EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Challenges in Implementing CLIL: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

This systematic review explores English as Foreign Language Teachers' perceptions and challenges to the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) across diverse contexts. 20 peer reviewed studies from 2015 and 2024 are selected in which data are synthesized from countries like Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Turkey, Spain, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Nepal, and others. Its findings reveal that CLIL is widely practices by EFL teachers as promising pedagogical approach. CLIL is found that it enhances integrated content and language learning especially in multilingual context like in Nepal. As most of the teachers perceive CLIL as an effective strategy that fosters academic engagement and language skills. Similarly, across most contexts, teachers report that CLIL implementation is more challenging because inadequate institutional support, time constraint, lank of training, insufficient materials, increased workload etc. The study also reveals methodological trends in which qualitative research is strongly referred with case study, narrative inquiry, and semi-structured interview as a research design. This study also denotes deeper understanding of CLIL from EFL teachers' perspective. This study finally contributes to both pedagogical significant and constraint in its implementation in EFL classroom.

Keywords: EFL teachers' perception, CLIL and its Implementation, CLIL in EFL Classroom, challenges and implementation

Introduction

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is a way of teaching in which learners are able to learn a subject in a foreign language such as social in English language. It means learners learn both the subject and the language together. If students learn science in English, they learn both subject and language at the same time and make better understanding. Presently, English language is strengthening as a lingua franca, as European government institutions soon recognized that fostering foreign language would be necessary

for citizens to survive in this global world. As result, they inspired the teaching and learning of more than one FL in School (European Parliament, 2009) as cited by (María et al., 2023).

CLIL was firstly used in the 1990s in Europe. In 2003, the European Commission precisely defined CLIL as a reliable and valid approach. According to the European Commision in Costa (2016), CLIL includes the language that is not commonly used, as teaching curriculum in education. Similarly CLIL is widely accepted as a teaching method that makes use of an additional language for learning both language and content as a whole (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh) as cited by Komang Budiarta et al., (2020). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an innovation method where students learn academic subject through foreign language that enhances both language and subjective comprehension of learners. It has replaced in traditional method of teaching and learning activities where grammar and vocabulary primarily focus. But in CLIL both blends learning language and subject is focused at the same time. So, students improve language skills naturally while learning subjects likes math, science, history.

The primary goal of CLIL is to make language learning procedure more meaningful and comprehensive by following the CLIL approach as a tool to explore real content. This helps learners practice the language in practical and authentic situation to develop natural setting of learning activities. According to Komang Budiarta (2020), CLIL has developed faster as one of the crucial approaches, and some research findings perfectly shown that learners following this approach obtain more and wide range of vocabulary Catalan & Llach (2017). CLIL also helps understanding inter-cultural awareness among the learners. Similarly, students are able to enhance all four language skills in better way and it is above the average level what is expected for teaching younger learners (University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, 2011). In addition to Quazizi (2016) makes sure that CLIL approach in education help students to obtain both proficiency of additional language and the subject with content. The additional language is mainly used for medium of instruction to study or deliver the content and the contents are used vice-versa Bonces (2012) as mentioned by (Komang Budiarta, 2020).

Similarly, CLIL is known as a teaching method, appeared in the European educational curriculum in the last decade of the twentieth century in the process of searching foreign language for teaching and learnig with new concept. That was accepted by European educational policies as the favor of multilingualism, such as White Paper in 1995, that pointed out for learning two languages in addition to one's mother tongue or common European Framework of Reference for Language of the Council of Europe in 2001 that defined language proficiency in six levels, AIto C2 in order to clarify the enhncing proficincy of foreign language (henceforth, FL), CLIL has been recognized as one of the striking innovation in Europe. The inclusion of CLIL in European education has supposed to shift in paradism for foreign language teaching. That

approach has implied compulsorily and it has used as an innovative methodology in European education as mention by José María Campillo, (2019).

