

English Language Teachers' Perceptions and Understanding of Content and Language Integrated Learning

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) focuses on content and language objectives in teaching and learning activities. The study has explored the English language teachers' perceptions of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in the context of English language classrooms conducted in urban secondary schools in Kaski, Nepal. The study utilizes the narrative inquiry research design, remaining under the interpretive paradigm of the research. Four English teachers from different schools participated in this exploration, providing valuable insights that followed a systematic process to collect and analyze data. In-depth interviews using open-ended questions allowed for a comprehensive exploration of their perceptions. The study uncovered a multifaceted picture of English language teachers' perceptions of implementing CLIL. Teachers expressed varying awareness of the CLIL approach, highlighting the importance of training and continuing support for professional development. Challenges identified include a lack of training, insufficient CLIL materials, and low English language proficiency among students, hindering effective CLIL instruction. The study suggests that strengthening teacher training, resource allocation, and classroom management strategies can create a more conducive learning environment, fostering the successful integration of the CLIL approach in English language classes. The findings suggest the active involvement of educational authorities in addressing these challenges and promoting the effective use of CLIL for improved language instruction and classroom engagement.

Keywords: *Hard CLIL, soft CLIL, English language teachers, narrative inquiry, teacher development, Nepal*

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Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an instructional method where students learn a subject or content through a foreign language. CLIL is about learning two things simultaneously: a language and the content. Coyle et al. (2010) noted that “Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (p. 1). So, language teachers using the CLIL approach have a significant and crucial task to know both the language and the content simultaneously. In a CLIL classroom, students use an additional language, like English, to learn about the subject content that may be directly unrelated to the language (Eslami & Geng, 2021). To understand how CLIL works, we must look at how different subjects use language differently, the kinds of writing used in those subjects, and how students interact in the classroom. Llinares (2015) highlighted that for successful CLIL, teachers and students need to understand the different ways that academic subjects use language and how to use language effectively to learn, evaluate information, and participate in classroom discussions.

CLIL focuses on the intricate fusion of content and language instruction, forming the core principle of its application (Llinares & Morton, 2017; Nikula et al., 2016; Ruiz de Zarobe & Jiménez Catalán, 2009). However, achieving a harmonious balance between these elements remains a persistent challenge, with educational programs often leaning more heavily toward content or language acquisition (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). This imbalance can affect both content and language teachers. Teaching programs may carelessly prioritize one aspect over the other, fostering a dichotomy rather than the intended integrated approach envisioned by CLIL (Met, 1998). Research emphasizes that within CLIL classes, content teachers often prioritize delivering subject matter, potentially neglecting language instruction (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Lo, 2019). Studies reveal that many teachers perceive themselves primarily as content instructors rather than language educators, emphasizing subject proficiency over language development (Tan, 2011; Hüttner et al., 2013). This perception is prevalent across diverse contexts, leading to a lack of explicit language elements and objectives in CLIL programs (Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016). Furthermore, teachers' insufficient understanding of the relationship between language and content might hinder realizing CLIL's fundamental objectives (Lazarević, 2019).

CLIL classrooms often prioritize active language use within the content context but may neglect explicit instruction. This is due to the division between content and language teachers, leading to inconsistent language integration approaches. Researchers support a balanced approach incorporating proactive and reactive language strategies within the subject matter (Lyster, 2007; Lo, 2019). The challenge lies in the tendency of content teachers to prioritize their subject matter over explicit language teaching, hindering language integration. To effectively implement CLIL, a balanced approach considering both language structures and content delivery is crucial (Barr et al., 2019; Lin, 2016). This emphasizes the importance of teaching both the subject and the language, not just focusing on content delivery.

CLIL has gained widespread acceptance in foreign language teaching contexts, with a primary focus on its pedagogical framework (Coyle, 1999). Numerous studies emphasize the interactive nature of CLIL, promoting meaningful communication among learners and facilitating the integration of values through shared understanding (e.g., Romanowski, 2018). This interactive environment encourages presenters to employ diverse strategies that assist

learners in overcoming communication hurdles (Mariotti, 2006, 2007; Foster & Ohta, 2005). These strategies often center on negotiating meaning within the L2 classroom (Foster & Ohta, 2005; Musumeci, 1996). Research on the negotiation of meaning and the interactive aspects of CLIL suggests that this approach offers learners more opportunities to discuss content and language simultaneously. This creates a more prosperous and favorable learning environment for L2 learners than in traditional ESL classroom settings (Lochtman, 2021). While research underscores the theoretical underpinnings and potential of CLIL as an interactive pedagogical tool, there is a scarcity of empirical research within the Nepali context to determine its effectiveness in equipping English teachers with strategies to create interactive learning environments for ESL learners.

