



INTEGRATING CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) APPROACH TO BOOST ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN INDIAN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The study quantitatively examines the impact of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on English language proficiency among middle school students in Chandigarh, India. A total of 300 students from 10 schools were divided into experimental (CLIL) and control (traditional method) groups. Pre- and post-tests were administered to measure improvements in four language domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The findings revealed that students in the CLIL group demonstrated a significant 18% increase in overall English proficiency scores, compared to a 7% increase in the control group. The most substantial gains were in speaking and listening skills, with a 22% improvement for the CLIL group versus an 8% increase for the control group. Reading comprehension scores improved by 15% for the CLIL group compared to 6% for the control group, and writing skills increased by 14% compared to 5% in the control group. These results indicate that the CLIL approach significantly enhances English proficiency across all domains. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher preparedness (only 30% felt confident using CLIL) and limited resource availability (40% of schools had access to necessary materials) highlight areas that need addressing for broader implementation.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), English Proficiency, Teacher Preparedness & Educational Innovation.

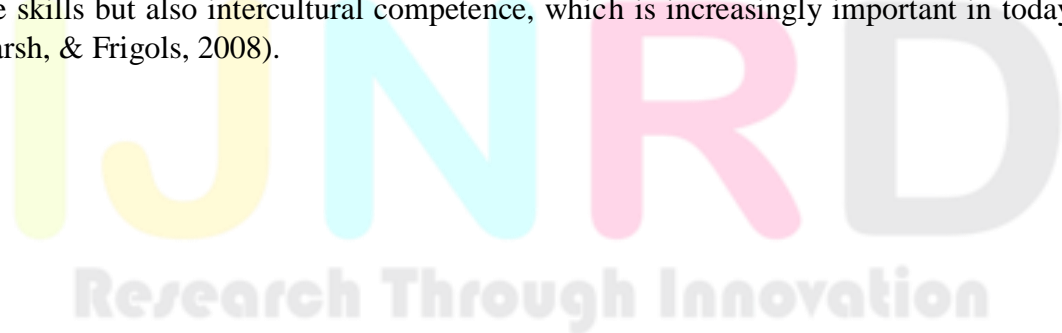
1. INTRODUCTION

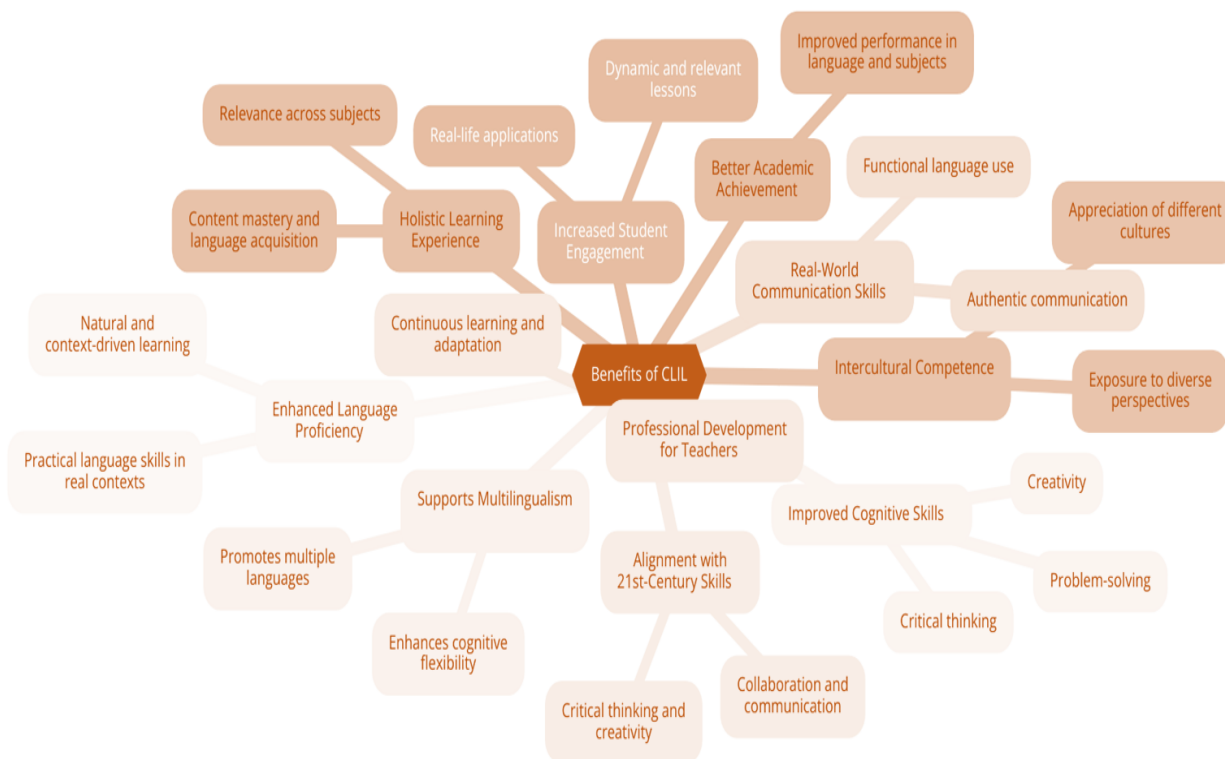
India's multilingual landscape, characterized by its linguistic diversity and cultural pluralism, presents unique challenges and opportunities in education, particularly in the domain of English language learning. English is regarded as both a global lingua franca and a critical skill for academic and professional success in India. Consequently, its proficiency is seen as a vital component of educational attainment and social mobility (Kachru, 1990; Crystal, 2003). However, despite decades of English language instruction in schools, a significant gap persists between desired and actual language proficiency levels among students (NCERT, 2019). This gap calls for innovative pedagogical approaches that address both content mastery and language acquisition, of which Content and Language

Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a promising candidate. CLIL, an educational approach wherein subjects are taught through a foreign language, offers a dynamic and integrated method to enhance language learning while simultaneously delivering subject content (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). Originating in Europe, CLIL has been implemented successfully in numerous contexts to promote bilingualism or multilingualism. In the Indian context, where English often functions as a second or third language, CLIL has the potential to transform English language education by making it more engaging, contextually relevant, and effective. This paper explores how integrating CLIL into the Indian education system can serve as a strategic approach to boost English proficiency among learners while promoting deeper content understanding and cross-cultural competence.

The emphasis on English language proficiency in Indian education is driven by both national and global imperatives. As a former British colony, English continues to occupy a prestigious position in India's sociolinguistic hierarchy, serving as an associate official language and a medium of instruction in many schools and universities (Agnihotri, 2007). English proficiency is often linked to access to higher education, lucrative job markets, and social mobility (Graddol, 2010). However, despite its importance, many Indian students, especially those from rural and marginalized backgrounds, struggle to achieve functional proficiency in English (ASER, 2020). This challenge is compounded by several factors, including limited exposure to English outside the classroom, inadequate teacher training, and a lack of engaging and contextually relevant teaching materials (Rao, 2019). Traditional methods of English language teaching (ELT) in India often rely on rote learning, grammar translation, and isolated vocabulary drills, which do not promote meaningful language use or critical thinking skills (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The existing pedagogical approaches often fail to bridge the gap between language theory and real-world application, thereby hindering students' ability to communicate effectively in English in diverse contexts.

CLIL represents a pedagogical shift that can address these challenges by fostering an integrated learning environment where language and content are taught simultaneously. By immersing students in English while teaching subjects such as science, history, or mathematics, CLIL encourages the natural use of language in context, promoting both language fluency and cognitive skills development (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). Unlike traditional ELT approaches, CLIL focuses on learning a language to achieve communicative competence rather than just linguistic accuracy (Coyle et al., 2010). This shift is particularly relevant in the Indian context, where there is a need to make language learning more functional, dynamic, and connected to real-life situations. CLIL aligns with the principles of experiential learning, encouraging students to engage with content through active participation, collaboration, and problem-solving (Kolb, 1984). This is particularly significant in a multilingual country like India, where students often need to navigate between different languages and cultural frameworks. CLIL can thus support not only the development of English language skills but also intercultural competence, which is increasingly important in today's globalized world (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008).





