ENHANCING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN CLIL CLASSROOMS: IMPACT ON STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNING ATTITUDES AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

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Abstract

In today's globalised world, navigating cultural differences and communicating effectively across diverse contexts is more important than ever. This study explores the impact of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on the development of intercultural competence and its subsequent influence on students' attitudes toward language learning and cultural awareness. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with 60 undergraduate students. The findings reveal that CLIL plays a significant role in enhancing intercultural understanding, which in turn leads to more positive attitudes toward language learning and a heightened sense of cultural awareness. These results not only underscore the importance of CLIL but also offer crucial insights for improving CLIL practices to better foster intercultural competence in educational settings.

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, the need to navigate cultural differences and communicate effectively across diverse cultural contexts has never been more urgent. This necessity has increased the emphasis on developing intercultural competence within educational settings. Intercultural competence, defined as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds, is not just a critical skill, but a fundamental requirement for students in today's globalised society.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has emerged as a powerful educational approach that integrates the teaching of content subjects with language instruction. One of its key benefits is the enhancement of language proficiency, which in turn provides a rich context for students to engage with and understand different cultural perspectives embedded within the language. As such, CLIL classrooms offer a unique environment for fostering intercultural competence, enabling students to develop the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of our multicultural world. (Li et al., 2023).

Recent studies have highlighted the significant role of CLIL in promoting intercultural competence and its impact on students' attitudes toward language learning and cultural awareness. For example, CLIL has been shown to enhance cultural awareness, linguistic proficiency, and intercultural communication skills, especially in diverse educational settings (Shykun, 2023; Trinh & Dinh, 2024). Through the integration of content and language, CLIL encourages students to explore cultural differences and reflect on their own cultural identities, leading to enhanced cultural awareness and more positive attitudes toward learning new languages (Varakina et al., 2021).

Despite these benefits, there remain challenges in effectively implementing CLIL to maximise its potential to develop intercultural competence (Méndez García, 2012).

This study aims to explore how the development of intercultural competence in CLIL classrooms influences students' attitudes toward language learning and cultural awareness. By addressing the existing gaps and challenges in the literature, this research seeks to provide insights into effective CLIL practices that can further promote intercultural competence in educational settings. Through a mixed-methods approach, this study aims to explore the impact of CLIL on students' intercultural competence and their attitudes toward language learning, particularly in a diverse educational context. Despite the growing body of literature on CLIL, there remain significant gaps in understanding how it influences intercultural competence development, and the challenges associated with its implementation.

To address these gaps, the following research questions are posed:

1. How does participation in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) programs influence students' intercultural competence and their attitudes toward language learning?
2. What is the relationship between intercultural competence and cultural awareness among students in CLIL settings?
3. What challenges do students encounter in CLIL classrooms when developing intercultural competence, and how do these challenges affect their overall learning experience?
4. How do different levels of prior cultural exposure among students impact their development of intercultural competence in CLIL classrooms?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Intercultural Competence in CLIL

In today's interconnected world, the integration of language and content learning through CLIL has gained prominence. CLIL is an educational approach where subjects are taught through an additional language, promoting both language proficiency and subject knowledge (Coyle et al., 2010). This dual focus makes CLIL an ideal context for developing intercultural competence, which is crucial for effective communication and understanding in a globalised society.

Recent research has demonstrated that CLIL is particularly effective in fostering intercultural competence. For instance, Schat, van der Knaap, and Graaff (2023) found that students engaged in CLIL programs showed significant improvements in their intercultural competence, particularly when literary pedagogy was integrated into the curriculum. This suggests that CLIL not only enhances language acquisition but also provides a rich environment for students to engage with diverse cultural perspectives (Sercu, 2021).

Moreover, the role of CLIL in higher education has been highlighted as a critical component in developing the intercultural communication skills of future professionals. Studies have shown that implementing CLIL in higher education settings, such as geography teacher training programs,

effectively cultivates a multicultural mindset among students, preparing them to contribute to a tolerant and civic society (Vishnikina & Hlukhota, 2023). Additionally, integrating cultural metacognition within CLIL instructional designs has significantly enhanced students' affective, metacognitive, and behavioural intercultural competencies (Huang, 2023).

