



EXPLORING VIETNAMESE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCES, AND PERSPECTIVES IN CLIL IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

In Vietnam, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has been introduced as an innovative approach to simultaneously develop elementary students' language skills and academic subject knowledge. This study aims to investigate elementary teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on CLIL implementation in Vietnam. Employing a mixed-methods design, this study administered a questionnaire comprising 20 five-point Likert-scale items to 100 teachers in the pilot phase and 183 teachers in the main phase, and conducted individual interviews with six teachers using nine open-ended questions. The findings reveal that although teachers possessed basic insights, relevant experience, and positive perspectives on CLIL (with mean scores exceeding 3.6), they faced several challenges related to professional development, collaboration and administrative support, and disparities in students' language proficiency. In addition, teachers' knowledge and experience were positively associated with their perspectives on CLIL ($r = .68, p < .001$; $r = .52, p < .001$, respectively), with knowledge emerging as a significant predictor ($\beta = .62, p < .001$), and a positive trend was observed between teachers' language proficiency and their attitudes toward CLIL. Based on the participants' responses, this study proposes several suggestions concerning training programmes, cooperation, and administrative support to enhance the effectiveness of CLIL implementation in Vietnamese elementary schools.

Keywords: Bilingual education, CLIL implementation, primary school, teacher, Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected and globalized world, being multilingual and having strong subject knowledge have become increasingly important, as they enable individuals to work successfully in specific fields using an additional or foreign language (Kováčiková & Luprichová, 2023; Mim, 2023). To enhance citizens' multilingual competencies and subject knowledge, many countries, including Vietnam, have implemented bilingual education as a prominent initiative (Do, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Accordingly, various approaches, such as English immersion programmes, English as a medium of instruction, and content and language integrated learning (CLIL), have been promoted in many educational contexts (Chen, 2023; Kao, 2022). Among these initiatives, CLIL, which marks a fundamental change in language education, has been widely adopted to simultaneously develop students' content knowledge and language competencies (Kao, 2022; Kováčiková & Luprichová, 2023).

In CLIL implementation, teachers are the main agents as their subject knowledge and teaching skills directly impact the learning process and outcomes of students. In addition, as teachers engage directly with the realities of classroom practices, they gain an in-depth understanding of both the advantages



and challenges associated with CLIL implementation (Szczeniak & Luna, 2022). Accordingly, the success and sustainability of CLIL implementation heavily rely on teachers' expertise. Therefore, investigating their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, as well as the factors that influence their expertise in CLIL, is significantly essential to propose suitable recommendations, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of CLIL.

There has been growing international interest in research on teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and experiences with CLIL implementation in elementary schools (Campillo et al., 2019; Szczeniak & Luna, 2022). However, most of these studies have been conducted in European and American countries, with limited attention to Asian contexts (Chen, 2023; Kao, 2022). In Vietnam, several studies have examined CLIL implementation (Do, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). However, they have primarily focused on teachers' expertise across various educational levels, without specifically addressing the elementary level. At this stage, students are in a critical period of simultaneous cognitive, linguistic, and conceptual development, making them particularly sensitive to instructional design in bilingual contexts (Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020; Coyle et al., 2010; Rutgers et al., 2020). In addition, they are still developing foundational academic concepts alongside emergent literacy skills in both their first and additional languages (Coyle et al., 2010; Rutgers et al., 2020). Consequently, CLIL implementation at the elementary level places greater demands on teachers' expertise, particularly their capacities to scaffold language, mediate meaning, and prevent conceptual misunderstandings (Banegas et al., 2024; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Karimi et al., 2017; Kováčiková & Luprichová, 2023; Pérez Cañado, 2016; Szczeniak & Luna, 2022). This highlights a clear need for further investigation. To address the above gaps, this present study explores teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, as well as which factors affect their expertise in CLIL implementation in elementary schools in Vietnam. Based on the findings, possible practices were proposed to contribute to the success of CLIL implementation in Vietnamese elementary schools.

