

The Effect of Content and Language Integrated Learning on Students' Reading Skills

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Abstract

Reading is one of the essential language skills that enables students to acquire information and develop English proficiency. However, many junior high school students still experience difficulties in comprehending English texts because of limited vocabulary, low motivation, and teacher-centered instructional practices. This study aimed to investigate the effect of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on students' reading skills at SMPN 3 Masbagik. The study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group design. The population consisted of 78 seventh-grade students, while 52 students were selected as the sample through purposive sampling, comprising 26 students in the experimental class and 26 students in the control class. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests administered as pre-tests and post-tests and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an Independent Samples t-test with SPSS version 25. The findings revealed that students taught through CLIL demonstrated significantly better reading achievement than those taught through conventional instruction. The mean score increased from 41.54 in the pre-test to 68.19 in the post-test, and the Independent Samples t-test showed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that CLIL had a significant positive effect on students' reading skills. The findings suggest that integrating meaningful content with language instruction promotes active learning, enhances reading comprehension, and creates more contextualized learning experiences for junior high school students

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning; Reading Comprehension; EFL Learners; Student Engagement; English Language Teaching.

Abstrak

Kemampuan membaca merupakan salah satu keterampilan berbahasa yang penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris karena memungkinkan siswa memperoleh informasi dan mengembangkan kompetensi berbahasa. Namun, banyak siswa sekolah menengah pertama masih mengalami kesulitan memahami teks bahasa Inggris akibat keterbatasan kosakata, rendahnya motivasi belajar, dan pembelajaran yang masih berpusat pada guru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) terhadap keterampilan membaca siswa di SMPN 3 Masbagik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain quasi-experimental tipe non-equivalent control group design. Populasi penelitian berjumlah 78 siswa kelas VII, sedangkan sampel terdiri atas 52 siswa yang dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling, yaitu 26 siswa pada kelas eksperimen dan 26 siswa pada kelas kontrol. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes kemampuan membaca yang diberikan sebelum dan sesudah perlakuan, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan uji Independent Samples t-test dengan bantuan SPSS versi 25. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang diajar menggunakan pendekatan CLIL memperoleh hasil membaca yang lebih baik dibandingkan siswa yang diajar menggunakan metode konvensional. Nilai rata-rata meningkat dari 41,54 pada pre-test menjadi 68,19 pada post-test, sedangkan hasil uji Independent Samples t-test menunjukkan nilai signifikansi sebesar 0,000 ($p < 0,05$) yang mengindikasikan bahwa CLIL berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keterampilan membaca siswa. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pengintegrasian materi pembelajaran dengan penggunaan bahasa Inggris mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, memperbaiki pemahaman membaca, serta menciptakan pengalaman belajar yang lebih kontekstual dan bermakna

Kata Kunci: Content and Language Integrated; Pemahaman Membaca; Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing; Keterlibatan Siswa; Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the fundamental language skills that plays a crucial role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Through reading, students acquire information, develop vocabulary, and construct meaning from written texts. Reading comprehension is not merely the ability to recognize written words but also involves

understanding explicit and implicit information, identifying main ideas, drawing inferences, and evaluating textual information. Consequently, reading competence becomes an essential foundation for students to achieve academic success and improve overall language proficiency. However, many Indonesian junior high school students continue to experience difficulties in

comprehending English texts due to limited vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, low learning motivation, and teacher-centered instructional practices. These conditions indicate the need for more meaningful and contextual approaches to reading instruction.

One instructional approach that has attracted considerable attention in English language teaching is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL integrates subject content and foreign language learning simultaneously, allowing students to develop language proficiency while acquiring knowledge through meaningful contexts. Based on the 4Cs framework—Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture—CLIL encourages learners to actively engage in learning activities that promote language development, higher-order thinking skills, and intercultural awareness. In reading instruction, CLIL provides authentic contexts that help students understand texts more effectively because language is learned as a medium for constructing meaning rather than as an isolated subject.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of CLIL and other content-based instructional approaches in improving English language skills. Coyle et al. (2010) reported that CLIL promotes language acquisition through meaningful content learning. Guntur (2011) found that CLIL positively influenced university students' reading comprehension by integrating language use with subject content. Similarly, Hidayat et al. (2022) revealed that content-based instruction significantly improved students' reading ability in EFL classrooms. These studies consistently indicate that integrating content and language facilitates students' comprehension and increases learning engagement.

