Bridging Local Identity and English Proficiency through CLIL: A Proposal for Implementation

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as an approach for improving English language proficiency among high school students in Bener Meriah, Aceh, Indonesia. Leveraging the local identity and reputation of Bener Meriah as a leading coffee producer region, this study proposed a coffee-themed curriculum to be integrated in English learning with culturally relevant content. A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted in accordance with PRISMA guidelines to explore the implementation of CLIL in high school EFL contexts. Using Google Scholar, an initial *boolean* search identified 87 articles published between 2020 and 2024. Through inclusion and exclusion criteria, 12 relevant studies were selected for final analysis. The findings reveal that (i) CLIL promotes language acquisition, contextual learning, and student motivation. However, (ii) challenges such as resource constraints, teacher training needs, and implementation costs must be addressed. Based on these findings, this article offers recommendations for CLIL integration and highlights its implications for education and economic development in EFL contexts, particularly Bener Meriah, where coffee farming is a primary source of livelihood.

Keywords: CLIL; Coffee Industry; English; High School; Local Content

INTRODUCTION

Bener Meriah, Aceh, Indonesia, is globally recognized for its high-quality coffee, ranked among the top 10 worldwide (Taste Atlas, 2024). Situated at an altitude of over 1,200 meters above sea level, the region possesses an ideal climate for coffee plantation. According to Statistics Indonesia (2018), 80% of the region's land is dedicated to coffee plantation. With approximately 100,000 hectares of coffee plantations (Hikmah, Hamzah & Nasir, 2014), it is not surprising that most of the population is engaged in coffee farming or involved in the coffee industry. Moreover, coffee has become deeply attached in the local culture and daily life, as

reflected in the community's routines. Many people in this region, including politicians and government officials, often spend their weekend leisurely working on or visiting coffee farms, viewing it as both a pastime and a source of pride.

The traditions of coffee farming have been passed down through generations. As children of coffee farmers, most senior high school students in Bener Meriah have a strong understanding of coffee cultivation and trade, gained through first-hand experience by assisting their parents in the fields or in business activities. They are also well aware that coffee plays a central role in their family's livelihood (The Jakarta Post, 2017). As coffee is recognized as a global commodity, it draws buyers from various regions to Bener Meriah. Consequently, English, as a lingua franca, becomes essential for facilitating communication among speakers of different native languages.

Despite the economic significance of coffee, the local high school students lack the English proficiency needed to engage with international markets. In fact, students in Bener Meriah learn general English instead of English for specific purpose which can connect students with its unique socio-economic context, in this case, English related to coffee industry or business. This then limits opportunities for students to contribute effectively to the global coffee trade. The gap between the high school students' English proficiency and the region's language demand for a more prospective global business encourage the researchers to propose a strategic approach for local authorities. This study proposes recommendation for CLIL integration in high school curriculum and highlights its potential to enhance both educational outcomes and economic growth in EFL contexts, particularly Bener Meriah, where coffee farming is a primary source of livelihood.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) offers a promising approach to bridge the aforementioned gap by combining English language instruction with subject-specific content. By integrating coffee-themed content into the English curriculum, CLIL can create a meaningful learning experience that aligns with the goal of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which encourages contextualized and interest-driven education (Inayati, 2022). This study explores the potential of implementing a CLIL-based coffee-themed curriculum for high school students in Bener Meriah. Therefore, it is expected to help bridge the gap between the local identity and students' current limited English proficiency.

CLIL integrates subject content, in this case coffee-related content, and language learning. CLIL emphasizes four key principles: content, communication, cognition, and culture (Coyle et al., 2010). Previous studies related to the implementation of CLIL in several EFL contexts demonstrate significant improvements in students' vocabulary acquisition, subject knowledge, and learner motivation. For instance, a study examines Kazakh teachers' views on using CLIL in a language program. While challenges include low teacher language proficiency and lack of materials,

teachers see CLIL as beneficial for boosting student interest, improving language comprehension, and aligning with national education standards (Huertas-Abril & Shashken, 2021). As a result, most teachers view CLIL as a promising yet overlooked approach for language education in Kazakhstan.