The emphasis on intercultural competence within CLIL extends beyond language learning and includes the broader educational objectives of preparing students to navigate and thrive in multicultural environments. The integration of intercultural competence in CLIL not only facilitates a deeper understanding of the subject matter but also equips students with the necessary skills to interact effectively across cultural boundaries. As global interactions continue to expand, the role of CLIL in promoting intercultural competence is likely to become increasingly important in educational settings.

2.2. Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence refers to the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. It encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions, including knowledge of other cultures, positive attitudes towards cultural differences, and skills in intercultural communication (Deardorff, 2006). Developing intercultural competence is essential for fostering mutual respect and understanding in diverse educational settings.

Recent research has provided further insights into these dimensions. For instance, Matveev and Merz (2014) argue that a comprehensive definition and measurement of intercultural competence should include cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions such as culture-specific knowledge, emotional stability, and social initiative (Matveev & Merz, 2014). This aligns with Deardorff's model but emphasises the need for a multidimensional approach in assessing intercultural competence across various contexts.

In the realm of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), Lies Sercu has made significant contributions, particularly in the context of foreign language education. Sercu's work highlights the importance of integrating cultural components into language instruction to develop students' ICC effectively. For example, her research on the use of textbooks in fostering ICC underscores the need for teaching materials that go beyond linguistic content to include cultural contexts, thereby enriching students' intercultural understanding (Sercu, 2000).

Sercu's contributions are particularly relevant in educational settings where language learning is combined with cultural education. Her studies have shown that focusing on intercultural aspects within language curricula can significantly enhance students' ability to navigate and communicate across cultures, which is increasingly important in today's globalised world (Talbi, 2020). Additionally, Sercu has emphasised the role of reflective practices and experiential learning in deepening students' intercultural awareness, suggesting that these approaches are crucial for the effective development of ICC in educational contexts.

Moreover, the behavioral aspect of intercultural competence, or intercultural adroitness, involves the practical skills needed to navigate intercultural interactions successfully. This includes effective communication strategies, conflict resolution skills, and the ability to adapt one's behavior in response to cultural cues. Research by Pinariya and Sutjipto (2021) suggests that although intercultural communication competence (ICC) is recognised as a critical skill(Pinariya & Sutjipto, 2021), it remains underexplored in educational fields, highlighting the need for more targeted interventions to develop these competencies.

In educational settings, the affective dimension of intercultural competence—often referred to as intercultural sensitivity—plays a critical role in students' ability to engage meaningfully with cultural differences. Huang (2023) highlights the importance of integrating cultural metacognition in instructional design to enhance students' affective, metacognitive, and behavioural competencies in intercultural communication. This approach fosters a deeper understanding and reflection on cultural interactions, which is crucial for effective intercultural engagement.

Moreover, group intercultural competence (GIC) studies underscore the importance of interaction, efficacy, and communication in multicultural teams. Schmidmeier, Takahashi, and Bueno (2020) emphasised that GIC development is a procedural process that includes elements such as cultural differences and intercultural learning (Schmidmeier et al., 2020), which are vital in collaborative and team-based educational environments.

Finally, the behavioural aspect of intercultural competence, or adroitness, involves the practical skills needed to successfully navigate intercultural interactions. This includes effective communication strategies, conflict resolution skills, and the ability to adapt one's behaviour in response to cultural cues. Research by Pinariya and Sutjipto (2021) suggests that although intercultural communication competence (ICC) is recognised as a critical skill, it remains underexplored in educational fields, highlighting the need for more targeted interventions to develop these competencies.

As educational institutions continue to diversify, the development of intercultural competence among students and educators becomes increasingly important. This competence facilitates more effective and respectful interactions across cultures and prepares individuals to thrive in a globalised world, where cultural agility is key to personal and professional success.

2.3. The Role of CLIL in Developing Intercultural Competence

CLIL classrooms provide a unique environment for developing intercultural competence. By learning subjects through a second language, students are exposed to different cultural perspectives and practices embedded within the language. Research indicates that CLIL enhances students' cultural awareness and sensitivity, as they navigate and negotiate meaning across languages and cultures(Cenoz et al., 2014).

Recent studies have further explored the impact of CLIL on intercultural competence. For instance, a study conducted at a Taiwanese polytechnic university demonstrated that a self-produced CLIL

culture coursebook significantly enhanced students' intercultural knowledge and awareness (Yang, 2019). This finding supports the notion that CLIL, by integrating content and language learning, provides a fertile ground for students to engage with cultural nuances and develop a deeper understanding of different cultures.