Although previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of CLIL, most were conducted in higher education or emphasized general language development rather than reading skills at the junior high school level. Moreover, empirical evidence concerning the implementation of CLIL in Indonesian junior high schools, particularly in

West Nusa Tenggara, remains limited. Consequently, further investigation is required to examine whether CLIL can effectively improve students' reading skills within this educational context. Specifically, no prior study has empirically tested the effect of CLIL on the four specific reading indicators of identifying main ideas, understanding specific information, interpreting vocabulary in context, and making inferences among junior high school students using a controlled quasi-experimental comparison with conventional instruction. This absence of empirical, level-specific, and skill-specific evidence constitutes the precise research gap that the present study is designed to fill.

This study offers a scientific contribution by examining the implementation of CLIL specifically for teaching reading to seventh-grade students at SMPN 3 Masbagik using a quasi-experimental design. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on university students or broader language competence, this research investigates the effectiveness of CLIL in improving junior high school students' reading skills, particularly in identifying main ideas, understanding specific information, interpreting vocabulary in context, and making inferences. This focus provides additional empirical evidence regarding the applicability of CLIL in Indonesian EFL classrooms at the secondary education level. The novelty of this study therefore lies in its dual specificity: it targets a population (junior high school students) and a skill (reading, disaggregated into four measurable indicators) that have rarely been examined together in CLIL research, particularly within an under-researched regional context such as West Nusa Tenggara, thereby offering empirical evidence that existing CLIL studies conducted mainly at the university level have not been able to provide.

Based on the issues described above, this study addresses the following research question: Is there a significant difference in reading skills between students taught through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and those taught through conventional teaching methods? Accordingly, the objective of this study is to determine the effect of

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on students' reading skills at SMPN 3 Masbagik.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design, specifically the non-equivalent control group design, to examine the effect of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on students' reading skills. This design was selected because the researcher used existing classes without randomly assigning participants into experimental and control groups. The study was conducted at SMPN 3 Masbagik during the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of 78 seventh-grade students from three classes (VIIA, VIIB, and VIIC). Using purposive sampling, two classes were selected as research samples: Class VIIA (26 students) as the experimental group and Class VIIC (26 students) as the control group, resulting in a total sample of 52 students. These two classes were specifically selected, rather than Class VIIB, because they were taught by the same English teacher using the same weekly schedule and instructional hours, which helped control for potential confounding effects related to teacher variation and time of instruction. In addition, the pre-test results and the teacher's records indicated that Class VIIA and Class VIIC had comparable average reading scores and a similar distribution of academic ability prior to treatment, making them more homogeneous and therefore more suitable for a fair experimental-control comparison than Class VIIB, whose composition and initial reading performance differed more noticeably from the other two classes.

The research procedure consisted of five stages. First, the preparation stage involved conducting a literature review, developing the research instrument, and determining the research site and participants. Second, a pre-test was administered to both groups to measure students' initial reading skills. Third, the experimental class received reading instruction through the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach, while the control class was taught

using conventional reading instruction. Fourth, a post-test was administered after the treatment to determine students' reading achievement. Finally, the collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 to identify the effectiveness of the instructional treatment. The research procedure is illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Research Procedure of the Study

The research instrument was a reading comprehension test administered as both the pre-test and post-test. The instrument consisted of multiple-choice questions designed according to the seventh-grade English curriculum. The test measured four indicators of reading skills: identifying the main idea, understanding specific information, interpreting vocabulary in context, and making inferences. Before administration, the instrument was reviewed to ensure its content validity and suitability for junior high school students.