In the context of Nepal Paudel (2024) Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an instructional teaching approach in which learners learn language and content with the means of foreign language. CLIL is an approach through which two things language and content learn simultaneously. In a CLIL classroom, learners have to use an additional language, like math, science; history etc. to learn content that significantly enhances the language of learners, (Eslami & Geng, 2021). To know how CLIL functions, we must look at how differet subjects use differently, the kinds of writing and reading used in those subjects, and how learners interact in the classroom. Likewise, Llinares (2015) states that CLIL as a successful method of teaching foreign language where both teachers and students need to aware about different way of learning skills as per different subjects that helps how students and teachers use language, interact each other's and evaluate the information as cited by (Poudel, 2024).

The concept of CLIL started from Europe and it was given more attention in including in education as formal method of teaching and learning activities. Recent studies show that CLIL enhances vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and inter-cultural awareness more effectively that traditional way of teaching focused on grammar and vocabulary teaching (Catalan & Llach, 2017; Komang Burdiarta et al., 2020). Similarly, learners exposed the CLIL often excellent with their peers in both language proficiency and subject content. Likewise, Eslami and Geng (2001) further highlights the authenticity and practicality of CLIL learning environments, learners are interested to learn language with purposeful menners.

In Nepal, the introduction of CLIL is relatively new term for EFL teachers. Poudel, (2024) defines CLIL as a pedagogical strategy that learners engage with both subject matter and language with the medium of foreign language especially English. Although, the practical application of CLIL in Nepalese context, especially in public schools is seen more issue. Because limited digital access, inadequate teacher training, and rigid curriculum structure cause several challenges.

Overall, CLIL shows significant pedagogical advantages especially in Europe, but literature review highlights its challenges and problems related to its implementation in diverse educational setting. Mainly its practical implementation remains challenging in non-European contexts like Nepal. Existing studies focus primarily on its effectiveness, development system and necessity. Therefore my study focuses on how EFL teachers in Nepal perceive challenges that encounter and implemented it with limited resources and trainings. So, these aspects bridge the gap and offer the insights in the Nepalese EFL teaching methods.

The research questions of my study are as follows:

a) What are EFL teachers' perceptions regarding Content and Language Integrated Learning?

b) What methodological trends are emerging in the implementation of CLIL in the EFL classroom?

Method

This study follows a systematic review method, aligned with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta Analysis (PRISMA) approach 2020. According to Sumbul, (2024), PRISMA 2020 prefers revised reporting guidelines for systematic reviews which reflect improvement in findings, selecting, evaluating and synthesizing studies (Page, 2021). It contains a long checklist with reporting instructions per item, 27-item checklist, PRISMA 2020 abstract checklist, and revised flow diagrams for the original and revised reviews (Page, 2021). The tool is to be used in systematic reviews that entail either synthesis, such as paired meta-analysis or other statistical approaches of synthesis or do not there is synthesis integration, for example, when only one fitting paper is uncovered (Page, 2021). It can be employed to update, original, or intermittently updated (commonly referred to as "living") systematic reviews M. J. Page, (2021) as cited by Sumbul, (2024).

While searching the relevant studies, I used specific keywords like "EFL teachers' perception," CLIL and its implementation, "challenges of CLIL," "content and language integrated language learning in EFL," on Google Scholar and ERIC databases. I went through TESOL Quarterly and Tribhuvan University Journal (TU's Faculty of Education) for additional support of my study.