Moreover, in Japan, a CLIL task involving the creation of mock English television advertisements was used to develop both intercultural and media awareness among university students. This task not only improved students' language skills but also heightened their sensitivity to cultural differences and the representation of those differences in media (Takahashi, 2019).

CLIL's effectiveness in fostering intercultural competence is also evident in the context of teacher education. Research involving EFL teachers in Chile highlighted that teachers' attitudes toward multicultural classrooms and their intercultural sensitivity significantly influenced their perceived intercultural communicative competence (Cancino & Nuñez, 2023). This suggests that CLIL can play a critical role in teacher training programs, equipping future educators with the necessary skills to handle culturally diverse classrooms.

In addition to enhancing intercultural awareness, CLIL has been found to contribute to the overall development of intercultural competence by encouraging students to engage in reflective practices and experiential learning. These approaches allow students to actively participate in cross-cultural interactions, thereby deepening their understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.

As global interactions continue to increase, the role of CLIL in promoting intercultural competence becomes even more crucial. By providing students with opportunities to learn through a second language, CLIL not only enhances their language proficiency but also prepares them to navigate and thrive in a multicultural world.

2.4. Impact of Intercultural Competence on Language Learning

Intercultural competence positively influences students' attitudes towards language learning. Students engaging with diverse cultures through CLIL develop a deeper appreciation for the language and its cultural context. This cultural immersion fosters motivation and a positive attitude towards learning the language, as students perceive it as a tool for understanding and connecting with different cultures (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009).

Recent research supports the strong connection between intercultural competence and language learning motivation. For instance, studies have shown that intercultural competence enhances students' motivation by preparing them to engage and collaborate in a global community, leading to more effective and meaningful interactions in the target language (Taghinezhad et al., 2016). This connection is particularly evident in environments where students are exposed to multiple cultural perspectives, as seen in a study of Chinese and Irish students in Ireland. The study found that intercultural competence and language learning motivation are intertwined, significantly impacting students' integration and success in a multicultural educational setting (Heying & Kennedy, 2016).

Moreover, the role of intercultural competence in language learning extends beyond motivation to include the development of students' overall linguistic and communicative abilities. Research at Kazan National Research Technological University in Russia identified various motivational types—such as intrinsic, integrative, extrinsic, and instrumental—that are influenced by intercultural competence, further underscoring the importance of cultural immersion in language education (Reeves & Panteleeva, 2017).

Additionally, the implementation of innovative teaching methods, such as augmented reality (AR) and project-based learning, has been shown to significantly enhance both intercultural competence and language learning motivation. For example, a recent study found that AR experiences in language classrooms led to higher levels of intercultural competence and increased motivation among EFL learners, compared to traditional instruction (Liu et al., 2023). Similarly, project-based assessments focusing on intercultural communication competence have had positive effects on students' critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and overall motivation to learn a foreign language (Nguyen, 2021).

The positive impact of intercultural competence on language learning is further highlighted in contexts where content and language are integrated. By learning subjects through a second language, students not only gain linguistic proficiency but also develop a more profound understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language is used. This dual focus promotes a more holistic language learning experience, where students are motivated to learn the language and the cultural nuances that come with it.

2.5. Enhancing Cultural Awareness through CLIL

Cultural awareness is a critical component of intercultural competence. CLIL promotes cultural awareness by integrating cultural content into the curriculum, encouraging students to explore and reflect on cultural differences. Studies have shown that CLIL students demonstrate greater cultural sensitivity and openness compared to their peers in traditional language learning settings (Pérez-Cañado, 2012). This heightened cultural awareness prepares students for global citizenship and intercultural communication.

Recent research continues to highlight the effectiveness of CLIL in fostering cultural awareness. For instance, a study in Taiwan found that a self-produced CLIL coursebook significantly enhanced tertiary-level students' intercultural awareness, emphasising the importance of integrating cultural content within language instruction (Yang, 2019). This approach aligns with the broader educational goal of preparing students for global citizenship by equipping them with the necessary skills to navigate and appreciate cultural diversity.

