process, teachers also proactively asked questions during the lesson to encourage students' thinking and promote their engagement in the class. This situation can be seen in data from the observation below:

Before the teacher explained the material, she introduced students to the object she was carrying. This provoked the students' curiosity, and they eagerly guessed that the object was a magnet. To activate prior knowledge, the teacher asked if they had ever tried to use magnets or noticed their use in everyday life. (Classroom observation of Science subject, meeting 3).

From the data above, the teacher encouraged students to share their thoughts on a given topic while trying to relate it to their personal experiences. This showed the teacher's efforts in providing scaffolding through guiding questions and encouragement to link new information with students' existing knowledge, so that they can gradually build a deeper understanding. Meanwhile, in the math classroom, the teacher provided scaffolding through modeling. Evidence of this practice emerges from the observation data presented below:

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher asked students to recall number symbols they had learned previously. The teacher modelled how to compare numbers

using greater than *and* less than *and corrected students' responses directly. (Classroom observation of the Math subject, meeting 2)*

The teacher modeled using a simple dialogue to demonstrate the interaction during role play. For example, the teacher emphasized some sentences such as "What do you want to buy?" and "How much does it cost?" "The pizza is ten thousand rupiah." (Classroom observation of the Math subject, meeting 3)

Furthermore, to support this, the data from teachers' responses during the interview also indicated that they provided support for students to help them learn:

"I often demonstrate the activity first and ask questions during the lesson to check their understanding. If there is a mistake, I give feedback immediately before moving on." (Interview of Teacher A)

"The best way to present material to children is by keeping it simple, especially the instructions. I avoid using complex language. Before asking students to complete a task, I always show them how it's done so they can follow it." (Interview with Teacher B)

The findings revealed that teachers employed various forms of scaffolding across subject lessons as a supportive strategy to facilitate students' learning through a foreign language.

3.3 Implementing a translanguaging strategy

Translanguaging was the next strategy applied by teachers in CLIL classrooms, in which teachers intentionally integrate the first language (L1) and the target language to facilitate understanding and encourage participation. During the classroom observations, teachers occasionally used English and then transitioned to Indonesian, especially when students seemed confused or when crucial points needed clarification. Utilizing translanguaging was a means to enhance comprehension while establishing a supportive learning environment, not an indication that the classroom failed to use the target language, as conveyed by the teachers during the interview session in the data below:

"I always try to use full English in certain classes, such as class C, where the children have good English. Usually, I use Indonesian when the students have started asking questions or are confused about the concept. So sometimes I use a combination of Indonesian. It's more about being flexible." (Interview of teacher A).

"I often explain important terms in both English and Indonesian. I also usually help translate texts or questions in their workbook. I have not used English entirely, as students still have difficulty understanding the material. If I use English all the time, they will not understand the material." (Interview with teacher B).

In the data below, the same way was also seen in learning science when the teacher wanted to ask students to share their opinions. During the classroom observation, the teacher said:

"Do you know the things around us that use magnets? Benda di sekitar yang menggunakan magnet apa aja? [Translation: What are the things around us that use magnets?] Do you have a refrigerator at home? Nah itu kira-kira pake magnet gak

ya. [Translation: Do you think it uses a magnet?].” (Observation of Science subject, meeting 3)

In math lessons on subtraction of two-digit numbers, the teacher explained the concept while switching to Indonesian. This can be seen in the classroom observation note below:

> The teacher explained the instructions in English and then switched to Indonesian to clarify the task. Key terms such as *subtraction* and *minus* were introduced in both English and Indonesian, and students were allowed to discuss the answers in Indonesian before responding. (Observation of the Math subject, meeting 1).
>
> *“You subtract from the ones first, dikurangin dari satuannya dulu, yaa”* [Translation: Subtract from the one first, okay]. When students were working on the exercise problems in their books, the teacher helped translate the questions several times. The teacher said*, “Amara has 18 sunflowers. Amara punya 18 bunga matahari. [Translation: Amara has 18 sunflowers.] She gave 12 to her friend. How many sunflowers are left? Diberikan 12 ke temannya, sisanya berapa?* [Translation: Gave 12 to a friend, how many are left?]*”* (Observation of the Math subject, meeting 1).