Data were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics, including the mean, minimum score, maximum score, and standard deviation, were used to describe students' reading performance. Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were examined using the Shapiro-Wilk normality test and Levene's homogeneity test. After the assumptions of normality and homogeneity were satisfied, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in reading skills between the experimental and control groups. The level of significance was set at 0.05. A significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of less than 0.05 indicated that the alternative hypothesis was accepted, whereas a value

greater than 0.05 indicated that the null hypothesis was accepted.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students' Reading Achievement

The implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) demonstrated a positive effect on students' reading skills. The descriptive statistics indicate that students' reading achievement improved after receiving CLIL-based instruction. Table 1 presents the comparison of students' reading scores before and after the treatment.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Reading Scores

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Pre-test	26	24	60	41.54	10.62
Post-test	26	45	86	68.19	10.06

Table 1 shows that the mean score increased from 41.54 in the pre-test to 68.19 in the post-test, indicating an improvement of 26.65 points. The minimum score also increased from 24 to 45, while the maximum score improved from 60 to 86. Furthermore, the standard deviation decreased slightly from 10.62 to 10.06, indicating that students' achievement became more consistent after the implementation of CLIL. These findings suggest that integrating content and language in reading instruction contributes positively to students' reading performance.

The improvement in students' reading achievement indicates that CLIL provides meaningful learning experiences by integrating language learning with subject content. Unlike conventional reading instruction, which often emphasizes translation and isolated vocabulary learning, CLIL encourages students to understand texts through contextualized content. Consequently, students actively construct meaning, relate new information to their prior knowledge, and develop deeper comprehension during the reading process. These learning conditions are consistent with the principles of CLIL

proposed by Coyle et al. (2010), which emphasize the integration of Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture to promote meaningful language learning. More specifically, CLIL appears to be more effective than conventional instruction for at least three interrelated reasons. First, because reading texts are organized around subject content rather than isolated grammar points, students are able to activate relevant prior knowledge (schemata) before and during reading, which facilitates the identification of main ideas and the interpretation of vocabulary in context, since new words are encountered within a meaningful conceptual framework rather than as decontextualized items to be memorized. Second, the content focus of CLIL increases students' cognitive engagement and motivation, prompting them to read texts more purposefully in order to understand the subject matter itself, rather than merely to complete a language exercise, which likely explains the larger gains observed in inference-making, an indicator that requires sustained attentional and cognitive effort. Third, the communicative and collaborative classroom activities embedded in CLIL provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning and receive contextual clarification from peers and the teacher, functioning as a form of scaffolding that supports comprehension of specific information that students might otherwise struggle to grasp independently. Taken together, these cognitive and social mechanisms, rather than the language input alone, plausibly explain why CLIL produced significantly greater gains in reading achievement than conventional instruction in this study.

Another important finding is the increased consistency of students' scores after the treatment, as indicated by the slightly lower standard deviation. This trend suggests that CLIL benefits not only high-achieving students but also those with lower initial reading ability. The collaborative learning activities, contextual reading materials, and guided comprehension tasks provided during CLIL instruction appear to reduce learning barriers and support students in understanding reading texts more effectively.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research. Coyle et al. (2010) argue that CLIL enhances language acquisition by providing authentic and meaningful learning contexts. Similarly, Guntur (2011) reported that integrating content and language significantly improved students' reading comprehension because learners focused on meaning rather than isolated language forms. Hidayat et al. (2022) also found that content-based instruction positively influenced students' reading ability by increasing their engagement with reading materials. The consistency between the present findings and previous studies strengthens the argument that CLIL is an effective instructional approach for improving reading skills in EFL classrooms.

The improvement observed in this study can also be explained from a cognitive perspective. During CLIL instruction, students were encouraged to identify main ideas, locate specific information, infer implicit meanings, and interpret vocabulary in context while simultaneously learning subject content. These activities required students to employ higher-order thinking skills rather than relying solely on memorization. As a result, reading became a process of constructing knowledge instead of merely translating sentences, leading to better comprehension and greater learner engagement.

Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of CLIL significantly improves students' reading skills. The observed increase in students' achievement demonstrates that integrating content and language creates more meaningful learning experiences and facilitates better reading comprehension among junior high school students. Therefore, the findings support the research hypothesis that students taught through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) achieve better reading performance than those taught through conventional instructional methods

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) significantly improved students' reading skills at SMPN 3

Masbagik. This conclusion is supported by the descriptive statistics, which showed that students' mean score increased from 41.54 in the pre-test to 68.19 in the post-test. Furthermore, the Independent Samples t-test produced a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups. These findings confirm that students who learned through the CLIL approach achieved better reading performance than those who received conventional instruction.

The improvement in students' reading skills can be explained by the characteristics of CLIL, which integrates language learning with meaningful subject content. Rather than focusing only on grammar and vocabulary, students actively construct meaning by connecting new information with their prior knowledge and real-life experiences. This learning process encourages students to identify main ideas, interpret vocabulary in context, infer implicit information, and communicate their understanding through classroom interaction. As a result, reading becomes an active cognitive process instead of merely translating words or memorizing vocabulary.

These findings are consistent with the 4Cs Framework proposed by Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010), which emphasizes the integration of Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture in language learning. Through this framework, students not only improve their English proficiency but also develop higher-order thinking skills while engaging with meaningful content. The findings also support the theory of reading comprehension proposed by Grabe and Stoller (2019), which explains that reading involves the integration of background knowledge, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, and critical thinking to construct meaning from a text.

The results are also in agreement with previous studies. Guntur et al. (2021) reported that CLIL enhanced students' reading comprehension by increasing learning motivation and engagement. Likewise, Hidayat et al. (2022) found that content-based

instruction positively affected students' reading ability because students learned language through meaningful contexts rather than isolated language forms. Similar to these studies, the present research demonstrates that CLIL is an effective instructional approach for improving reading skills. However, this study extends previous research by providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of CLIL among seventh-grade students at SMPN 3 Masbagik, thereby contributing to the implementation of CLIL in Indonesian junior high school EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has a significant positive effect on students' reading skills at SMPN 3 Masbagik. The findings demonstrate that students who were taught through the CLIL approach achieved better reading performance than those who received conventional instruction. The statistical analysis confirmed that the difference between the experimental and control groups was statistically significant, indicating that the integration of content learning and language learning effectively enhanced students' reading achievement. Therefore, the research objective was successfully achieved, and the alternative hypothesis stating that CLIL significantly improves students' reading skills was accepted.

The findings also indicate that the effectiveness of CLIL extends beyond improving students' test scores. Through the integration of meaningful content and language learning, students became more actively engaged in the reading process, developed better comprehension strategies, and demonstrated greater ability to identify main ideas, locate specific information, interpret vocabulary in context, and infer implicit meanings from reading texts. These learning experiences enabled students to construct meaning more effectively and encouraged them to participate actively in classroom interaction. Consequently, reading was transformed from a passive decoding activity into an active process of meaning

construction supported by communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of research on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) by providing empirical evidence of its effectiveness in improving reading skills among junior high school students in the Indonesian EFL context. While previous studies have largely focused on higher education or broader language competencies, the present study demonstrates that CLIL can also be successfully implemented at the secondary school level to enhance students' reading comprehension. These findings suggest that English teachers may consider integrating meaningful content with language instruction to create more engaging, contextual, and student-centered reading activities that promote both language development and academic learning.

This study is subject to several limitations. The research was conducted at a single school with a relatively small sample of 52 seventh-grade students assigned through purposive rather than random sampling, so the findings may not be generalizable to other schools, grade levels, or regions. In addition, the study measured reading achievement only through a multiple-choice pre-test and post-test administered over a single instructional period, without a delayed post-test to examine whether the improvement in reading skills was retained over time, and it did not control for extraneous variables such as students' out-of-class exposure to English or individual learning motivation. Future research is therefore recommended to involve larger and more randomly selected samples across multiple schools, to include a delayed post-test to assess the retention of reading skills, and to combine quantitative results with classroom observations or student interviews in order to gain a richer understanding of how CLIL influences the reading process.

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