Hyojung Shin's (2023) research on global citizenship and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) awareness among university English learners highlights the increasing importance of ELF in fostering global citizenship. The study emphasises that understanding ELF can enhance learners' intercultural communication skills, which are essential for navigating a globalised world. This aligns with findings from Irgin (2023), who discusses the role of language in shaping global

identities and the necessity for educational frameworks that promote ELF awareness among students. Moreover, Al-husban and Alabri (2023) underscore the significance of integrating global citizenship education into language curricula, suggesting that such integration can empower learners to engage more effectively in diverse contexts. However, while these studies advocate for ELF awareness, they also acknowledge challenges, such as varying levels of acceptance and understanding among learners, which may hinder the effective implementation of these educational strategies. Overall, Shin's work contributes to a growing body of literature advocating for ELF as a vital component of language education aimed at fostering global citizenship.

The role of CLIL in promoting cultural awareness is particularly evident in the way it encourages students to reflect on their own cultural identities while exploring those of others. This reflective process is crucial for developing the intercultural sensitivity needed to engage effectively in a globalised world. Moreover, studies suggest that the cultural immersion provided by CLIL fosters empathy, respect, and appreciation for diverse perspectives, which are essential qualities for global citizenship (Mouboua et al., 2024).

CLIL's integration of cultural content within language education enhances students' cultural awareness and prepares them to be active and informed participants in an increasingly interconnected world. By fostering a deeper understanding of cultural differences, CLIL equips students with the intercultural competence necessary for effective global communication and collaboration.

2.6. Methodological Approaches in Studying CLIL and Intercultural Competence

Various methodological approaches have been employed to study the development of intercultural competence in CLIL settings. Mixed-methods research, which combines quantitative and qualitative data, is particularly valuable in providing a comprehensive understanding of how CLIL influences intercultural competence. This approach allows researchers to explore the multifaceted nature of intercultural competence by capturing both the measurable outcomes and students' nuanced, contextual experiences.

Common tools used in these studies include surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. For example, research by Onursoy and Zaimoğlu (2024) employed questionnaires and interviews to assess the perceptions of Turkish EFL instructors regarding the importance of intercultural communicative competence (Onursoy & Zaimoğlu, 2024). Their study revealed that while instructors acknowledge the significance of integrating cultural components into language teaching, they often face challenges such as time constraints and rigid curricula, which can hinder students' effective development of intercultural competence.

In another study, Lagou and Zorbas (2020) utilised a mixed-method approach to investigate the impact of CLIL on intercultural competence development in Greek primary education. This study combined quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights from classroom observations and interviews (Lagou & Zorbas, 2020) , providing a well-rounded analysis of how CLIL promotes intercultural dialogue and awareness among young learners.

Furthermore, research focused on English lessons in high school settings highlights the importance of modelling intercultural dialogue as a continuous process. Udovichenko and Tkachenko (2023) emphasised that effective intercultural competence development requires the incorporation of psychological attitudes such as reciprocity and mutual understanding, which can be fostered through structured interactions in the classroom.

Case studies also play a significant role in understanding the specific contexts in which CLIL operates. For instance, Juliastuti, Thayyib, and Haerazi (2023) conducted a case study at several Islamic universities in Indonesia, examining students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to intercultural activities within the framework of English literature courses (Juliastuti et al., 2023). Their mixed-method approach, combining surveys and classroom observations, provided valuable insights into how intercultural communicative competence can be nurtured through literary education.

These studies underscore the importance of employing diverse methodological approaches to capture the complex interplay between language learning and intercultural competence development. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, researchers can better understand how CLIL influences students' cultural awareness and attitudes, thereby informing more effective educational practices.

While CLIL offers significant benefits for developing intercultural competence, it also presents challenges. Effective implementation requires teachers to be proficient in both the subject matter and the target language. Additionally, there is a need for culturally responsive teaching strategies that address students' diverse backgrounds (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Addressing these challenges is essential for maximising the potential of CLIL in fostering intercultural competence. Despite the growing body of research on CLIL and intercultural competence, several gaps remain. There is a need for longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of CLIL on intercultural competence development. Additionally, more research is needed on the specific strategies and practices that effectively promote intercultural competence in CLIL classrooms across different educational contexts (Nikula, 2016).