Identification of studies via databases and registers

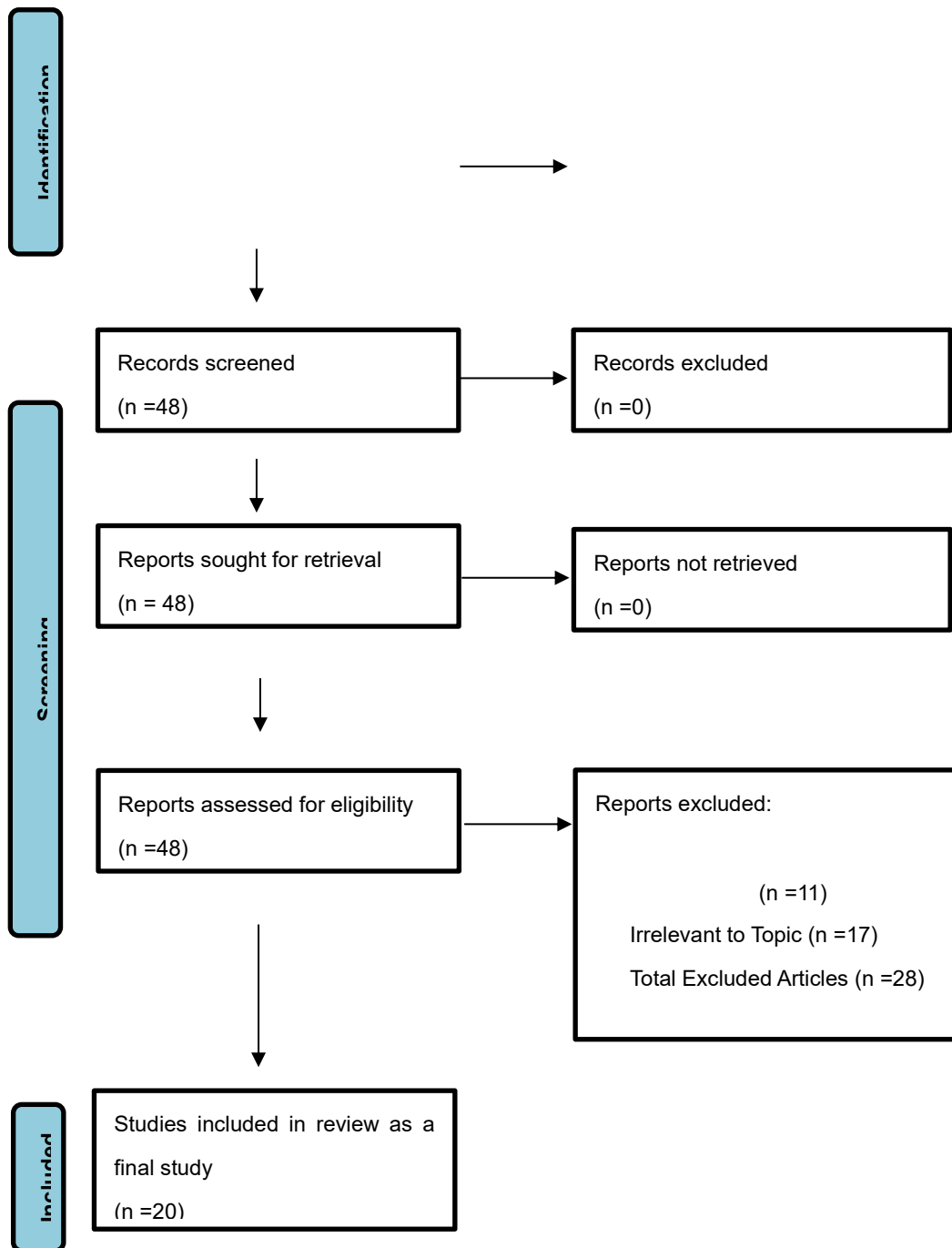| Records identified from:	Records removed *before screening:*
Google Scholar (n =46)	
ERIC (n =19)	Corrupted and inaccessible studies (n =4)
Total Studies (65)	

Figure 1: PRISMA flow chart

In this systematic review, data were collected from databases: Google Scholar and ERIC. The studies were based on published between 2015 to 2024 and literature related to EFL teachers' perception, challenges and implementation of CLIL. Initially, 65 articles were downloaded (n=65). Among them, 4 articles were found corrupted and inaccessible (n=4), and 13 were identified as duplicates (n=13) that all were removed and left 48 articles (n=48) selected for full-text screening.

For the further eligibility of assessment, 11 articles (n=11) were excluded because they were not as defined

timeframe (before 2015). And 17 articles (n=17) articles were deemed irrelevant as they were not suitable with the core themes of EFL teachers' perceptions or CLIL related challenges. Finally, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria allowing with the PRISMA follow chart 2020 guidelines, 20 articles were selected for the final systematic review.