Additionally, translanguaging was employed to promote student involvement, particularly among students who were reluctant to use English. Teachers permitted students to discuss completing assignments in their first language. In classroom observation, teachers did not interrupt students' use of their mother tongue. These findings showed that teachers provide flexible opportunities for language use during the learning process, especially in collaborative activities, to ensure students remain actively engaged in comprehending the content.

3.4 Employing an active learning strategy

Teachers implemented this strategy, which was intended to support students’ understanding of content and language simultaneously. This was reflected through activities that enabled students to interact, discuss, and use language in the context of the lesson content, both orally and in writing. Activities such as group work, discussions, role play, experiments, and games-based tasks were implemented during the learning process. The observation data uncovered several instances where teachers provided support to facilitate students' active learning during the lesson, as shown in the data of the classroom observation below:

> *Students worked in small groups to solve subtraction and number comparison tasks using the Snake and Ladders game. Group discussion was encouraged, and students explained their answers to peers during the activity. (Observation of the Math subject, meeting 1)*
>
> *Before working on individual assignments, students practiced money recognition through role-play in groups, acting as shopkeepers and customers. The teacher provided menu lists and replica money for each group. Students used the target phrases to interact with their peers during the activity. (Observation of the Math subject, meeting 3).*

The teacher guided students in a group experiment to test magnetic and non-magnetic materials using magnets and everyday objects. Students recorded their findings on worksheets and discussed the results together. (Observation of Science subject, meeting 3)

To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers encourage students to actively engage in a lesson, classroom observations were triangulated with interview data. The following data excerpts highlight how teachers described the implementation of this strategy when asked about the types of tasks or classroom activities they typically use to promote student interaction while supporting both content knowledge and language, offering further insight into the practices observed throughout the lesson.

"It seems easier for students to understand the material when they work together with their friends." (Interview with teacher A).

"Instead of only explaining, I ask students to try the experiment themselves. When they touch and see the results directly, they become more active and understand the concept more easily." (Interview with Teacher B).

"Group activities help students feel more confident to speak. Even if they make mistakes, they can learn from each other during the discussion." (Interview with Teacher B).

The above descriptions showed that math and science teachers provided opportunities for students to actively participate in the classroom so that they can work together, discuss, and convey ideas orally and in writing within the context of learning. This strategy appeared in various types of classroom activities that involved direct interaction between students, both in small groups and the whole class, making learning more centered on the students. During this process, students can easily gain content knowledge and language more engagingly.

3.5 Utilizing multimodal resources strategy

The finding further disclosed that teachers use a variety of multimodal resources as instructional strategies to support content comprehension and language in the classroom. These resources include visual, auditory, gestural, and written modes. Teachers chose and combined resources according to the needs of their students and the learning objectives. The example of a classroom observation note below shows how teachers use different modes in the classroom:

The teacher used pictures of animals and habitats and explained them verbally. The students completed a written matching task. (Classroom observation of Science subject, meeting 2).

The teacher showed a video on magnets in daily life and provided real objects for students to experiment with. She also gave visually supported worksheets with a clear layout and simple language to help students classify items as magnetic or non-magnetic. (Classroom observation of Science subject, meeting 3).

The teacher used number cards and symbols on the board while explaining the steps verbally. Hand gestures were used to show more than *and* less than*, and students*

copied the examples into their notebooks. (Classroom observation of the Math subject, meeting 2).

Before working on individual assignments, students practiced money recognition through role-play in groups, acting as shopkeepers and customers. The teacher provided menu lists and replica money for each group. (Classroom observation of the Math subject, meeting 3).