Examining theoretical frameworks and empirical studies highlights the benefits of CLIL in promoting language proficiency and cultural understanding. Recent studies have emphasised the role of CLIL in developing intercultural competence and its impact on student's attitudes towards language learning and cultural awareness. Previous research underscores the unique potential of CLIL to enhance cultural awareness and foster positive attitudes through integrated content and language instruction. Addressing the challenges and gaps identified in the literature is crucial for informing effective CLIL practices. To investigate these aspects in detail, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies to comprehensively analyse the development of intercultural competence in CLIL classrooms and its influence on students' attitudes and cultural awareness.

Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively explore how the development of intercultural competence in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classrooms influences students' attitudes toward language learning and cultural awareness. The mixed-methods approach combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, providing a robust framework for understanding the complex interactions between CLIL practices and intercultural competence development.

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study were selected from a cohort of undergraduate students enrolled in CLIL programs at a university in Vietnam. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure a diverse representation of students across different academic years, disciplines, and levels of language proficiency. 120 students participated in the study, with 80 students completing quantitative surveys and 40 participating in qualitative interviews. The sample included students from various cultural backgrounds to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives.

3.3. Data Collection

3.3.1. Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' intercultural competence, attitudes toward language learning, and cultural awareness. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items to measure the extent of students' cultural sensitivity, openness to intercultural communication, and motivation for language learning. The survey also gathered demographic information and details about students' prior exposure to different cultures and languages. The questionnaire was administered electronically to ensure ease of access and high response rates.

3.3.2. Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants who had completed the quantitative survey. The interviews aimed to delve deeper into the students' experiences within the CLIL classrooms, focusing on how the integration of content and language learning has influenced their intercultural competence and attitudes toward language learning. Interview questions were designed to explore participants' reflections on cultural differences encountered in their coursework, their perceptions of how these experiences have shaped their cultural awareness, and the challenges they faced in adapting to diverse cultural contexts within the classroom.

3.4. Data Analysis

3.4.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software analysed the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the demographic data and the participants' levels of intercultural competence and language learning attitudes. Inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analyses, were conducted to examine the relationships between students' intercultural competence, their attitudes toward language learning, and their levels of cultural awareness. This analysis aimed to identify significant predictors of positive attitudes toward language learning within the CLIL framework.

3.4.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process of thematic analysis involved systematically coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to students' experiences in CLIL classrooms, their development of intercultural competence, and the impact on their cultural awareness and language learning attitudes. The following coding procedures were employed:

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data

The first step involved transcribing all interview recordings verbatim. Researchers then thoroughly read through the transcripts multiple times to familiarize themselves with the content, gaining an initial understanding of the data and noting any potential codes or patterns.

Step 2: Initial Coding

Next, the data were systematically coded using an open coding approach. Each transcript was carefully reviewed, and segments of text (words, phrases, or sentences) that appeared relevant to the research questions were highlighted and assigned preliminary codes. Initial codes were descriptive and captured the essence of the data, such as "cultural exchange," "language learning motivation," or "challenges in CLIL."

Step 3: Organizing Codes into Themes

After the initial coding, codes were grouped into broader themes that represented the key concepts emerging from the data. The researchers employed a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to identify themes. Inductive coding allowed themes to emerge organically from the data, while deductive coding involved applying pre-existing theoretical concepts related to intercultural competence and CLIL to guide theme development. For example, codes like "increased cultural sensitivity" and "understanding different perspectives" were grouped under the theme "Intercultural Competence Development."

Step 4: Reviewing and Refining Themes

The identified themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the data and were distinct from one another. This step involved cross-referencing themes with the original transcripts to check for consistency and coherence. During this process, some themes were merged, split, or discarded if they were not sufficiently supported by the data. For instance, initial themes such as "Cultural Awareness" and "Appreciation of Diversity" might be combined under a broader theme like "Enhanced Cultural Awareness."

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Once the themes were finalized, each theme was clearly defined and named. This involved articulating what each theme represents and how it relates to the research questions. The themes were then organized into a thematic map, which visually depicted the relationships between themes and sub-themes. This map served as a guide for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the data.

Step 6: Interpretation and Reporting

The final step involved interpreting the themes in the context of the research questions. The researchers explored how each theme related to students' experiences in CLIL classrooms, their development of intercultural competence, and the impact on their cultural awareness and language learning attitudes. The themes were reported with supporting quotations from the interview transcripts, ensuring that the participants' voices were central to the analysis.