CLIL models can be broadly categorized into "hard" and "soft" approaches, with the latter focusing primarily on language development. Effective CLIL classrooms require challenging content, clear explanations, and consistent language support (Mahan et al., 2018). However, successful implementation also necessitates teacher training, resources, and well-defined language learning goals (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). Soft CLIL encompasses various models, including Language Showers (Mehisto et al., 2008), which emphasize short, intensive language exposure, and Weak/Soft CLIL (Ball, 2009; Bentley, 2010), which balances language and content. Language-Led Soft CLIL (Bentley, 2010) specifically focuses on developing foreign language competence through content-based learning. While these models may have distinct characteristics, they can be combined depending on learners' needs and teachers' goals.

Soft CLIL offers several advantages, including improved student attitudes toward learning in English (Nakanishi & Nakanishi, 2016) and the development of both language and subject knowledge (Ball, 2009; Bentley, 2010). However, successful implementation requires teachers with solid language skills and effective teaching methods (Ikeda, 2021). Soft CLIL is gaining popularity in educational settings worldwide, particularly in regions where English is a foreign language (Aiba & Izumi, 2024). However, Soft CLIL is particularly prevalent in areas where English is a foreign language and differs significantly from native English-speaking cultures (Kachru, 2006). These regions are often referred to as the "outer circle" or "periphery" of English use, with their unique English varieties (Kirkpatrick, 2010). English is essential in countries like Nepal, but it is often taught as a separate subject with limited real-world use, and it can benefit significantly from Soft CLIL.

The new Nepali curriculum includes guidelines for integrating language and content, suggesting a growing awareness of CLIL principles (SEC, 2021). The English textbooks of Grades IX and X incorporate Soft CLIL activities to align with this curriculum. So, English language teachers' perceptions and understanding about how teachers used the CLIL approach or not, how they used the CLIL approach to teach the English language in the classroom to the learners, and what sorts of changes were moving from the traditional ways of teaching to the CLIL approach. The existing literature offers insights into CLIL's potential and challenges. Studies conducted in Spain by Campillo et al. (2019) and Czura & Anklewicz (2018) highlight the potential of CLIL to motivate students and develop language skills. However, they also reveal the challenges of maintaining the balance between content and language, such as the need for adequate resources and support.

In Nepal, the English language curriculum (2021) for grades IX and X introduces CLIL as a learning facilitation method. However, due to limited teachers' professional development support (Neupane, 2023; Neupane & Bhatt, 2023; Neupane & Joshi, 2022), many teachers are unaware of the CLIL approach. In Nepal, Many studies are conducted on teacher professional development and identity construction in general (Neupane, 2023, 2024;

Neupane et al., 2022; Neupane & Gnawali, 2023), a lack of empirical research exploring the experiences and perspectives regarding CLIL implementation is evident. This lack of information hinders the development of effective CLIL practices in the country. Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) presents a promising approach to address the challenges faced in English language teaching and learning in Nepal. While numerous studies have explored CLIL's benefits in foreign contexts, research within the Nepalese context remains limited. This research investigates the perceptions of secondary-level English teachers regarding CLIL implementation. By delving into teachers' perceptions, this study seeks to uncover the potential of CLIL in enhancing language proficiency, fostering motivation, and improving classroom dynamics. As Coyle (2006) highlights, CLIL offers opportunities for problem-solving, risk-taking, and communication skill development, which are vital for effective language learning. The following research question guides this study.

- What does Content and Language Integrated Learning mean to English language teachers regarding their understanding and interpretation in Nepal?

Theoretical Framework: Constructivism and Holism

Constructivism, with its roots in Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, has emerged as a transformative force in educational practices since the mid-1990s, impacting both classroom-level (micro) and broader educational system (macro) advancements (Jia, 2010). This learning theory emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing knowledge through independent exploration and social interaction, aligning with the philosophies of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky (Jia, 2010). In contrast to passive knowledge reception, constructivism speculates learning as an active process where individuals construct meaning through their experiences (Amineh & Davatgari, 2015). This philosophy underscores the importance of continuous adaptation and reconstruction of cognitive structures to accommodate the ever-changing demands of the environment (Amineh & Davatgari, 2015). This engagement has been intertwined with the principles of constructivist ideology. So, as a researcher, I implemented constructivism theory in this study. CLIL helps teachers and learners to learn language through content and learn content with the help of language where teachers' and learners' prior knowledge also plays an important role. So, I use constructivism as a learning theory in my research.

Holism is a prevalent concept in contemporary linguistics and challenges the notion of isolated definitions. As Descombes (2013) argued, holism proposes that the meaning of any word or phrase cannot be fully grasped in isolation but emerges from its dynamic relationship with the entire linguistic structure it inhabits. Central to this understanding is the concept of "constitutive relationships," as Lormand (1996) explored. Meaning holism asserts that certain specific semantic connections, often those based on inferential relationships between expressions, are not mere ornaments but rather essential building blocks of meaning. These connections are not simply adjuncts to pre-existing meanings; they are the foundation upon which those meanings are constructed. In other words, understanding a single word necessitates grasping its place within the broader area of the language, its threads woven through inferential pathways to other expressions (Becker, 1998). While the focus on inferential connections is prevalent, holists like Putnam (1975) acknowledge the flexibility of this concept. This theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of words in language.