To achieve the research objectives, this study is grounded in the theoretical framework of CLIL, which conceptualizes learning as the simultaneous development of subject knowledge and additional language proficiency through instruction that integrates content and language objectives (Coyle et al., 2010). Following Coyle's (2007) 4Cs framework, CLIL brings together content, communication, cognition, and culture, highlighting that meaningful content learning should be accompanied by purposeful language use and cognitively engaging tasks. CLIL is further informed by constructivist and mediated learning accounts of classroom interaction, where language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a key resource for conceptual development (Coyle et al., 2010). Accordingly, classroom strategies, such as adapted input, visual mediation, and teacher revoicing, are best understood as temporary scaffolds that maintain disciplinary demand while enabling students to progressively appropriate academic language, rather than as simplifications that dilute content rigor (Gibbons, 2015). In this framework, teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives become pivotal in shaping the effectiveness of CLIL implementation.

Literature Review

Content Language Integrated Learning in Elementary Schools

Although numerous definitions of CLIL have emerged, they all share a common emphasis on its dual nature, which simultaneously combines teaching both subject content and a foreign language (Coyle & Mars, 2010; Karimi et al., 2017). This approach allows students to learn subjects using the target language, which enhances their understanding of academic content and language skills. This is because CLIL requires students to use the target language to analyze and communicate the learning materials and complete tasks relevant to real-life situations (Banegas et al., 2024; Karimi et al., 2017). The significant benefits of CLIL for elementary students have been highlighted in numerous existing studies. Above all, CLIL not only develops students' language abilities but also helps them connect their language skills with content knowledge in a practical way (García, 2011; McDougald, 2015). This approach often utilizes the 4Cs model, including content, cognition, communication, culture, to ensure that language learning occurs contextually and balances academic content comprehension with



broader cultural awareness (Coyle, 2007; Coyle et al., 2010). Consequently, it contributes to students' intercultural skills development, given that content learning often involves cross-cultural perspectives critical in today's global world (García, 2011).

Second, CLIL boosts students' motivation and engagement to learn the language, as they can directly see the application of language in practical situations (Banegas et al., 2024; Karimi et al., 2017; McDougald, 2015). Through this approach, students see a direct connection between language proficiency and academic content understanding, increasing their interest in learning. CLIL also develops students' cognitive skills, as it encourages deeper thinking about complex concepts that involve both language and academic content (Coyle & Mars, 2010; McDougald, 2015). Furthermore, CLIL prepares students to face increasingly complex global challenges, equipping them with transferable skills essential in a multilingual and multicultural world (García, 2011).

Although there are numerous considerable benefits CLIL could bring, its implementation has faced a wave of criticism. A major concern is the absence of a well-defined framework, which frequently leads to misinterpretation of its essential features by key stakeholders (Cenoz et al., 2014). While some educators have appreciated that CLIL is flexible and adaptable to various educational settings, others have argued that this same lack of clarity makes it difficult to properly implement CLIL (Cenoz et al., 2014; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022).

Challenges teachers have faced in CLIL implementation in elementary schools

In CLIL implementation, teachers play a key role as main agents who experience the realities of classroom practices, they gain an in-depth understanding of both the advantages and challenges (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017). In other words, the success and sustainability of CLIL implementation heavily rely on teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and perspectives. Consequently, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate elementary teachers' expertise regarding CLIL implementation (Szczesniak & Luna, 2022).

Although the advantages of CLIL have been clearly demonstrated, various challenges exist in its implementation (Pérez Cañado, 2018a). The most significant challenge lies in teachers' insufficient professional knowledge. Specifically, a significant number of teachers lacked familiarity with CLIL and only had a general or unclear understanding of what it entails (Savic, 2010; McDougald, 2015; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022). When teachers possess limited knowledge of how to implement CLIL effectively, they undermine its effectiveness (Pérez Cañado, 2018a). Furthermore, their insufficient methodological expertise may lead to their misconceptions of CLIL, ultimately hindering its successful implementation in actual classrooms (Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020).

The second challenge relates to inadequate professional training programs (Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020; Campillo et al., 2019; Chen, 2023). In fact, existing in-service training programs have been criticized as inadequate or misaligned with teachers' practical needs (Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020). In addition, professional development opportunities are limited for teachers (Custodio Espinar & García Ramos, 2020), which resulted in a lack of qualified teachers (Pérez Cañado, 2016). These findings highlight the need for effective training programs to ensure teachers understand and implement CLIL effectively (Milla Lara & Casas Pedrosa, 2018).