In another EFL context, a mixed-method study with secondary school students in Thailand as participants revealed that students exhibited significant improvement in science vocabulary and positive attitudes towards English learning (Kruawong & Phoocharoensil, 2024). Furthermore, Beaudin (2021) carried out a study to evaluate CLIL program in Taiwan. The findings revealed that the students made notable progress in both science and language learning, as reflected in their higher posttest scores compared to their pre-test. Students also showed positive perceptions of the CLIL implementation by having high participation, improved English skills through content-based learning, and increased motivation to continue engaging with the CLIL program. Such findings suggest that integrating CLIL can effectively enhance both language learning and students' attitudes.

Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka encourages the integration of local content to make learning more engaging and relevant. Previous studies have shown that embedding industry-related content, such as business and marketing, enhances Indonesian vocational high school students' English skills and workplace readiness (Rosyida & Effendy, 2022). Besides, a quasi-experimental study examining the impact of the CLIL on Chinese college students' motivation in learning Business English writing showed that the experimental group had significantly higher motivation across the ARCS model (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) compared to the control group (Rong & Nair, 2021). This suggests that CLIL effectively enhances motivation and supports improved students Business English writing.

Despite the advantages of CLIL implementation, there is a noticeable lack of research exploring its application in context-specific subjects, particularly in relation to the coffee industry, which is a key economic sector in Bener Meriah. Building on this gap, the integration of CLIL into the local content curriculum at Bener Meriah's high schools presents a novel and contextually relevant approach to simultaneously improve students' English proficiency and equip them with industry-relevant knowledge. By proposing the implementation of CLIL into high school curriculum, this study will not only address the gap between English language education and local economic prospects but also serves as a strategic effort to align educational outcomes with real-world demands and students' future career opportunities.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design, which involves a structured and rigorous approach to identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant studies to answer specific research questions (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The sample for this review consisted of 12 selected journal articles that met the predetermined inclusion criteria. These articles were published from 2020 onward, written in English, available in full text, and indexed in Scopus or the Science and Technology Index (SINTA). All selected studies focused specifically on the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in improving English language proficiency within EFL high school contexts. The research was guided by two key questions: (1) How does the implementation of CLIL enhance English language proficiency among high school students in EFL contexts? and (2) What challenges are encountered in implementing CLIL to improve English proficiency in EFL contexts?

Instrument and Procedures

The main instrument used in conducting this SLR was a review protocol, which provided a standardized and replicable framework for the selection and analysis of studies. This protocol clearly defined the inclusion criteria, such as the publication year (2020 onwards), language (English), database indexing (Scopus or SINTA), and thematic relevance to CLIL and English proficiency in EFL contexts. It also outlined exclusion criteria, which filtered out studies that were published before 2020, not available in full text, or not specifically addressing the topic of CLIL in the context of English language learning. A Boolean search strategy was used with keyword combinations like ("CLIL" OR "Content and Language Integrated Learning") AND "English curriculum" OR "Local Content Subject" AND "high school" AND "Indonesia OR EFL Contexts" to optimize search results and ensure coverage of relevant literature.