Understanding a single word becomes a journey through this intricate network, where each word contributes to the overall tapestry of meaning. By embracing holism, CLIL excels in traditional boundaries and cultivates a learning environment where language and content become inseparable partners. CLIL teachers and students acquire linguistic skills and develop a deep understanding of content, critical thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge in real-

world contexts. CLIL, through its holistic approach, empowers teachers and learners to become confident communicators and engaged global citizens.

Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that investigates human experiences through storytelling, recognizing the value of lived experiences as a source of knowledge and understanding. Rooted in the idea that narratives offer valuable insights into culture, identity, and lived experiences (Clandinin & Caine, 2013), narrative inquiry involves collecting stories through open-ended questions and analyzing them to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals' perspectives. To elicit detailed thoughts and perceptions from participants during in-depth interviews, I employed the stimulated recall method (Gass & Mackey, 2016) in conjunction with narrative inquiry. This combined approach allowed a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives.

Participants

Participants	Dil	Prakash	Asim	Adhyayan
Brief Description	Born in urban, 17 years of teaching at public school, came to know about CLIL after the new English curriculum was launched in Nepal, no CLIL training experience from the authorities.	Born in rural area, 15 years of teaching at private school, came to know about CLIL from his friend. Self-paced learner, but no CLIL training experience from the authorities.	Born in rural area, 17 years of teaching at public school, came to hear the term CLIL from TPD training on CBI, learnt CLIL from his fellow, a self-paced learner, but no detailed CLIL training experience from the authorities.	Born in rural area, 14 years of teaching at private school, came to learn CLIL from the friends, online sources and compared his teaching practices with CLIL activities but no CLIL trainings.

Four English language teachers teaching at the secondary level in Pokhara Metropolitan City were the participants in this study. I employed a purpose-driven method to select participants carefully to conduct a narrative inquiry study offering comprehensive depictions of phenomena within a specific setting (Chase, 2008). This method guaranteed that participants could recount a range of experiences concerning the use of CLIL in English language classrooms. A purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) was used to select the participants in the best position to share their views and experiences (Cohen et al., 2017). The key criterion for participant selection was their location within Pokhara Valley. This geographic proximity facilitated multiple in-depth interviews, fostering a richer understanding of their lived experiences. Initially, I deliberately selected four schools in Pokhara Valley as my research site. They were situated in Kaski district in the Gandaki Province of Nepal. I selected this study site as I have had a long experience teaching English as an ELT professional in this region.

Data Collection Techniques and Processes

Qualitative interviews were employed to gather participants' data, following the guidance of Kvale (2009). These interviews were designed as open-ended conversations to delve into participants' perceptions and narratives. Then, I conducted these interviews in

person, building rapport with school administrators and English teachers before scheduling interviews with the latter. A pre-developed interview guide with open-ended questions guided the conversations.

To ensure data accuracy and capture the original meaning, I recorded the audio of the interviews and took notes during the process. The interviews were later transcribed, and the transcripts were reviewed for recurring themes. Saldana (2018) and Creswell (2013) suggest that marginal notes can facilitate data analysis and pattern recognition. Finally, the participants reviewed the transcripts to verify the accuracy of the data, ensuring a thorough and participant-centered data collection process.

Meaning Making

Riessman's (2008) data analysis process for qualitative narrative inquiry involves a multi-step framework that focuses on understanding and interpreting the narratives collected. The process began with immersion, where I read and reread the data transcripts multiple times. Then, I described five key themes and patterns that emerge from the narratives after summarizing the data. Then I interpreted the themes and analyzed their deeper meanings and significance, connecting them to broader theoretical frameworks and contextualizing them within the participants' lived experiences. In the final step, I verified the validity of the findings by comparing them to the original data and seeking external validation. This process allowed me to examine the narratives to explore their perceptions of CLIL practicing in English language classrooms.

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion section organizes five major themes that emerged from the teachers' perceptions of CLIL. These themes include teachers' awareness and understanding of the CLIL approach, CLIL training and support for professional development, teachers' knowledge of CLIL and English curriculum, benefits of CLIL in English language classrooms on learners, and challenges related to CLIL in the ELT context. The study provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for CLIL integration in Nepal's educational system by analyzing these themes.

