



## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) FOR TEENAGE LEARNER

Ro'ziyeva Munisxon Komiljonovna  
Tashkent Academic Lyceum No.2 of the  
Ministry of Internal Affairs of the  
Republic of Uzbekistan  
[munisxonroziyeva2@gmail.com](mailto:munisxonroziyeva2@gmail.com)  
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**Abstract:** The present study sought to examine the effectiveness of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in developing cultural awareness among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student teachers. In recent years, cultural competence has become an essential component of foreign language education, as language learning extends beyond the acquisition of grammatical knowledge and communicative skills to include an understanding of the cultural values, beliefs, traditions, and practices associated with the target language. Within this context, the CLIL approach has attracted considerable attention because it integrates language learning with meaningful content, enabling learners to develop both linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence simultaneously. To achieve the objectives of the research, the study adopted an experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. This design was selected to measure the extent to which the implementation of the CLIL approach influenced participants' levels of cultural awareness over a specified instructional period. The participants consisted of thirty-eight third-year students enrolled in the English Language Section at the Faculty of Education, Benha University. These students were preparing to become future English language teachers; therefore, developing their intercultural awareness was considered particularly important for their professional and academic growth.

**Keywords:** content, language, linguistic studies, culture, cultural dimensions, sociolinguistics, intercultural competence.

In the contemporary globalized world, English has established itself as one of the most influential languages for international communication, education, business, science, and technology. It serves as a bridge connecting people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, enabling them to exchange ideas, access information, and participate in global interactions. As globalization continues to intensify, the demand for a common language that facilitates communication across national boundaries has become increasingly important. In this context, English is no longer viewed solely as the native language of countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, or Australia. Rather, it has evolved into a global lingua franca used by millions of people worldwide to communicate in academic, professional, and social settings (Crystal, 2003). Consequently, the significance of English language education continues to grow as individuals seek to develop the linguistic skills necessary for successful participation in the global community.

However, learning and teaching English involves far more than acquiring vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and communicative competence. Modern language education recognizes that effective communication requires an understanding of the cultural contexts in which language is used. Language and culture are deeply interconnected, and meaningful communication depends on the ability to interpret cultural references, social norms, values,

beliefs, and behavioral expectations. Therefore, foreign language instruction should not be limited to linguistic proficiency alone but should also foster intercultural awareness and cultural competence among learners. According to Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, and Kohler (2003), culture can be understood as a complex system encompassing concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviors, practices, rituals, and lifestyles shared by members of a particular social group. This broad definition emphasizes that culture influences nearly every aspect of human interaction and communication. It shapes how individuals perceive the world, interpret experiences, establish relationships, and express themselves through language. As a result, language learners must develop an awareness of these cultural dimensions in order to communicate effectively with speakers from different cultural backgrounds.

Similarly, Brown (2000) defines culture as the collection of ideas, customs, skills, artistic expressions, tools, and social practices that characterize a specific group of people during a particular historical period. This definition highlights the dynamic nature of culture and its role in shaping both individual and collective identities. Cultural knowledge enables language learners to understand not only what people say but also why they say it in particular ways. It provides insight into the social meanings underlying linguistic expressions and helps learners avoid misunderstandings that may arise from cultural differences.

Furthermore, the integration of culture into language teaching contributes significantly to the development of intercultural communicative competence. Learners who are exposed to cultural content become more capable of recognizing and respecting cultural diversity, comparing different cultural perspectives, and adapting their communication strategies to various intercultural situations. Such skills are particularly important in today's multicultural and interconnected world, where interactions frequently occur among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997). For future teachers of English, cultural awareness is especially important because they are responsible not only for teaching language structures but also for preparing students to communicate successfully in international contexts. By incorporating cultural elements into language instruction, educators can help learners develop a more comprehensive understanding of the target language and the communities that use it. Consequently, language teaching becomes a means of promoting intercultural understanding, tolerance, and global citizenship. The development of cultural awareness and intercultural competence has become one of the central concerns of foreign language education in recent decades. As globalization increases contact among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, language teaching has expanded beyond the traditional focus on grammar and vocabulary to include the cultivation of cultural understanding. Researchers and educators increasingly recognize that language and culture are inseparable; therefore, effective language learning requires learners to acquire not only linguistic knowledge but also an awareness of the cultural contexts in which the language is used.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, the teaching of language inevitably involves the teaching of culture. Every aspect of language instruction contains cultural elements that contribute to learners' understanding of the target community. Forms of address, greetings, politeness conventions, conversational formulas, and common expressions all reflect culturally specific ways of interacting with others. Likewise, dialogues, reading passages, listening activities, and literary texts expose students to the values, beliefs, traditions, and social

practices of English-speaking communities. Through these materials, learners gain insight into how language functions within particular cultural settings and how communication is shaped by social expectations and cultural norms.

Cultural learning also extends beyond verbal communication. Nonverbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, body language, eye contact, and interpersonal distance carry important cultural meanings that vary across societies. Understanding these cultural dimensions helps learners interpret communication more accurately and avoid misunderstandings in intercultural interactions. Exposure to such cultural practices encourages students to develop greater sensitivity toward cultural differences and to appreciate alternative ways of expressing thoughts, emotions, needs, and social relationships.