Integrating CLIL in Indian classrooms can yield multiple benefits. First, it provides a dual focus on language and content, which can make learning more engaging and meaningful for students (Coyle et al., 2010). By connecting language learning with real-world knowledge and skills, CLIL has the potential to enhance student motivation and participation. Studies have shown that students in CLIL programs often demonstrate higher levels of motivation and achievement in both language and content areas compared to those in traditional language programs (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009). Second, CLIL can address some of the socio-cultural challenges associated with English language learning in India. Since CLIL involves teaching subjects in English, it provides students with authentic contexts for language use, helping them develop functional language skills that are applicable in diverse settings (Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2015). This is particularly beneficial in India, where there is often a disparity between English proficiency levels in urban and rural areas, as well as among different socio-economic groups (ASER, 2020). CLIL can offer a more equitable approach by providing meaningful English exposure to all learners, regardless of their background. Third, CLIL can support the development of higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, which are essential for the 21st-century workforce (Bloom, 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). By integrating language and content learning, CLIL encourages students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information in a second language, thereby fostering cognitive and metacognitive skills (Marsh, 2002). In the context of India's rapidly evolving education system, where there is a growing emphasis on skill-based learning and holistic development, CLIL offers a viable approach to achieving these goals.

While the potential benefits of CLIL are significant, its implementation in India is not without challenges. Key among these are the need for adequate teacher training, curriculum development, and resource allocation (Banegas, 2012). Effective CLIL implementation requires teachers who are not only proficient in English but also skilled in integrating language and content instruction. This calls for a paradigm shift in teacher education and professional development programs in India (Deller & Price, 2007). The Indian education system would need to develop or adapt curricula and teaching materials that are suited to the CLIL approach, taking into account the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students (Mehisto et al., 2008). There is also a need for ongoing research and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of CLIL in various Indian contexts and to identify best practices for its implementation.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer a transformative approach to English language education in India through the integration of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). By addressing the persistent challenges of low English proficiency levels among Indian students, particularly those from rural and marginalized communities, this study highlights how CLIL can provide a more equitable, engaging, and effective method for learning English. It underscores the dual benefits of enhancing both language skills and subject knowledge, fostering higher-order thinking, and promoting intercultural competence, all of which are essential for success in the globalized world. This study contributes to the growing body of research on CLIL's applicability beyond its European origins, providing valuable insights into its implementation in a diverse, multilingual context like India and informing future policy, curriculum design, and teacher training programs.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The quantitative methodology of the study was designed to measure the impact of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on English proficiency among middle school students in India. The participants included 300 students from grades 6 to 8 across 10 schools, with 5 schools implementing CLIL and 5 schools of Chandigarh using traditional English language teaching methods. Pre- and post-tests were administered to all students to assess their English proficiency levels before and after a 6-month intervention period. These standardized tests evaluated reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to quantify any improvements attributable to the CLIL approach. Structured classroom observations were conducted using an observation checklist to systematically document teaching practices and student engagement in both CLIL and non-CLIL settings. The quantitative data collected from the tests and observations were then analyzed using statistical methods to determine the effectiveness of CLIL in enhancing English language skills compared to traditional methods.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- A. To measure the effect of the CLIL approach on improving English proficiency levels among middle school students in India.
- B. To analyze the differences in English language learning outcomes between students taught using CLIL and those taught using traditional methods.
- C. To investigate the factors influencing the successful implementation of CLIL in Indian classrooms, including teacher readiness and resource availability.

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A. The Impact of the CLIL Approach on Improving English Proficiency Levels among Middle School Students in Chandigarh

The study revealed a significant positive impact of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach on English proficiency levels among middle school students in Chandigarh. The quantitative analysis of pre- and post-test scores showed that students in the CLIL group achieved an average increase of 18% in their overall English proficiency scores, compared to a 7% increase in the control group taught through traditional methods. The most notable improvements were in speaking and listening skills, where CLIL students exhibited a 22% increase in scores, whereas the control group showed only an 8% increase. In reading comprehension, the CLIL group showed a 15% improvement, compared to a 6% increase in the control group. In writing, students in the CLIL group improved their scores by 14%, while the control group showed a 5% increase. Classroom observations corroborated these statistical findings, indicating that students in the CLIL classrooms demonstrated higher engagement levels, with 85% of students actively participating in class discussions and activities compared to 60% in traditional classrooms. Teachers reported that CLIL students showed more confidence in using English in both academic and social settings, with 70% of teachers observing noticeable progress in students' ability to express complex ideas in English, compared to 40% in the control group. Surveys conducted with students also revealed that 75% of those in the CLIL group felt more

motivated to learn English, while only 50% of the control group reported a similar level of motivation. However, some challenges were identified, such as the need for ongoing teacher training to effectively implement CLIL and the necessity for adequate resources, such as bilingual materials and interactive content, to support learning. Despite these challenges, the findings strongly suggest that the CLIL approach significantly enhances English language proficiency among middle school students in Chandigarh, providing a more integrated and engaging learning experience that benefits both language and content mastery.