Teachers' Awareness and Understanding of the CLIL Approach

Introducing CLIL as an instructional approach is a novel concept within the Nepali ESL context. This is likely due to the prevalence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) among educators, with many teachers holding qualifications in this more established methodology. A key finding of this study was the concern expressed by participants regarding the limited availability of professional development opportunities within their workplaces. Additionally, they highlighted a lack of time, resources, and adequate training as potential barriers to successful CLIL implementation within the Nepalese EFL context. These findings resonate with previous research that underscores the importance of professional development, time allocation, resources, and appropriate training for effective CLIL integration (Conn, 2010; Hillyard, 2011; Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Pistorio, 2009; Banegas, 2012; Dalton-Puffer, 2011; McDougald, 2015).

English language teachers often express concerns about two main limitations: the strict stepping guide and a predetermined curriculum. The participants' statements highlight their awareness and understanding of the CLIL approach. One of the research participants, Adhyayan, shared :

In my class, CLIL is not widely used. I primarily focus on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and rarely discuss CLIL. My emphasis is primarily on language

rather than content. Even though I am aware of the benefits of CLIL, I cannot implement it in my classrooms due to a lack of proper knowledge.

Adhyayan's story highlights that many language classrooms heavily rely on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), with little emphasis on integrating CLIL. Even though Adhyayan identifies the advantages of CLIL, his focus remains on language teaching, indicating a separation between language and content. The main issue is the lack of proper knowledge, preventing Adhyayan from using CLIL in his classes. This reflects a broader challenge in education, showing the need for teachers to be trained in innovative methods.

As a researcher, Adhyayan's experience makes us question the support systems for CLIL in schools. We must look at the policies and resources in place and find ways to link the gap between theory and practice. This requires specific teacher training and a commitment from the education system to include CLIL in language curricula. His perception can be linked with Wood's (2012) view that constructivism has the potential to be a compelling approach to reimagining educational practices. According to Adhyayan, rethinking the need for teachers to be trained is an immediate need. Addressing these challenges can create a more well-rounded language learning method where students can learn language skills and content knowledge seamlessly.

Similarly, Asim shared his experience regarding awareness and understanding. *If our top management promotes CLIL, I would be motivated to learn more and incorporate it into my daily lesson plans.* Asim's statement emphasizes the decisive role of top management in encouraging teachers to embrace CLIL. His view suggests that when school leaders actively support CLIL, teachers like Asim are likelier to show interest and incorporate it into their daily lessons. This highlights the importance of exploring how leadership influences teachers' motivation and successful implementation of CLIL. His view aligns with the social constructivist theories of situated and collaborative learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Likewise, Miao, Pinkwart, and Hoppe (2006) highlighted the social dimension of learning by proposing that knowledge is embedded within communities of practice, mirroring the holistic frameworks of situated and collaborative learning. These theories suggest that learning is best supported when embedded in a supportive social context and when learners can interact with others. In this context, top management's promotion of CLIL would create a supportive environment for learning about and implementing CLIL, motivating educators to acquire more about it and integrate it into their teaching practices. Researching the link between management support, teacher attitudes, and actual classroom practices can provide valuable insights, helping to develop effective strategies for promoting CLIL in schools. Understanding these dynamics can guide the creation of policies that foster a supportive environment for innovative language teaching methods.

Likewise, Prakash also stated his story of understanding CLIL critically, saying: *Trainers in our context have not emphasized CLIL in workshops. They mainly concentrate on the communicative aspects of language learning and teaching, overlooking the significance of content and culture.* Prakash's observations of CLIL workshops revealed a lack of focus on the CLIL approach itself, with teachers prioritizing communicative language teaching. This suggests a need for increased awareness and training on CLIL's benefits. The social constructivist perspective of CLIL emphasizes the integration of content, language, and culture within a meaningful context (Coyle, 2007). By neglecting CLIL, trainers miss the opportunity to use content and language as mutually reinforcing tools (Gibbons, 2002). Social constructivism highlights the social nature of learning, emphasizing knowledge construction through interactions with others and the environment (Vygotsky, 1978). In CLIL, this interaction occurs through meaningful engagement with content and language, fostering

linguistic and conceptual development (Coyle et al., 2010). The lack of CLIL emphasis in workshops suggests a traditional CLT approach, which focuses on communicative competence at the expense of content and cultural understanding (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). CLIL offers a framework for integrating language learning with meaningful content and cultural exploration, fostering more profound understanding, motivation, and cross-cultural competence (Coyle, 2007; Gibbons, 2002). Reaffirming the other participants' perception, Dil shared:

I am unfamiliar with CLIL, but I heard about it and searched for materials to read about it myself. I am teaching content integrated with language in the English language classroom, but I know I am using the CLIL unknowingly without any plan.

Dil's statement reflects her awareness of employing CLIL in her English language classroom despite her unfamiliarity with the concept. Dil indicates that she learned about CLIL through self-directed means, such as hearing about it and conducting personal research, expressing a proactive approach. Despite lacking formal training in CLIL, she acknowledges its implicit incorporation into her teaching practices, emphasizing a practical understanding gained through experience rather than structured instruction.