Table 1: EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Challenges in Implementing CLIL

S.N	Author(s) Published year	Method	Thematic concentration	Context
1	Olga Vitchenko (2017)	Qualitative method and narrative inquiry approach	The article addresses stakeholders' attitudes towards CLIL in Kazakhstan's multilingual education. It emphasizes the promotion of Kazakh, Russian, and English. CLIL improves subject and language learning.	Kazakhstan
2	Phuong Anh Pham and Aylin Unaldi (2022)	In this article qualitative workshop case study is used.	This research investigates cross-curricular collaboration in one Vietnamese CLIL programme. It discovers that the teachers set content and language functions, with minimal training and variable collaboration. The research indicates the necessity of improved professional development and	Vietnam

			curriculum support.	
3	Akın Metlí and Dinçer Akıs (2022)	. Here qualitative research and case study approach is applied.	This research examines the problems Turkish schools face in the adoption of CLIL like inadequate training, resources, and curriculum integration- and emphasizes measures such as collaboration among teachers, continued support, and modification of content.	Turkey
4	Kristiina Skinnari (2020)	Qualitative descriptive and case study method is used.	This research uncovers how CLIL teachers in three different European nations face issues and manage them, depending on help that they receive and their situation.	Austria, Finland and Spain
5	Pimsiri Taylor (2020)	Qualitative research, semi-structure interview based on interpretive design is used.	This research reveals the perception of Thai and foreign teachers concerning their competence in CLIL and language usage and validates the fact that Thai teachers are less confident compared to foreign teachers.	Thailand

6	Ahmet Cihat Yavuz, Ali Öztüfekçi, Aybüke Demet Ören, Ayten Kaplan, Çiğdem Yilmaz Uzunkaya (2020)	Times New Roman	This research analyzes how Turkish secondary school teachers perceive CLIL advantages and difficulties and what kind of support they require to carry it out successfully.	Turkey
7	Kamonwan Charunsri (2019)	Quantitative survey design is used.	This research responds to the problems of Thai teachers in implementing CLIL and provides guidance on how to develop and implement appropriate materials incorporating local culture and language for enhancing teaching and engaging learners.	Thailand
8	Uzma Manzur Hashmi (2019)	Quantitative survey design is used for collecting data.	This research examines Saudi EFL instructors' attitudes toward CLIL, which confirms that even though CLIL is not extensively implemented, the instructors notice its advantages but are noticed problems such as inadequate training and practical difficulties in implementing it.	Saudi Arabia

9	José María Campillo, Raquel Sánchez & Pedro Miralles (2019)	Qualitative research with case study design is used.	CLIL is said to be useful in teaching Science and Social Science by Spanish primary teachers. They have language assistants but require additional training, support, and resources.	Spain
10	Campillo, Sánchez & Miralles (2019)	Qualitative method and thematic analysis design is applied.	Teachers are supposed to think that CLIL helps in learning language but need additional help, training, and materials from government.	Spain
11	Ana Isabel García Abellán (2022)	Qualitative method is used as research method.	Teachers in Murcia perceive CLIL differently based on their teaching experiences and training.	Spain
12	Debora Infante, Guido Benvenuto, Emilio Lastrucci (2020)	Mixed method: qualitative and quantitative methods are used here.	Experienced Italian teachers found that using CLIL is beneficial and helps in developing skills but they face problems in method.	Italy
13	Jhon Eduardo Mosquera Pérez (2022)	Qualitative research with phenomenological design and semi-structure interview is used as method.	This article shows the teaching CLIL is both opportunities and challenges but teaching English is not sufficient, that there needs to have	Colombia

			proper understanding and preparation to work it.	
14	Eleni Griva Angeliki Deligianni (2017)	Qualitative research and semi-structure interview is used.	This article identifies that EFL teachers face challenges in its implementation.	Greece
15	Celina Salvador-Garcia and Oscar Chiva-Bartoll (2017	Qualitative and semi-structure interview is used.	CLIL helps learners to learn language in physical class without changing the subjects but it increases teacher's workload and causes stress as well as low motivation.	Spain
16	Gaby Khoury and Narin Zakarian (2023)	Qualitative phenomenological method is used.	The teachers in Lebanon face several challenges while using CLIL because they have no proper idea about it. Other factors like limited time and resources, poor teamwork between language and subject teachers.	Lebanon
17	María Paz Azparren-Legarre and María Camino Bueno-Alastuey (2023)	Qualitative research and exploratory method is used here.	Contextual challenges make teaching CLIL difficult but proper training help to navigate CLIL successfully.	Spain
18	I Komang Budiarta, I Wayan	Qualitative research and case study design is used.	It explores how EFL teachers of Bali,	