According to Moate (2010), culture encompasses all aspects of shared life within a community and serves as the context in which language is learned and used. Language derives many of its meanings, functions, and communicative conventions from the cultural environment in which it operates. Therefore, learners who aspire to achieve a high level of language proficiency must develop an understanding of the cultural knowledge embedded within the target language. Without cultural competence, students may possess grammatical knowledge yet still encounter difficulties in interpreting meaning and communicating effectively in authentic situations.

Furthermore, cultural awareness contributes significantly to learners' intellectual and personal development. When students encounter cultural perspectives that differ from their own, they are encouraged to reflect critically on their assumptions, broaden their worldview, and develop empathy toward people from different backgrounds. Such experiences foster intercultural understanding and prepare learners to participate successfully in multicultural environments. Consequently, the integration of culture into language teaching promotes not only linguistic competence but also social and intercultural competence. Supporting this perspective, Naqeeb (2012) emphasized the importance of developing cultural literacy within EFL education. His research provided valuable guidance for EFL teachers by introducing practical approaches to integrating cultural learning into language instruction. The study highlighted the role of teachers in fostering students' cultural awareness and equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective intercultural communication. Naqeeb also presented the American Access Microscholarship Program as a successful model for promoting cultural literacy in EFL classrooms. Through cultural activities, authentic materials, and intercultural experiences, the program enabled learners to develop a deeper understanding of English-speaking cultures while simultaneously improving their language skills.

The findings of Naqeeb's research underscored the necessity of adopting a more comprehensive philosophy of language teaching, one that recognizes culture as a fundamental component of language learning rather than an optional supplement. He argued that educational policymakers, curriculum designers, and teachers should incorporate cultural objectives into language programs and provide the necessary resources and training to support their implementation. Such an approach would enable learners to become not only proficient language users but also culturally competent communicators capable of engaging successfully in international and multicultural contexts.

The importance of cultural awareness in foreign language education has been emphasized by numerous scholars who argue that language learning cannot be separated from cultural

understanding. According to Elsabagh (2012), it is essential for learners to recognize that individuals' thoughts, behaviors, communication styles, and worldviews are profoundly influenced by the cultural environments in which they live. Language reflects these cultural influences through vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, social conventions, and patterns of interaction. Therefore, exposing students to the cultural dimensions of language helps them understand that meaning extends beyond words and grammatical structures. Such awareness enables learners to interpret linguistic expressions more accurately and communicate more effectively in intercultural contexts.

Elsabagh further highlighted the importance of increasing students' understanding of the cultural significance associated with specific words, expressions, and communicative practices in the target language. Many linguistic forms carry meanings that are deeply rooted in cultural traditions, historical experiences, and social values. Without adequate cultural knowledge, learners may struggle to comprehend the intended meaning of certain expressions or may misinterpret messages in authentic communication. Consequently, cultural instruction should be integrated into language learning to help students develop a more comprehensive understanding of how language functions within its social and cultural context.

To explore this issue, Elsabagh (2012) conducted a study investigating the effectiveness of web-based projects in enhancing both cultural awareness and writing competence among first-year experimental school students. The findings demonstrated that technology-supported learning environments can provide valuable opportunities for cultural exploration by exposing learners to authentic materials, real-world communication, and diverse cultural perspectives. Through online projects, students were able to engage with cultural content more actively, which contributed to improvements in both their intercultural understanding and their ability to express ideas effectively in writing. These results suggest that digital technologies can serve as powerful tools for integrating cultural learning into language education.

In addition to acquiring cultural knowledge, learners should also develop the ability to critically evaluate cultural stereotypes and generalized assumptions about the target culture. Language education should encourage students to move beyond simplified or biased representations and develop a more nuanced understanding of cultural diversity. By examining different perspectives and questioning preconceived notions, learners become more open-minded and better prepared to engage in meaningful intercultural communication. Such critical cultural awareness is considered an important component of intercultural competence because it enables individuals to recognize the complexity and diversity that exist within every culture.

Within this process, teachers play a pivotal role in fostering students' curiosity and interest in the target culture. Effective language instructors create learning environments that encourage exploration, inquiry, and cultural reflection. They motivate students to learn about the traditions, customs, values, and everyday lives of people from different cultural backgrounds while promoting respect and appreciation for cultural differences. Through carefully selected materials, classroom discussions, and interactive activities, teachers can help learners develop positive attitudes toward the target culture and strengthen their ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of cultural awareness, several researchers have pointed out that this area remains insufficiently addressed in some EFL contexts. Shehata (2013) and Ali (2015) noted that many language programs continue to prioritize linguistic competence while giving relatively limited attention



to cultural development. As a result, students may achieve acceptable levels of language proficiency but still lack the intercultural skills necessary for effective communication in real-life situations. This gap highlights the need for innovative educational approaches that integrate cultural learning with language instruction.

Consequently, researchers have called for the development and implementation of effective programs, teaching strategies, and pedagogical approaches specifically designed to enhance cultural awareness among EFL learners. Such programs should provide students with opportunities to engage with authentic cultural materials, participate in intercultural activities, and reflect critically on cultural similarities and differences. By incorporating these elements into language education, educators can support the development of learners who are not only linguistically competent but also culturally sensitive and globally aware.

In conclusion, cultural awareness constitutes an essential component of successful foreign language learning. Research demonstrates that exposure to cultural content, critical reflection on cultural stereotypes, and the use of innovative teaching approaches can significantly enhance learners' intercultural competence. Therefore, educational institutions and language teachers should place greater emphasis on cultural learning to prepare students for effective communication and meaningful interaction in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world

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