Dil's statement that she has been teaching content integrated with language in the English language classroom "unknowingly" without any plan reflects the notion of emergent CLIL. This concept suggests that CLIL can arise organically from well-designed content-based language teaching (CBLT) practices, even if the teacher does not explicitly set out to implement CLIL (Coyle, 2007; Gibbons, 2002). Social constructivism theory aligns with the concept of emergent CLIL as it focuses on the significance of learners' active engagement in constructing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). In language learning, learners should be allowed to use language in significant and authentic contexts to make sense of new information and concepts (Gibbons, 2002). Dil's statement suggests that she has created these opportunities for her learners by integrating language with content in her teaching. While she may not have explicitly set out to implement CLIL, her practices likely foster linguistic and conceptual development in her learners (Coyle et al., 2010). Regarding the awareness of the policy of CLIL, almost all the participants explained that the secondary-level English Curriculum had mentioned CLIL as an essential principle of learning.

CLIL Training and Support for Professional Development

Teachers need professional development to stay up-to-date and meet the needs of their students. CLIL training can help educators integrate language learning with subject matter, making lessons more engaging and effective (Coyle, 2007). In today's globalized world, where students come from diverse language backgrounds, CLIL equips teachers with the skills to address these differences. CLIL training focuses on strategies to improve language skills and understand specific subject contents. By participating in CLIL sessions, teachers can enhance their ability to provide a more immersive and well-rounded learning experience. This approach fosters language proficiency and develops essential critical thinking and communication skills. CLIL training is a crucial element in preparing educators to address the issues and challenges of the world, where effective communication and cultural understanding are more important than ever (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

In this study, all the participants stated their experiences regarding CLIL training and support differently. However, their ultimate case was the same: they were not provided with any training or support from the government or administration. For this, one of the participants, Asim, highlighted that *in the case of grade 10, the recently launched textbook is also based on the CLIL approach. Many exercises are designed in an integrated way with*

another subject based on CLIL, but we are not provided with any training in CLIL. Asim's statement regarding the lack of CLIL training aligns with the social constructivist perspective, emphasizing the importance of teacher knowledge and professional development for effective CLIL implementation (Coyle et al., 2010). Social constructivism suggests that teachers facilitate social collaborations and provide scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Patel's (2003) holistic framework underscores the importance of teacher guidance in learning and teaching interactions. In CLIL, this scaffolding includes providing clear objectives, language tasks, and opportunities for interaction. Teachers may lack the knowledge and skills to implement CLIL successfully without proper training. Asim's statement highlights the potential gap between introducing a new curriculum and providing adequate support for teachers, leading to confusion, frustration, and ineffective implementation.

Similarly, Dil further stated: "... I learned about the CLIL approach by myself and there was no any discussion regarding CLIL in the trainings I attended. So, nobody helped me". Dil's narrative aligns with the theory of Constructivism which focuses on the dynamic role of the individual in building knowledge, emphasizing that learning occurs through personal experiences and interactions with the environment (Bruner, 1966; Piaget, 2013). Dil's experience of independently learning about CLIL, demonstrating their active engagement in the knowledge construction process. Social constructivism, a branch of constructivism, further focuses on the importance of social interactions and collaboration in learning (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). While Dil's learning of CLIL occurred independently, it still falls within the social constructivist framework as she gained knowledge through interactions with various resources and materials.

Dil's statement reflects self-directed learning, where individuals take ownership of their learning journey, seeking information and resources to expand their understanding (Knowles, 1975). This approach aligns with constructivism, emphasizing the learner's active role in constructing knowledge. In the context of CLIL, Dil's self-directed learning demonstrates self-motivation to acquire knowledge about the approach despite the lack of formal training. This intrinsic motivation is essential for effective learning, as it drives individuals to seek out information and engage with the material (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Likewise, another participant, Prakash, regarding the topic, stated this way: *Regarding CLIL, I have not taken any training. However, last year, I attended one training provided by the metropolitan education office. At that time, the training was curriculum-oriented, and the trainer introduced the term CLIL, but it was not explained in detail.* Asim mentioned that the CLIL approach was pronounced during the training. However, the focus was given to the nature of the curriculum but not to the detailed procedural use of this approach in the class. The previously mentioned excerpts also highlight that CLIL is not adequately recognized as an essential element of English language teaching within the Nepalese context. Teacher development programs often neglect to prioritize integrating CLIL principles in their curriculum and training initiatives. Given the emphasis on fostering linguistic, communicative, and cultural competence in language learners, policymakers and educational authorities should consider the potential of CLIL to address the needs of English language learners and equip them with proficiency in the language.