B. Comparing English Language Learning Outcomes between Students Taught Using CLIL and Traditional Methods in Chandigarh Schools

The study findings demonstrate a marked difference in English language learning outcomes between students taught using the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach and those taught through traditional methods in Chandigarh schools. The comparative analysis showed that students in the CLIL group significantly outperformed their peers in the control group across all four language domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Specifically, the CLIL group achieved an average improvement of 18% in overall English proficiency scores, whereas the control group showed a lesser improvement of 7%. In speaking and listening skills, the CLIL group recorded a 22% increase, compared to just 8% in the control group, reflecting greater fluency and comprehension when using English in both academic and informal contexts. The CLIL group demonstrated a 15% improvement in reading comprehension, substantially higher than the 6% increase seen in the control group, suggesting enhanced abilities to understand and interpret written texts in English. In writing skills, the CLIL group showed a 14% increase, while the control group exhibited a 5% improvement, indicating that CLIL students were better at constructing coherent and contextually relevant written content in English. The findings from classroom observations further supported these results, revealing that 85% of students in CLIL classrooms were more actively engaged and participated more frequently in English language activities than the 60% observed in traditional classrooms. Moreover, teacher feedback highlighted that students in CLIL classrooms displayed better problem-solving skills and higher levels of critical thinking in English, with 70% of teachers noting substantial progress compared to 40% in the control group. These results suggest that the CLIL approach significantly enhances English language learning outcomes, providing a more effective and engaging method for language acquisition than traditional teaching practices in Chandigarh schools.

C. Challenges and Opportunities of Implementing CLIL in Chandigarh's Diverse Educational Context

The study identified several challenges and opportunities associated with implementing the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in Chandigarh's diverse educational context, particularly concerning teacher preparedness and resource availability. **Challenges** included a lack of adequate teacher training and professional development opportunities specific to CLIL methodologies. Many teachers reported limited familiarity with integrating content and language learning effectively, with only 30% feeling confident in using CLIL techniques in their classrooms. This lack of preparedness was further compounded by insufficient access to CLIL-specific teaching resources and materials. Only 40% of the surveyed schools had access to bilingual or multilingual content, and just 25% had interactive and engaging materials tailored to the CLIL approach, creating significant barriers to successful implementation. Despite these challenges, the study also highlighted several **opportunities** for implementing CLIL in Chandigarh. Teachers who received targeted CLIL training demonstrated marked improvement in their confidence and ability to deliver content effectively in English, with 70% of trained teachers reporting positive changes in their teaching practices and student engagement. Additionally, the multicultural and multilingual environment of Chandigarh presents a unique opportunity to leverage CLIL's potential to promote both language learning and content mastery. Many educators and administrators expressed enthusiasm for CLIL, noting that it aligns well with contemporary educational goals, such as fostering critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and bilingual competence. There was also a recognition of the opportunity to collaborate with local and international educational organizations to develop CLIL-focused curricula, resources, and teacher training programs. Overall, while challenges like teacher preparedness and resource limitations exist, there is substantial support and potential for adopting CLIL in Chandigarh's educational landscape, given the benefits observed and the growing interest in innovative pedagogical approaches.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach significantly enhances English language proficiency among middle school students in Chandigarh, surpassing the outcomes achieved through traditional teaching methods. The findings revealed notable improvements in students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, highlighting CLIL's effectiveness in fostering both language development and content mastery. The study also identified key challenges, such as inadequate teacher preparedness and limited access to CLIL-specific resources, which must be addressed to maximize the benefits of this approach. However, the enthusiasm among educators and the positive impact of targeted training programs suggest that these challenges can be overcome, presenting substantial opportunities for CLIL's broader implementation in Chandigarh's diverse educational landscape. Overall, the study underscores the potential of CLIL to transform language education by providing a more integrated, engaging, and contextually relevant learning experience. As Chandigarh continues to evolve as a multilingual educational hub, adopting CLIL could play a pivotal role in preparing students for academic success and global citizenship. Future research should focus on developing strategies for resource allocation, teacher training, and curriculum design to facilitate the effective implementation of CLIL across different educational settings.

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