Based on the thematic analysis, the following key themes were identified:

Intercultural Competence Development	Increased cultural sensitivity
	Understanding and appreciating different perspectives
	Navigating intercultural communication challenges
Impact on Language Learning Attitudes	Enhanced motivation to learn new languages
	Perception of language as a tool for cultural connection
	Positive shift in attitudes toward language learning

Enhanced Cultural Awareness	Recognition of cultural diversity and differences
	Reflection on one's own cultural identity
	Increased confidence in engaging with multicultural environments
Challenges in CLIL Classrooms	Language barriers in understanding cultural content
	Varied levels of cultural exposure among students
	Need for culturally responsive teaching strategies

These themes provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of CLIL on students' intercultural competence, cultural awareness, and language learning attitudes, contributing valuable insights into how CLIL can be effectively implemented in educational settings.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards set by the university's institutional review board.

Results and Findings

4.1. Quantitative Results

4.1.1. Demographic Overview

The demographic analysis of the participants revealed a diverse sample, with students representing various academic years and levels of language proficiency. The majority of the participants were second-year students (60%), followed by third-year students (30%), and a smaller proportion of first-year students (10%). The participants had varying degrees of prior exposure to different cultures, with 70% having travelled abroad or participated in international exchange programs.

4.1.2. Intercultural Competence and Language Learning Attitudes

The quantitative analysis demonstrated a significant positive correlation between students' intercultural competence and their attitudes toward language learning ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$). Students who reported higher levels of intercultural competence, characterised by greater cultural sensitivity and openness to intercultural communication, also exhibited more positive attitudes toward learning a new language. Specifically, these students expressed a stronger motivation to learn languages to engage with and understand different cultures.

The regression analysis further indicated that intercultural competence significantly predicts positive language learning attitudes ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that the development of intercultural competence within CLIL classrooms plays a crucial role in shaping students' motivations and attitudes toward language learning.

4.1.3. Cultural Awareness

The analysis also revealed that students with higher levels of intercultural competence demonstrated greater cultural awareness. Approximately 75% of the participants indicated that their experience in CLIL classrooms enhanced their understanding of cultural diversity and increased their appreciation for different cultural perspectives. The survey results showed that students felt more confident in navigating multicultural environments and were more likely to engage in intercultural interactions both inside and outside the classroom.

4.2. Qualitative Findings

4.2.1. Experiences of Intercultural Competence Development

The thematic analysis of the qualitative interviews provided deeper insights into how CLIL classrooms foster the development of intercultural competence. Participants reported that integrating content and language learning exposed them to a wide range of cultural perspectives embedded within the curriculum. This exposure was often facilitated through authentic materials, such as articles, videos, and case studies, that reflected diverse cultural contexts.

Many students highlighted the importance of classroom discussions and collaborative projects, which required them to engage with peers from different cultural backgrounds. These interactions were instrumental in challenging their preconceived notions and encouraging them to reflect on their own cultural identities. As one participant noted, "Working on group projects with students from different cultures really opened my eyes to how much we can learn from each other, not just about the subject, but about our different ways of thinking and communicating."

4.2.2. Impact on Language Learning Attitudes

The qualitative data also underscored the impact of intercultural competence on students' attitudes toward language learning. Several participants described how their experiences in CLIL

classrooms motivated them to pursue further language study as an academic requirement and a tool for meaningful intercultural engagement. One student remarked, "Learning a new language through CLIL made me realise that language is more than just grammar and vocabulary—it's a way to connect with people and understand their culture."

Students also reported that their increased cultural awareness led to a more positive and proactive approach to language learning. They expressed a greater willingness to participate in language exchanges, attend cultural events, and seek out opportunities to practice the language in real-world settings. This shift in attitude was particularly evident among students who had initially been hesitant about learning a new language but became more enthusiastic as they developed their intercultural competence.

4.2.3. Challenges and Considerations

While the findings highlighted the benefits of CLIL in developing intercultural competence, some challenges were also identified. Participants pointed out that not all students were equally comfortable with the cultural content integrated into the curriculum, particularly those with limited prior exposure to different cultures. Additionally, the language barrier posed difficulties for some students in fully engaging with the content, occasionally leading to frustration or exclusion.