Teachers' Knowledge of CLIL and English Curriculum

The purpose of the study was to uncover views of English teachers' understanding and perception of CLIL practices in their teaching and learning activities. After data analysis, the findings can be explored from the participants' quotes. One of the participants, Asim, shared his experience in the following lines:

I have found so many texts where content and language are integrated. In the case of grade 10, the recently launched textbook is also based on the CLIL approach. Many exercises are designed in an integrated way with another subject based on CLIL.

Asim's story highlights a prevalent educational paradigm, particularly in grade 10, where the CLIL approach takes center stage. The recently launched grade 10 textbook's adoption of the CLIL approach signals a departure from traditional classified teaching methods, emphasizing an integrated approach. Asim's familiarity with this approach attests to its growing recognition as an effective pedagogical strategy for creating a cohesive and immersive learning experience.

Asim's experience links with the constructivism theory proposed by Vygotsky. Vygotsky posited that learning is a social process, and the CLIL approach aligns with this ideology. Through integrating language and content in a meaningful context, students participate in collaborative learning experiences. This fosters an environment where they can build upon their existing knowledge, construct new understanding through interaction, and jointly navigate the complexities of various subjects. Asim's familiarity with CLIL provides a concrete example of how educational practices can be aligned with constructivist principles, emphasizing the importance of social interaction and shared experiences in the learning process.

Similarly, another participant, Prakash, stated his familiarity with CLIL: *Regarding teaching content, I have been teaching content in my English classes, but I have been using the CLIL approach unknowingly.* Prakash demonstrates an inherent understanding of CLIL in his teaching practices despite not consciously adopting the approach. His acknowledgement of teaching content within English classes suggests an intuitive integration of language and subject matter, aligning with CLIL principles. His pedagogical approach combines language acquisition with content learning. Another participant, Adhyayan, supported Prakash's views regarding his familiarity with CLIL. For this, Adhyayan stated: *I unknowingly use CLIL in my classroom.* It shows that the participants knew CLIL but were unfamiliar with the classroom implication procedures in CLIL.

Likewise, Dil, another research participant, explained her familiarity with CLIL, saying: *So far, I realized there is content integrated into the English curriculum, but we are using the content unknowingly without any plan and procedures.* Her story also supports other participants' explanations regarding their unfamiliarity with CLIL implications in their classrooms. Dil accepted that she was unknowingly implementing CLIL in her English language classrooms. It shows that she was familiar with the term CLIL but unaware of the proper procedure for implication, and the other participants also had the same problem. All the participants justified it as a lack of appropriate training.

From the participants' understanding, I came to the idea that the teachers heard the term CLIL, got the idea of the approach themselves, and even knew that CLIL was mentioned as a principle of learning in the secondary-level curriculum. As McDougald (2015) explored, teachers actively seek informal and formal guidance on CLIL. From the participants' stories, I conclude that the participants have heard the term or come across the term CLIL. Some got the idea but did not go through all CLIL procedures in their classroom teaching. The participants understand that CLIL is a practical approach to teaching the English language through content and content through the English language. They have a positive perception of CLIL. However, they require effective training on implementing the CLIL approach in EFL classrooms.

Benefits of CLIL in English Language Classrooms on Learners

Marsh (2000) stated that CLIL can generate positive attitudes and inspiration towards a second language. So, the proper implication of the CLIL approach in English language classrooms has many benefits for the learners. This approach is beneficial because it does not just focus on language skills; it helps students learn the content better. The good thing about CLIL is that it improves language abilities and makes students think more critically and understand different subjects. It is like hitting two birds with one stone: improving English and becoming more competent in other subjects. This way of learning prepares students for the global world, making CLIL an excellent choice for teachers who want their students to be good at both language and thinking skills. Regarding the benefits of CLIL for students, one of the participants, Adhyayan narrated:

...different activities happen in the classroom. I remember students being active in the class. They support one another. They cooperate and collaborate in class. I think this helps them develop their language and content also together. They develop their speaking skill and can speak fluently. They can learn many things from their friends.

Adhyayan shared that in the classroom, students work together and support each other, making the environment lively. This collaboration and cooperation help them improve their language skills and understanding of the content. Students enhance their speaking abilities and become more fluent by interacting with their friends. This aligns with the advantages of CLIL, where students learn not just the content but also improve their language skills through working together in class.

The next participant, Asim, reported his experiences with the benefits of the CLIL approach in English language class: *Students discuss with their friends and participate in group discussions. All students participate actively in the classroom activities. Most of the students feel comfortable to answer the questions. I find students developing both their language and content together.* As per Asim's story about the benefits of CLIL, students actively engaged in discussions and group activities in the classroom. All students were found to participate actively, and a majority felt comfortable when responding to questions. So, active participation contributes to the students' simultaneous language and content development. This aligns with the advantages of CLIL, where students, through active involvement and discussions with their peers, not only enhance their language proficiency but also grasp the subject matter more effectively.