The procedures of the SLR followed six systematic steps as suggested by Bettany-Saltikov and McSherry (2024). First, the research questions were formulated to clearly define the scope of the review and guide the identification of relevant literature. Second, a review protocol was developed to ensure the study followed a consistent and replicable process, incorporating inclusion and exclusion criteria for article selection. Third, a systematic literature search was conducted using Google Scholar, applying Boolean operators to search terms to retrieve a total of 87 articles. Fourth, a screening and assessment process was carried out by reviewing the titles, abstracts, and keywords of each article to determine their relevance. Based on this process, 12 articles were selected for final analysis. This step is visually summarized using a PRISMA flow diagram (Page et al., 2021), illustrating the stages of identification, screening, exclusion, and inclusion. Fifth, the selected studies were synthesized and analyzed to extract findings relevant to the research questions. Lastly, the results were reported and discussed, providing insights into the role of CLIL in enhancing English proficiency in EFL contexts and identifying common challenges faced in its implementation.
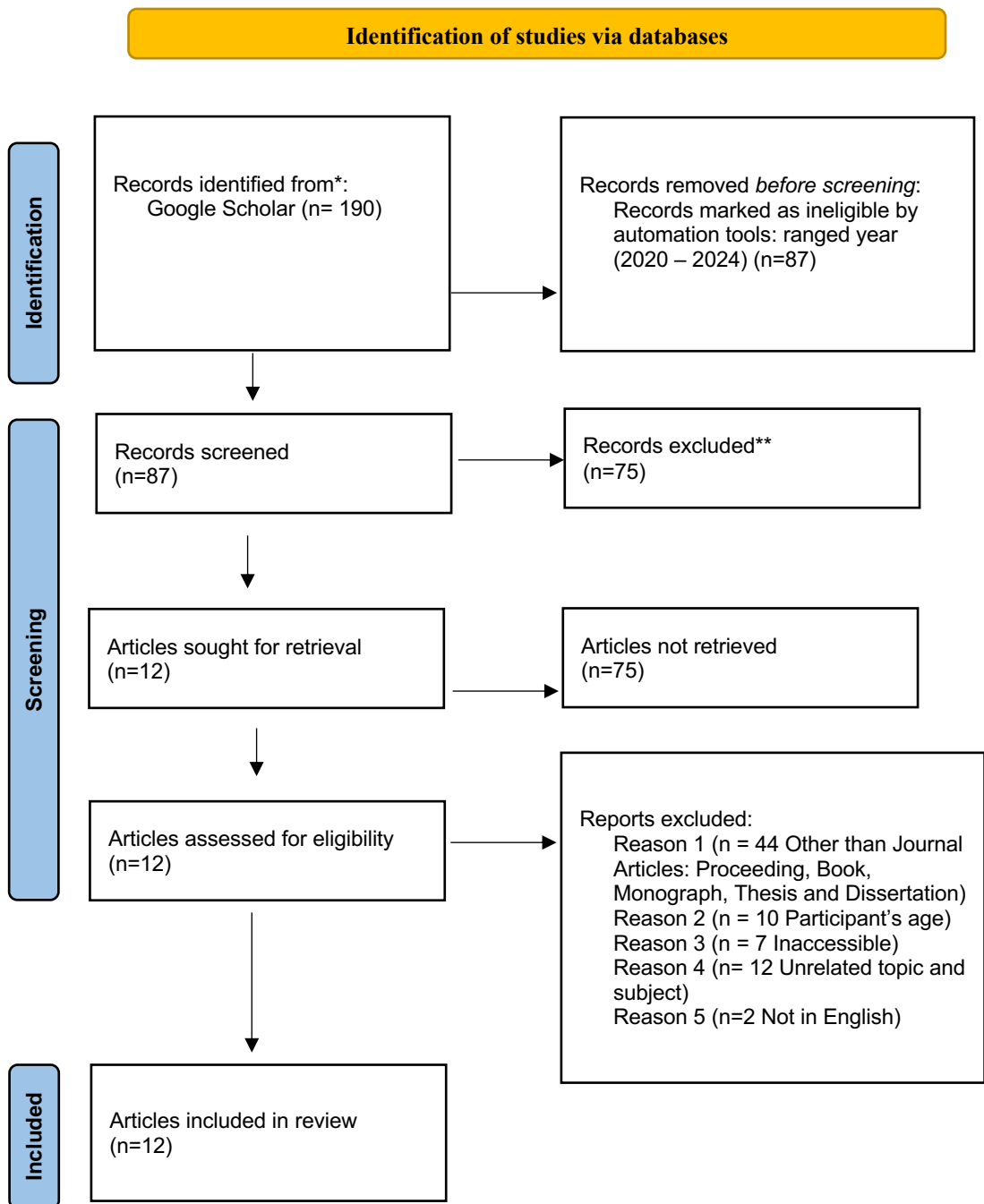
Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram for systematic reviews
(Adapted from Page et al., 2021)

Data Analysis

The data analysis aims to systematically organize the findings from the chosen articles by categorizing them according to journal name in which they were published and research questions. The results are summarized in figure 2 below:

Table 1. The Results of the Extraction from the Selected Articles

No	Journal Name	RQ
1	Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning (JETLE)	RQ 1
2	Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists	RQ 1
3	rEFLections	RQ 1
4	Universal Journal of Educational Research	RQ 1
5	International Journal of Curriculum & Technological Education	RQ 1
6	Korea TESOL Journal	RQ 1
7	ELIA: Studies in Applied English Linguistics	RQ 2
8	Mathematics 2023	RQ 2
9	English Education Research	RQ 2
10	Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif	RQ 2
11	MEXTESOL Journal	RQ 2
12	Jurnal MediaTIK: Jurnal Media Pendidikan Teknik Informatika dan Komputer	RQ 2

Based on the data extraction and analysis presented in figure 2, it can be concluded that the selected articles are highly relevant to the research questions (RQs). Specifically, 6 articles respond to RQ1 while other 6 articles address RQ2. All studies were retrieved from the Google Scholar database. Collectively, the findings from these articles provide valuable insights that substantially contribute to addressing the research questions.