	Rasna, Ni Nyoman Padmadewi, Luh Putu Artini (2020)		Indonesia view CLIL while using it for teaching English with content.	Indonesia
19	Ganga Ram Paudel, Bharat Prasad Neupane, Laxman Gnawali, Sagun Shrestha (2024)	Qualitative research and narrative inquiry design is used.	This article explores that how Nepalese urban English teachers experience and perceive CLIL, and shows the benefits of its using in the classroom. It reveals limited sources, training, time consuming and no support of government.	Nepal
20	Víctor Pavón Vázquez, Marta Prieto Molina, Fco. Javier Ávila López (2015)	Qualitative research and interview and observation are used.	It explores how both teachers and students perceive CLIL oriented language to improve Task Based activities primarily learners from low level of language proficiency.	Spain

The above mentioned table 1 shows a total of 20 articles that have been reviewed in this study from different contexts. The varieties of countries includes Kazakhstan (n=1), Veitnam (n=1), Turkey (n=2), Austria, Findland, and Spain (n=1), Thailand (n=2), Saudi Arabia (n=1), Spain (n=6), Italy (n=1), Colombia (n=1), Greece (n=1), Lebanon (n=1), Indonesia (n=1), and Nepal (n=1). These studies are based on published 2015 and 2024 that focus on perceptions, experiences, challenges and benefits related to its implementation of CLIL in the classroom as a method. They are from different contexts with unique looks toward CLIL.

For the data analysis process a comprehensive table was constructed including thematic concentration, key categories, and influencing factors for CLIL. Also covers the findings and analytical remarks and this

table was developed after a thorough reading of all selected articles. These articles were systematically compared, contrasted, and synthesized to answer the first research question. Similarly, data collections process, methodology, and challenges like limited training, lack of resources, institutional support etc. are noted to address the second questions.

Discussion and Findings

In this section, it shows a synthesis of the key insights derived from 20 systematically reviewed studies in addresses the two core research questions: (a) EFL teachers' perceptions regarding Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and (b) the challenges and problems they encounter in its implementation in EFL classroom. By analyzing 20 studies from diverse contexts from 2015 to 2024, here common themes, variations, and critical issues have been identified. Similarly, findings are thematically organized to provide comprehensive understanding. It also reveals the teachers' perceptions, experiences, belief and practical barriers integrating CLIL in the classroom.

Teachers' Perception of CLIL in EFL Classroom

In the 20 reviewed articles, EFL teachers' perceptions regarding CLIL are recognized as opportunity as well as challenges. Teachers have widely appreciated that CLIL enhances integrated language and content learning and that helps for students' engagement and also supports in multi-lingual classroom settings. It also contributes in improving achievement in both content and language subject. For example, Vitchenko (2017) states that how stakeholders in Kazakhstan view CLIL positively for promoting trilingualism and improving academic writing for learners. As Budiarta et al., (2020) identifies teachers' positive attitudes towards CLIL and its ability teaching English with subject content.

Most of the EFL teachers often express their strong belief that CLIL plays significant role in language learning but they also point the gaps in preparation and systemic support. While talking in Spain, Pavon Vazquez et al., (2015) reveal that both teachers and students find crucial method that helps in task-based English proficiency primarily for lower level learner. However the teachers of Spain need adequate help, training, instructional support and positivism of school administration. In other European context, Skinnari (2020) reports that teachers in Austria, Findland and Spain prefer CLIL but there is lacks of training, government supports and collaborative learning among staff.