Similarly, another participant, Prakash, stated: *I was involving students in group work, and inactive students shared group work in English. I felt proud to see a student sharing group work for the first time. He was using the English language. He was confident but had some pronunciation problems.* Prakash experienced a proud moment when a less privileged student actively participated in group work, sharing their thoughts in English. A student who had not previously contributed to English, taking the initiative was a pleasing experience for Prakash. Despite facing some pronunciation challenges, the student displayed confidence in using English. Prakash's account appeals to the positive impact of CLIL, where students, irrespective of their background, gain the courage to express themselves in a second language. This not only helps language development but also boosts their overall confidence and communication skills.

Dil also supported the advantages of CLIL in English language classrooms. She narrated *a lesson that using different activities in the class can help grow students' confidence and learning.* Dil's narrative also highlighted the development of confidence among the students as they develop good language skills and content together. The findings of the texts align with the theory of constructivism and holism. Constructivism suggests that learners actively create knowledge through their exchanges with the world around them (Brooks &

Brooks, 1999). Similarly, within the framework of holism, Gordon (2009) posits that knowledge construction is an active process driven by learners' engagement with the world. This notion resonates with Yang's (2006) emphasis on the integrative framework of the holistic learning theory, which underscores the complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions in knowledge acquisition. On the other hand, CLIL integrates language learning with content learning, providing learners with chances to use language in meaningful contexts (Coyle, 2007).

The participants' narratives suggest that CLIL can foster a constructive and helpful learning setting where learners feel happy taking risks and collaborating with their peers (Adhyayan & Asim). This collaborative learning environment is conducive to constructivist learning, allowing students to share their ideas, build on each other's knowledge, and improve their understanding of the content (Vygotsky & Cole, 1982). In addition, the participants' observations highlight the role of CLIL in developing students' language proficiency. Prakash's experience with a student who was initially hesitant to speak English but eventually gained confidence demonstrates that CLIL can offer students the chance to use language in real-world situations, which is essential for language development (Krashen, 1982).

Overall, the findings of the texts support the notion that CLIL is an effective approach to teaching English to students of diverse backgrounds. CLIL can help learners develop their language skills, content knowledge, and confidence by providing a supportive learning environment and opportunities for meaningful language use.

Challenges Related to CLIL in ELT Context

While previous studies have identified challenges associated with CLIL implementation, such as time constraints and limited teacher preparedness (e.g., Conn, 2010), this study explores deeper into the specific context of Nepal. This investigation acknowledges the potential effectiveness of CLIL in English language instruction; however, it emphasizes the need for contextualization. The emphasis is not on blind cultural adoption but on using CLIL's core principles to achieve language learning objectives within the Nepali ESL context. This study identified a significant concern: the lack of CLIL awareness among policymakers, curriculum developers, and syllabus designers. Despite attempts to integrate CLIL into the English language secondary-level curriculum, a critical gap exists in formal training for educators. The participants strongly advocate for relevant authorities to acknowledge the importance of CLIL, not just by integrating it into the curriculum but also by providing teachers with the necessary training and support. This would empower educators to effectively incorporate CLIL components into their lesson plans and ultimately enhance students' learning experiences.

Regarding the challenges of CLIL use in EFL classrooms Dil explained:

We are not getting any training from the concerned authorities, such as the school administration, district education training office, etc. I know CLIL is used in the English curriculum. So I learned CLIL from other sources. Anything the authority introduces and makes mandatory will become part of the day-to-day practice. If we consider CLIL a success story in different parts of the world, it should also be introduced in this part of the world.

Dill expressed her frustration with the lack of training and support from educational authorities, including the school administration and district education training office. Despite CLIL being integrated into the English curriculum, she highlighted the need for and the absence of formal training. Dil emphasized that for CLIL to be successfully implemented, it should be introduced and made mandatory by the relevant authorities. Drawing a parallel

with the perceived success of CLIL in other parts of the world, Dil encouraged its adaption in their local context, stressing the potential benefits of integrating CLIL into day-to-day teaching practices.

Similarly, another participant of this study, Prakash, regarding the challenges of CLIL use, mentioned:

Importantly, the current curriculum and syllabi do not strongly focus on CLIL; however, if teachers push for it, there is every chance it will be initiated soon. I have read some articles related to CLIL. And with the knowledge I gained from those materials, I have been using CLIL in my classroom. That's why I have many problems using CLIL in my class.

In this sentence, Prakash wanted to say that though the English Curriculum mentioned CLIL as one of the principles used for teaching English, the curriculum has not focused on CLIL strategies in the English Curriculum. He focused that if all the teachers start implementing the CLIL method in English language teaching and demand training, the authority will bring due strategies for its proper implication. He further complained that he was getting the ideas of CLIL approach himself through different means. To support Prakash's views, another participant, Asim stated:

I find it difficult to balance teaching content and language at a time. This is due to a lack of knowledge regarding the CLIL implications in the class. We expect to provide detailed training on using CLIL in English classrooms.