RESULT AND DISUSSION

This section covers the research findings based on the research questions of the study. The selected articles have been systematically analyzed and grouped to deliver proper responses to each research question.

The benefits of CLIL implementation in EFL Contexts (RQ 1)

Six articles were relevant to addressing Research Question 1 (RQ1), which answers the question "How does the implementation of CLIL enhance English language proficiency among high school students in EFL Contexts?" by investigating the benefits of CLIL implementation.

Table 2. Summary of Findings for RQ1: The benefits of CLIL implementation in EFL Contexts.

No	Authors and Publication Year	Findings on the benefits of CLIL implementation in EFL Contexts
1	Rosyida & Effendy (2022)	CLIL enhances vocational students' motivation, improved language and content learning, and better preparation for future careers through relevant and real-world teaching materials.
2	Heliawati, Rubini & Firmayanto (2020)	The study finds that CLIL in enhancing students' scientific literacy and engagement. It does not only support content understanding but also increase motivation and participation through relevant, integrated learning.
3	Kruawong & Phoocharoensil (2023)	This mixed-methods study revealed that CLIL significantly improved Thai high school students' science vocabulary and content knowledge. They also responded positively to the approach.
4	Aladini & Jalambo (2020)	This experimental study found that CLIL significantly enhanced ninth-grade students' English fluency, accuracy, and confidence in Gaza, Palestine, while also increasing engagement, motivation, and content understanding.
5	Sheir & Yacoub (2024)	This study found that a CLIL-based EFL module significantly improved first-year secondary students' reading and writing skills.
6	Savage (2021)	This study found that Korean secondary students viewed CLIL as effective for both content and language learning, with significant differences across subjects. English literature was perceived as the most effective, followed by social studies, science, and mathematics.

Based on the findings above, the implementation of CLIL has demonstrated significant benefits on enhancing English proficiency among high school students in EFL contexts. Rosyida and Effendy (2022) found that CLIL increased vocational high school students' motivation and improved both language and content mastery through the integration of real-life needs and career-relevant materials. Similarly, Aladini and Jalambo (2020) revealed that CLIL improved students' English fluency, accuracy, and confidence, while also boosting students' engagement. Sheir and Yacoub (2024) further confirmed that a CLIL-based EFL module improved students' reading and writing skills, implying its capacity to strengthen multiple language skills simultaneously. Furthermore, Kruawong and Phoocharoensil (2023) reported that CLIL enhanced students' science vocabulary and conceptual understanding, with students responding positively to the approach. Savage (2021) highlighted that Korean secondary students perceived CLIL as highly effective for both language and content acquisition, especially in English literature and social studies. From these findings, it can be seen clearly that not only CLIL foster English proficiency but also supports subject learning, learner motivation, and active

engagement. Given these benefits, the researchers propose the adoption of CLIL as a pedagogically and contextually appropriate approach for improving English instruction in Bener Meriah.

Challenges associated with implementing CLIL in EFL contexts (RQ 2)

Six articles addressed Research Question 2 (RQ2), which investigates challenges encountered in implementing CLIL to improve English proficiency in EFL contexts.

Table 3. Summary of Findings for RQ2: Challenges associated with implementing CLIL in EFL contexts

No	Authors and Publication Year	Findings on the challenges associated with implementing CLIL in EFL contexts
1	Campos (2023)	Several key challenges in the implementation of CLIL in Madrid were students' motivation, the need for more institutional support, and external pressures.
2	Ruiz-Cecilia, Sanchez & Garcia (2023)	The study found limited language proficiency among students and teachers, low language awareness in content teachers, and the use of linguistically complex materials as the challenges in the implementation of CLIL with a focus on math.
3	Lee (2021)	This study outlined several challenges in implementing CLIL in Japanese secondary schools; 1) a rigid curriculum; 2) students' low English proficiency; 3) teachers lack of training; 4) limited access to sample lessons and resources; 5) insufficient time for planning; and 6) the absence of institutional support.
4	Khoiriyah (2021)	The study highlighted several challenges in CLIL implementation: 1) teacher qualification; 2) effective lessons, assessment, and balance content-language goals; and 3) sustaining students' interest.
5	Setyaningrum & Khoiriyah (2022)	The study emphasized the need for better cooperation between content and language teachers to improve CLIL materials and highlighted for the importance of teacher development training to enhance their CLIL teaching skills.
6	Affandi & Nurfadhilah (2023)	Implementing CLIL in Indonesian senior high schools faces several challenges: 1) need for government support through policy; 2) adequate teacher training; and 3) institutional readiness.