Some studies are more concerned on teachers' competences and confidence frequently that is required to emerge. In the context of Thailand, Taylor (2020) addressed that local teachers feel themselves as less competence in CLIL than the foreign teachers. They revealed their gaps in linguistic confidence and

pedagogical readiness. Similarly, Charunsri (2019) found that Thai teachers suffer with material design and learners' engagement. The Thai teachers also talks about importance of culturally adapted resources regarding CLIL integrated learning. In the context of Lebanon, Khoury and Zakarian (2023) investigates that due to lack of training, support, infrastructure as well as insufficient collaboration with resource constraints contribute negative perception of CLIL.

Some studies show that training and professional development are significantly influenced the teachers perceptions regarding CLIL. Article such as Pham and Unaldi (2022) in the context of Veinam and Metli and Akis (2022) in the context of Turkey indicate that insufficient training and support lead teachers more challenges in its implementation. Because teachers are like infant and struggling in collaborating and integrating CLIL in real classroom due to insufficient idea. Moreover, Infante et al.,(2020) in the context of Italy proves that teachers are positive of CLIL to foster their skills but they face challenges in methodological design that requires to address.

Furthermore, some articles view CLIL as intellectually and professionally important and stimulating for learners. In the context of Colombia (2022) describes that how teachers view CLIL as both challenges and opportunities that show deeper understanding and preparation for its successful implementation. Similarly, while talking on Greece, Griva and Deligianni (2017) reports that teachers face several barriers in implementation of CLIL in their professional life even they perceive it as a progressive teaching pedagogical shift in the field of EFL teaching. In the same periphery, in Middle Eastern and South Asia context, the challenges are seen in the central area. As Hashmi (2019) mentions in the context of Saudi Arabia that teachers view CLIL as a significant in theory but they face practical limitations such as lack of training and curriculum alignment in real manners. In Nepal too, Poudel et at., (2024) identifies that teachers in urban schools in Nepalese context perceive CLIL as a positive approach that provides significant benefits to learners but lack of training, limited resources and systemic issue leads challenge in its implementation.

Challenges of CLIL in Its Implementation

The challenges and implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is various educational contexts show that they face several similar or common types of problems as their primary issue regarding implementation of CLIL in EFL classroom. The systematic review conducted between 2015 and 2024 across different countries to explore its practical and real benefits, challenges and pedagogical design. Despite the recognition of several benefits of CLIL which enhances subject and language skills together, teachers face multiple issues either practical or contextual barriers. And that barriers stand to hinder in implementation of CLIL.

Primary challenge is reported that there is lack of adequate training, professional development for teachers and limited resources. For Example the study from Turky Akin Metli & Dincer Akis, 2022; Yavuz et al., (2020), from Saudi Arabia Hashmi, 2019), from Lebanon (Khoury & Zakarian, 2023) notify that teachers often agree in unprepared due to lack of training and support and also have limited sources regarding CLIL that causes their confidence and competence. Similarly, in the context of Spain Campillo et a., 2019; Azparren-Legarre & Bueno- Alastuey (2023) indicate the necessity of CLIL for professional development in EFL field and they appeal to have sufficient help from government. Likewise from Nepal, Poudel et al., (2024) also highlights the importance of CLIL in urban area of Nepal. But teachers feel that they are unable to get support like training, fund and infrastructure.

Another significant barrier is noted the limited availability of resources and materials regarding the CLIL context. This scarcity causes the quality and creativity of lesson plan and delivery of teachers. As mentioned in Turkey context Akin Metli & Dincer Akis (2022) and Spanish context Salvidor-Garcia & Chiva-Bartoll (2017) suggest that without adequate teaching materials and institutional help teachers always oblige to struggle to implement CLIL. Time pressures and workload has become too critical concerns. Spanish teachers Salvador-Garcia & Chiva-Bartoll (2017) indicate that CLIL raises their workload, raises stress and decreased motivation. The same issues of time pressures and lack of coordination between language and content teachers are indicated in Lebanon Khoury & Zakarian (2023) and Vietnam Pham & Unaldi (2022). This interdisciplinary coordination deficit also hinders CLIL implementation.