The interviews also revealed that CLIL's success in fostering intercultural competence heavily depended on the teacher's ability to facilitate discussions and create an inclusive classroom environment. Participants emphasised the need for culturally responsive teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learning styles and provide additional support for students who may struggle with the dual demands of content and language learning.

4.3. Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative data provides a comprehensive understanding of how CLIL classrooms contribute to developing intercultural competence and its subsequent impact on students' attitudes toward language learning and cultural awareness. The quantitative results establish a strong link between intercultural competence and positive language learning attitudes, while the qualitative findings offer detailed insights into the experiences and challenges faced by students in CLIL settings.

The findings suggest that CLIL is an effective pedagogical approach for promoting intercultural competence, fostering positive attitudes toward language learning and enhancing cultural awareness. However, the study also highlights the importance of addressing the challenges associated with implementing CLIL, particularly in terms of supporting students who may find the approach's cultural and linguistic demands challenging.

Discussion

The results of this study provide compelling evidence for the positive impact of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) on the development of intercultural competence and its subsequent influence on students' attitudes toward language learning and cultural awareness. This discussion will synthesise the key findings and explore their implications for educational practice, while also addressing the challenges and considerations highlighted by the participants.

5.1. Intercultural Competence and Language Learning Attitudes

The significant positive correlation between intercultural competence and language learning attitudes ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that students who develop greater cultural sensitivity and openness are more motivated to learn languages. This finding is consistent with existing literature, which suggests that intercultural competence enhances students' motivation by making language learning more relevant and meaningful (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009). The regression analysis further supports this by identifying intercultural competence as a significant predictor of positive language learning attitudes ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). These results underscore the importance of integrating cultural content into language education to foster a more holistic and engaging learning experience.

5.2. Cultural Awareness in CLIL Classrooms

The quantitative findings revealed that students with higher levels of intercultural competence also demonstrated greater cultural awareness, with 75% of participants reporting enhanced understanding of cultural diversity. This aligns with previous studies that highlight the role of CLIL in promoting cultural awareness by immersing students in diverse cultural contexts through language learning (Pérez-Cañado, 2012). The qualitative data further elaborates on this, illustrating how classroom discussions, collaborative projects, and exposure to authentic materials contribute to students' cultural awareness and their ability to navigate multicultural environments. These findings suggest that CLIL not only supports language acquisition but also plays a crucial role in preparing students for global citizenship by equipping them with the skills necessary for intercultural communication.

5.3. Challenges in Implementing CLIL

While the benefits of CLIL in developing intercultural competence are evident, the study also identified several challenges that need to be addressed. Some students, particularly those with limited prior exposure to different cultures, expressed discomfort with the cultural content integrated into the curriculum. Additionally, the language barrier posed difficulties for some students, hindering their full engagement with the material. These challenges highlight the need for culturally responsive teaching strategies that can accommodate diverse learning styles and provide additional support for students who may struggle with the dual demands of content and language learning.

The success of CLIL in fostering intercultural competence also depends heavily on the teacher's ability to create an inclusive classroom environment. The qualitative findings emphasise the importance of skilled facilitation in discussions and the need for teachers to be aware of and responsive to their students' cultural and linguistic needs. This suggests that teacher training programs should include components that focus on developing culturally responsive pedagogies and strategies for effectively managing the challenges associated with CLIL.

5.4. Implications for Educational Practice

The findings of this study have important implications for educational practice. First, they highlight the potential of CLIL as an effective approach for promoting intercultural competence and positive language learning attitudes. Educators should consider integrating CLIL into their curricula to provide students with meaningful opportunities to engage with diverse cultural perspectives. However, it is also essential to recognise the challenges associated with CLIL and implement strategies that support all students in navigating this approach's cultural and linguistic demands.

To maximise the benefits of CLIL, educational institutions should provide ongoing professional development for teachers, focusing on culturally responsive teaching and the effective integration of cultural content into language instruction. Creating a supportive learning environment that encourages students to explore and reflect on cultural differences is crucial for fostering intercultural competence and preparing students for global citizenship.

Conclusion
The research project presents strong evidence that cultivating intercultural competence in CLIL courses substantially impacts students' views towards language acquisition and cultural consciousness. The results emphasise the capacity of CLIL to prepare students for global citizenship by providing them with the required skills, attitudes, and knowledge for effective intercultural communication. To effectively capitalise on the advantages of CLIL and guarantee comprehensive student involvement and advantages, it is imperative to tackle the obstacles highlighted in this study.