This finding was also supported in the interview data, when the teachers were asked about the type of non-textbook materials they usually use, as explained by participants:

"More often videos from YouTube, then for the quiz, I usually give quizzes, and then just like the lesson earlier, using Wordwall." (Interview with teacher A).

"If I need additional materials that support learning, like previous discussions, I show the children the continents. On the computer, I showed the world map on the screen. Students will learn from the picture." (Interview with teacher B).

"When I explain science, I don't rely only on talking. I show pictures, use real objects, and move my hands to help students imagine the concept." (Interview with teacher B).

Data consistently indicated that teachers employed a variety of multimodal resources. This also made the learning process more engaging and interactive, particularly for young learners. In the CLIL context, this strategy supported language acquisition by embedding the language within a meaningful and fun context, while also connecting it to the thematic content of the lesson. These modes were frequently combined during teaching to facilitate comprehension and keep students' attention. Teachers also said that these resources made it easier for them to convey the lesson. Every class that was observed showed this pattern.

4. Discussion

This research investigated how primary teachers apply teaching strategies when delivering subject matter in a foreign language that uses the CLIL approach through the International Class Program (ICP). The teaching strategies highlighted were intended to support students' understanding of the subject matter while simultaneously fostering the target language.

This study revealed that teachers intentionally provide content-specific vocabulary as a teaching strategy, which can help students grasp both content and language. The practice embodies the communication domains of Coyle et al.'s (2010) 4C framework and the "language of learning" that encompasses the subject-specific language required to access and learn the content. Unlike the CLIL context in ESL settings, where learners may have greater exposure to the language, Indonesian EFL learners may rely heavily on explicit vocabulary support to bridge the language gap. Similar findings have been reported in the CLIL classroom, where teachers emphasize vocabulary repertoire for a thorough

understanding of academic concepts (Alisoy, 2025; Metlí & Akıs, 2022). However, this study expands on previous research by showing how vocabulary teaching is strategically integrated with content tasks rather than taught separately. From a pedagogical perspective, this implies that vocabulary teaching should be purposefully planned by CLIL teachers at the primary level as a component of content acquisition rather than as a distinct language activity.

Additionally, this study contributes to CLIL theory by broadening the concept of scaffolding into the context of elementary education. Results specifically indicate that teachers actively encourage learning, providing students with short-term assistance as they acquire new concepts or tackle challenging tasks. This finding can be attributed to the key concept of Vygotsky's theory (1978), the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the crucial role of assistance from knowledgeable others, like teachers, to help students achieve skills that they could not achieve on their own. Likewise, Alisoy (2025), Mahan (2022), and Meyer (2010) noted that students must be adequately given ample support, and this support progressively diminishes as they develop greater capacity. While scaffolding in CLIL is often discussed in relation to secondary or tertiary learners, the findings demonstrate that scaffolding for young learners involves activating prior knowledge, questioning, providing sentence starters, modeling, and giving immediate feedback. These forms of scaffolding address not only cognitive demands but also the linguistic needs of elementary school students.

Furthermore, an important finding emerged regarding the nuanced use of teachers' and students' linguistic repertoires in the CLIL classroom. The data revealed that teachers consistently employed students' first language (L1) through translanguaging practices. While this study adopts a generally positive stance toward translanguaging, the findings indicate that its pedagogical value is contingent upon learner age, language proficiency, and content complexity. In the observed CLIL classrooms, L1 was used strategically and briefly to facilitate understanding of abstract concepts and clarify task instructions, particularly for lower-proficiency learners. Despite this, scholarly work underscores the need to restrict first-language use in CLIL classrooms in order to enhance exposure to the target language (Bekirogulları et al., 2022; Lasagabaster, 2013). Lo (2015) further cautions that excessive reliance on L1 may compromise the dual focus of CLIL by reducing opportunities for meaningful L2 input and output. This study reveals that rather than avoiding L1 use, teachers strategically employ it to support students in making meaning, communicating, and instructing. In the same view, Zhang et al. (2024) also noted that when effective communication in the target language is not feasible, thoughtful use of L1 can be beneficial for teaching. Similar patterns have been reported in Southeast Asian CLIL classrooms. In Thailand, CLIL's content-driven approach poses challenges for both teachers and students because English is rarely used in everyday contexts (Suwannopharat & Chinokul, 2015). Likewise,