From the findings, the implementation of CLIL in EFL contexts presents numerous challenges. A major concern is students and teachers limited English proficiency affecting the effectiveness of instruction (Ruiz-Cecilia, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2023; Lee, 2021). For example, in subjects like mathematics, content teachers ffind it difficult to deliver the subject in English since it involves linguistically complex materials (Ruiz-Cecilia, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2023). Thus, teachers' qualification emerges as a significant barrier, as many of them lack the necessary training to effectively integrate content and language goals (Khoiriyah, 2021; Lee, 2021). Furthermore, institutional constraints further complicate CLIL implementation, such as rigid curricula, limited access to model lessons and resources, and the lack of institutional and policy support (Campos, 2023; Lee, 2021; Affandi & Nurfadhilah, 2023). To address these issues, studies highlight the importance of stronger collaboration between content and language teachers to enhance materials and instruction (Setyaningrum & Khoiriyah, 2022), the need for teacher development trainings (Setyaningrum & Khoiriyah, 2022; Affandi & Nurfadhilah, 2023), as well as the need for comprehensive support through policy and institutional readiness to successfully implement CLIL in EFL contexts. Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of CLIL remain promising, especially for students in Bener Meriah, offering an innovative approach to strengthen both content mastery and English language skills to equip students with the skills needed for their real-life communication to promote Bener Meriah's coffee to the world.

The findings highlight both the benefits and challenges of implementing CLIL in EFL contexts, with a particular focus on its potential implementation in Bener Meriah, Aceh, Indonesia. The six selected studies clearly demonstrate that CLIL contributes positively and highly to both students' English skills and subject mastery. It enhances their motivation (Rosyida & Effendy, 2022), fosters scientific vocabulary and engagement (Heliawati, Rubini, & Firmayanto, 2020), and improves various language skills such as vocabulary, reading, and writing (Kruawong & Phoocharoensil, 2023; Sheir & Yacoub, 2024). Besides, CLIL was found to increase fluency, accuracy, and learners' confidence in speaking English, as shown in studies conducted in Palestine and Korea (Aladini & Jalambo, 2020; Savage, 2021). These findings are in line with a previous quantitative study conducted in China (Rong & Nair, 2021). The study found that students taught using CLIL approach demonstrated higher motivation as well as improving their Business English writing skills. These suggest that CLIL not only supports students' language skills and content knowledge but also enhances student motivation and participation in learning. Given these benefits, CLIL seems to be a contextually appropriate approach to improve English language instruction in Bener Meriah, where students would benefit from a more integrated, practical, and motivating approach to develop their English skill more comprehensively.

However, CLIL implementation is not without challenges. A major issue is limited English proficiency among both students and teachers (Ruiz-Cecilia, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2023; Lee, 2021). This happens because many content teachers are not well-trained to balance content delivery with language instruction (Khoiriyah, 2021; Lee,

2021). Moreover, institutional challenges such as rigid curricula, insufficient CLIL materials, and lack of support from authorities further complicate the problem (Campos, 2023; Affandi & Nurfadhilah, 2023). In line with this, a previous study by Huertas, Abril, and Shashken (2020) emphasize the need for supports such as policy initiatives, professional development programs, and collaborative teaching models before CLIL is implemented. Moreover, institutional readiness and teacher training must be prioritized to ensure the sustainable implementation of CLIL in schools.

While CLIL holds great potential for enhancing English instruction in Bener Meriah, its effectiveness depends on careful planning. If implemented with proper teacher development program, resources, and institutional supports, CLIL can serve as an innovative pedagogical approach that not only strengthens students' English skills but also deepens their understanding of coffee-related topic. This is contextually relevant in Bener Meriah, where English is needed to promote the region's coffee to global markets. In this way, CLIL can play a transformative role in equipping students with the real-world communication skills needed for the advancement of both academic and socio-economic.

CONCLUSION

CLIL offers significant benefits for enhancing both students' English proficiency and coffee-related knowledge in Bener Meriah and other similar EFL contexts. Despite challenges, with sufficient teacher training and institutional support, it can effectively equip students with real-world communication skills needed. Therefore, the implementation of CLIL in English classroom instruction in Bener Meriah high schools is strongly recommended to support both educational improvement and socio-economic growth.

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