Asim experienced difficulty teaching both content and language together. He thought it was because he did not know enough about using CLIL. He believed that authorities should give detailed training on how to use CLIL in English classrooms. This showed that Asim saw the importance of CLIL for students to understand the subject and improve their language skills. He asked for specific training from education authorities to help teachers like him use CLIL better. This story highlights the need for teachers to get the proper training to teach content and language well simultaneously. Another participant, Adhyayan, also had the same problems: *I face difficulties, especially in balancing teaching the subject and developing the English language. This is due to the lack of knowledge on CLIL implementation in classrooms.* The excerpt above supported the challenges faced by other participants.

This study investigated the challenges of implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in English language classrooms in Nepal. Findings align with constructivist and CLIL theories, particularly highlighting the need for adequate teacher preparation and curriculum development. Participants consistently emphasized the lack of training and support for teachers, hindering their ability to effectively balance content and language instruction (Dil, Prakash, Asim, Adhyayan).

Constructivism emphasizes the teacher's role as a guide in learners' knowledge construction (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Holistic theory outlines the importance of a supportive and open learning atmosphere (Uhlig, 2018). CLIL requires teachers to understand both subject matter and language (Coyle, 2007). Without proper training, teachers may struggle to implement CLIL effectively.

Furthermore, participants expressed concerns about the lack of emphasis on CLIL in the curriculum and syllabi, suggesting a disconnect between theory and practice (Prakash). Constructivism advocates for student-centred learning with authentic and meaningful contexts (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). CLIL provides opportunities for real-world language use (Coyle, 2007). However, the absence of clear guidelines and strategies hinders teachers' ability to translate theory into practice, potentially undermining the benefits of CLIL.

The findings of this study suggest that overcoming these challenges requires a concerted effort from educational authorities to provide comprehensive training for teachers and to revise the curriculum and syllabi to reflect the principles of CLIL better. By addressing these challenges, teachers can generate a more supportive and active environment for implementing CLIL, allowing students to reap the full benefits of this approach.

Conclusion and Implications

The conclusion of this research marks a significant milestone in exploring the perceptions and understanding of CLIL in English language teaching practices in Kaski, Nepal. It proceeded into a narrative inquiry as a study focused on uncovering English language teachers' perceptions in the region. This study illuminated the complicated setting of CLIL integration in ELT through rigorous interviews and careful thematic analysis. The analysis of participant narratives aligns with existing theories of constructivism and holism, highlighting the positive impact of CLIL on fostering a collaborative and supportive learning environment. The participants reported students' increased confidence, active participation, and improved language skills through interaction and group work. These findings resonate with the constructivist notion of knowledge construction through learner engagement and the holistic emphasis on integrating learning's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects.

This study investigated Nepali ESL teachers' perceptions of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). While some teachers demonstrated clear understanding, others expressed confusion. Barriers to CLIL implementation included lack of training, time constraints, resources, and a predetermined curriculum. Despite challenges, lack of support from concerned authorities, and focus on CLT, some teachers unknowingly used elements of CLIL, suggesting a gradual and supportive approach to implementation. The study highlights the need for increased professional development, concerned authorities' support, and a focus on content and culture integration in teacher training programs.

By addressing these challenges, the Nepali ESL context can create a more conducive environment for the successful implementation of CLIL. This study explored English teachers' perceptions of CLIL practices in their teaching and learning activities. The findings revealed an inconsistency between the increasing integration of CLIL principles in the curriculum and the lack of adequate training and support for teachers. While many teachers demonstrated positive perceptions of CLIL and were unknowingly implementing aspects of the approach, they expressed a need for more comprehensive training on its implementation strategies.

This study investigated the factors influencing English language teachers' awareness and understanding of CLIL in Nepal. To ensure successful CLIL implementation, educational policymakers and administrators must prioritize teacher professional development. Targeted training programs addressing the specific needs of teachers in integrating language and content learning are crucial. Additionally, authorities should consider the potential of CLIL in addressing the needs of English language learners and fostering linguistic, communicative, and cultural competence. By investing in CLIL training and support, policymakers can empower teachers to create more engaging and effective learning experiences for their students.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that CLIL has the potential to be a valuable approach to English language teaching in Nepal. To fully realize this potential, educational authorities must address the identified challenges. Providing comprehensive teacher training and revising the curriculum and syllabi to reflect CLIL principles better are crucial steps. By developing a more supportive environment for CLIL implementation,

teachers can empower students to reap the full benefits of this approach, developing their language skills, content knowledge, and overall confidence as learners.

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