Moreover, institutional and systemic support is usually absent or lacking in CLIL environment. Various research mainly in the context of Turkey, Spain and Nepal (Turkey: Akın Metlí & Dinçer Akıs, 2022; Spain: Campillo et al., 2019; Nepal: Paudel et al., 2024) indicates that the absence of administrative support and absence of policy guidelines hinder the sustainable practice of CLIL. Teachers are alone cannot fulfill the all requirements with the Cumulative complexities of integrating language and content instruction.

At last, issues of language competence of instructors as well as background also influence CLIL achievement. Thai local instructors, for instance, possess comparatively less confidence in the use of their native language than their foreign peers that stands as a great barrier due to of language as well as CLIL pedagogical proficiency. (Taylor, 2020; Charunsri, 2019). In the same way, Greece's study also identifies cultural and contextual challenges with EFL instructors' usage of CLIL (Griva & Deligianni, 2017).

Methodological Trends

This systematic review study, based on 20 selected articles reveals the distinct methodological trends while

exploring EFL teachers' perceptions and challenges face by them regarding CLIL implementation across the diverse national contexts. The majority of the studies (17 out of 20) employed qualitative research methods. They highlight a strong inclination towards understanding of CLIL as well as lived experiences of teachers through in-depth exploration. Similarly case study research design is frequently applied to investigate institutional and regional perceptions of CLIL. For example, (Metli & Akis, 2022; Campillo et al., 2019; Budiarta et al., 2020), are clearly offering the contextual insights of CLIL.

Semi-structure interview are also artistically used for prominent data collection tools that allows researchers to capture first hand data which is thought more reliable. It also helps and it is aligned perfectly in those articles that I have selected. They have played crucial role for narrating teachers' belief, perceptions, and challenges in implementation of CLIL. For example (Taylor, 2020; Griva & Deligianni, 2017; Salvador-Garcia & Chiva-Bartoll, 2017) use interview as a data collection tools that has made study more trustworthy. In addition, some studies apply the narrative inquiry and phenomenological approaches like (Vitchenko, 2017; Mosquera Perez, 2022; Paudel et al.,2024), emphasizes the subjective meaning making tools but shows the limited resources and time constraints causes hinders in its implementation.

However, just limited studies are found on the basis of quantitative methods. Only two articles apply as common method of research. For example Charunsri, 2019; Hashmi, 2019) have used as quantitative methods with survey design to quantify teachers' attitudes, preparedness, and perceptions regarding CLIL' effectiveness. In the same way, two articles that are based on mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) for example (yavuz et al., 2020; Infante at al., 2020) employ this mixed method designs for data analysis. Furthermore, several studies have adopted interpretive exploratory framework to explore perception of EFL teachers, challenges and barriers that they face. Majorly, (Taylor, 2020; Azparren- Legarre & Bueno-Alastuey, 2023) have used to delve into how teachers understand and navigate CLIL within their unique socio-political context and different pedagogical practice. Overall the methodological trend used in selected studies indicates a clear preference for qualitative research. This also reveals context-sensitive and teacher centre methods that are applied.

Conclusion and Implication

This systematic review provides comprehensive insights into EFL teachers' perception and the challenges faced by them in several ways for implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning. The study, perceptions regarding CLIL from 20 peer reviewed articles published from 2015 and 2024 in different education contexts of different countries. In these studies CLIL is widely perceived as an innovative and beneficial pedagogical approach that enhances integrated content and language learning activities. Similarly, its implementation are has shown great challenging due to limited source, lack of training and

insufficient teaching material.

Teachers consistently recognize CLIL as an opportunity that enhances the learners' academic engagement, language skills and cultural knowledge. It also supports to develop subjective comprehension and language proficiency too. It equally helps in promoting bilingualism and even in trilingual context as benefited in the context of Kazakhstan, Spain, and Italy. In the same way, across all reviewed contexts including Thailand, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Nepal and Colombia teachers are very enthusiastic and willing to implement CLIL in their classroom but often suffered by practical challenges. These challenges are insufficient training, lack of pedagogical resources, increased workload. Inadequate institutional support, limited training from concerned authority and weak government policy also stand as barriers in implementation of CLIL.

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