Vietnamese teachers acknowledged learners' multilingual resources and the benefits of translanguaging (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Consequently, the strategic use of students' first language is often necessary to support content comprehension in elementary CLIL classrooms. Pedagogically, this underscores the need for principled guidelines to help teachers determine when and how L1 can be used, particularly when teaching abstract content to younger learners. However, the effectiveness of this approach may be limited in contexts where students have higher language proficiency or where teachers lack adequate training in balancing L1 and L2 use. These findings, therefore, highlight important implications for policymakers and teacher educators in designing targeted professional development programs that support effective pedagogical translanguaging.

Another key strategy uncovered is employing active learning among students. This matter is consistent with one of the CLIL tenets put forth by Mehisto et al. (2008), which states that teachers should promote active learning and encourage students to participate at all stages of the learning process. Apart from this, another pattern was also discovered in how teachers used additional sources beyond the textbook to support learning. As in the view of Guerrini (2023), content input is available in many modes. Based on the data, teachers utilized multiple modes, including auditory, visual, written materials, and gestural. This strategy aimed to keep students interested in class while boosting their understanding of material delivered in a foreign language. Following Meyer's (2010) conception of "rich input", in the selection of material, multi-modal input is a crucial idea since it facilitates a deeper comprehension of particular content and helps to explain and illustrate difficult concepts that are delivered in a foreign language. The study by Rohi and Nurhayati (2024) also discovered that teachers may accommodate different learning styles and foster deeper comprehension by utilizing a variety of modalities, including interactive activities, visual aids, and audio resources. In this instance, the classroom can become more engaged, dynamic, and responsive when students are given a variety of opportunities and tools to help them understand the material, creating a setting that offers more chances for language use and content mastery.

Based on the findings, several practical implications can be drawn for CLIL implementation. First, teacher training programs should explicitly focus on systematic vocabulary instruction and scaffolding routines, such as pre-teaching key terminology. Second, clear and principled guidelines on translanguaging are needed to help teachers strategically balance L1 and L2 use, particularly when introducing complex concepts or supporting learners with lower language proficiency, without reducing target language exposure. Third, teachers require support in designing multimodal learning materials that integrate visual, auditory,

and kinesthetic resources to facilitate students' content comprehension through an additional language.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights that the implementation of CLIL in elementary-level international classes relies on the integration of language support into content teaching. Teachers regularly insert specific vocabulary related to the lesson and scaffolding strategies to facilitate students' understanding of the subject matter. When language barriers hinder understanding, translanguaging is used strategically to support conceptual clarity while maintaining exposure to the target language. Altogether, the combination of strategic language support, active learning, and multimodal resources enables meaningful content learning in elementary-level CLIL classrooms.

The findings of this study highlight the pedagogical value of integrating scaffolding and translanguaging to support the simultaneous development of content knowledge and language skills in primary CLIL classrooms. Viewing students' first language as a pedagogical resource, rather than a constraint, can help teachers address young learners' comprehension difficulties more effectively. At the policy level, flexible language-use guidelines are recommended to better support CLIL implementation in linguistically diverse elementary settings and to ensure curricula are responsive to learners' bilingual needs.

Although this study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. The limited number of participants, involving only two elementary school teachers, may restrict the generalization of these findings to different CLIL contexts, school environments, and grade levels. Furthermore, as this study primarily focuses on the teachers' perspectives, the views of students are not included in this research.

To address the identified limitations, future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants and schools with diverse sociolinguistic backgrounds and to incorporate students' perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the instructional strategies are experienced by learners. Longitudinal studies may also be conducted to examine the long-term effects of teaching strategies on students' language development and content mastery in primary CLIL settings.

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