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of CLIL on intercultural competence and student attitudes, it is not without limitations. The sample is limited to students from a single institution, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, relying on self-reported data in both the survey and interviews may introduce biases related to social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment. Future research could address these limitations by including a larger and more diverse sample across multiple institutions and employing longitudinal designs to track changes in intercultural competence over time.

In conclusion, this study provides robust evidence that CLIL is an effective pedagogical approach for developing intercultural competence, positively influencing students' attitudes toward language learning and enhancing their cultural awareness. The findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural content into language education and highlight the potential of CLIL in

preparing students for the challenges of a globalised world. However, the study also emphasises the need to address the challenges associated with CLIL, particularly in supporting students who may find this approach's cultural and linguistic demands challenging. By addressing these challenges, educators can ensure that all students benefit from CLIL's opportunities, ultimately contributing to the development of global citizens equipped with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for effective intercultural communication.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Title: Questionnaire on Intercultural Competence, Language Learning Attitudes, and Cultural Awareness in CLIL Classrooms

Introduction: Thank you for participating in this study. The following questionnaire is designed to assess your experiences in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classrooms, focusing on developing intercultural competence, your attitudes toward language learning, and cultural awareness. Your responses are confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender:
    o Male
    o Female
    o Other
3. Year of Study:
    o First Year
    o Second Year
    o Third Year
    o Other: _____
4. Have you traveled abroad or participated in any international exchange programs?
    o Yes
    o No
    o If yes, please specify the country and duration: _____

Section 2: Intercultural Competence On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1. I am aware of the cultural differences between my own culture and others.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
2. I feel comfortable interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
3. I find it easy to understand different cultural perspectives.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
4. I actively seek opportunities to learn about other cultures.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
5. My experiences in CLIL classrooms have enhanced my understanding of cultural diversity.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Section 3: Attitudes Toward Language Learning On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1. I am motivated to learn new languages.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
2. Learning a new language is important for my personal and professional development.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
3. CLIL has made language learning more engaging for me.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
4. I see language learning as a way to connect with people from other cultures.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
5. I feel confident in learning and using new languages.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Section 4: Cultural Awareness On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1. I am aware of different countries' cultural norms and values.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
2. My participation in CLIL has increased my appreciation for cultural diversity.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
3. I feel more culturally aware after engaging in CLIL activities.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
4. I find it important to understand and respect cultural differences.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
5. I am more likely to seek out intercultural experiences after participating in CLIL.
    o 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Section 5: Open-Ended Questions

1. Can you describe an experience in a CLIL classroom that significantly impacted your understanding of cultural diversity?
2. How has your participation in CLIL influenced your motivation to learn new languages?
3. In what ways has CLIL affected your cultural awareness and sensitivity?

Appendix B: Interview on Intercultural Competence, Language Learning Attitudes, and Cultural Awareness in CLIL Classrooms

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

This interview aims to gain a deeper understanding of your experiences in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classrooms, particularly focusing on how these experiences have influenced your intercultural competence, language learning attitudes, and cultural awareness. Your responses are confidential and will contribute to our research.

Interview Questions:

1. **General Experience in CLIL Classrooms:**
   o Can you describe your overall experience in CLIL classrooms?
   o How do you feel CLIL differs from traditional language learning methods?
2. **Intercultural Competence:**
   o How do you think your intercultural competence has developed as a result of participating in CLIL?
   o Can you share any specific examples where CLIL helped you understand or appreciate cultural differences?
3. **Language Learning Attitudes:**
   o How has your attitude toward language learning changed since you started participating in CLIL?
   o Have you noticed any differences in your motivation to learn new languages? If so, how?
4. **Cultural Awareness:**
   o In what ways has CLIL increased your cultural awareness?
   o Can you provide an example of a cultural insight or lesson you learned through a CLIL activity?
5. **Challenges in CLIL:**
   o What challenges have you faced in CLIL classrooms, particularly related to cultural content?
   o How could these challenges be addressed to improve the learning experience?
6. **Impact on Future Learning:**
   o How do you think your experiences in CLIL will influence your future language learning and intercultural interactions?
   o Are there any CLIL aspects that could be improved to better support intercultural competence development?