On the other hand, teacher collaboration in teaching CLIL represents another considerable challenge. Many studies have indicated a lack of collaboration among teachers (Moreno de Diezmas, 2019; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022). One reason is that legislation in many schools does not facilitate timetable coordination, leaving teachers to manage the organization on their own (Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020). This has led to criticism of school administrators and education authorities for failing to provide adequate support to CLIL teachers (Pavón Vázquez & Méndez García, 2017).

In terms of students, while CLIL has positively influenced their language competencies, learning motivation, self-confidence, intercultural awareness, and cognitive abilities (García, 2011; McDougald, 2015; Milla Lara & Casas Pedrosa, 2018), a significant number of students risk falling behind, primarily due to their limited language proficiency (Romo Escudero & Durán-Martínez, 2019;



Chen, 2023). In other words, learning diversity has not received sufficient attention (Durán-Martínez & Beltrán-Llavador, 2020). If these issues are not addressed, they may undermine the goal of providing equal learning opportunities for all students (García, 2011; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022).

To summarize, existing studies have reported major challenges that teachers face in CLIL implementation, including insufficient subject knowledge, limited practical experiences, weak collaboration among teachers, lack of administrative support, and students' low language proficiency. As a result, many teachers feel unprepared to teach CLIL (McDougald, 2015; Chen, 2023). However, most of these studies focus on European and American countries like Colombia or Spain, where English is taught as a foreign language, and thus offer limited insights into Asian contexts like Vietnam, where recent curriculum reforms have emphasized bilingual education at the elementary level (Do, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024).

In Vietnam, CLIL remains in its early stages and faces major obstacles, including insufficient training programs, policy support, administrative support, and collaboration (Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). To address these gaps, this study first aims to investigate teachers' knowledge, practical experiences, and perspectives on CLIL in Vietnamese elementary schools, with the goal of identifying strengths to sustain and challenges to overcome by proposing possible solutions.

Factors influencing teachers' perspectives on CLIL implementation

The successful implementation of CLIL is directly linked to teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022). Existing studies have indicated that teachers' knowledge of CLIL principles and methodologies is foundational to their perceptions of its practicality and effectiveness in the actual classrooms (Cenoz et al., 2014; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010; Rutgers et al., 2020).

Accordingly, teachers who possessed a thorough understanding of CLIL, such as its dual-focused approach on both language and content learning, tended to perceive it as an opportunity to enhance student language proficiency and subject knowledge (Rutgers et al., 2020), and held more positive attitudes toward its implementation (Cenoz et al., 2014). Conversely, those with limited or only basic knowledge viewed it as a daunting challenge (Rutgers et al., 2020), leading to doubt and hesitation that hindered their willingness to adopt CLIL practices (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010). These findings underscore the need for adequate training programmes that equip teachers with both theoretical and practical knowledge.

Another factor found to contribute to teachers' differing perceptions of CLIL is their teaching experiences. Pérez Cañado (2018b), Durán-Martínez et al. (2020), and Campillo-Ferrer et al. (2020) revealed significant contrasts between experienced and novice teachers in their perspectives on CLIL implementation. The former expressed more positive perspectives across various aspects of CLIL implementation, while the latter often demonstrated more cautious or critical views (Pérez Cañado, 2018b). Second, these teachers were more aware of the difficulties associated with CLIL and emphasized the value of collaboration for successful implementation. They also appreciated language assistants more fully and employed various tools to evaluate student learning (Durán-Martínez et al., 2020; Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020). These practical experiences, whether positive or negative, significantly affect their perception of CLIL and their willingness to adopt it in their classrooms.

Language proficiency also plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' perceptions of CLIL implementation. Lasagabaster & Sierra (2010) and Pérez Cañado (2018b) demonstrated a clear correlation between higher language proficiency and more favorable attitudes toward the CLIL initiative, as greater proficiency enhances teachers' confidence in delivering content through a foreign language. In contrast, insufficient language proficiency can lead to increased anxiety and hesitation, limiting teachers' willingness to fully embrace CLIL methodologies (Coyle et al., 2010; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010). These findings collectively underscore the importance of supporting teachers' language development to encourage positive perspectives on CLIL implementation.



Overall, international literature has identified three key factors shaping teachers' perspectives on CLIL implementation: knowledge, teaching experiences, and language proficiency. However, most existing studies focus on teachers in European and American countries, with little attention to those in Asian contexts, including Vietnam. While this body of research is valuable, its transferability to Asian contexts is not straightforward because CLIL in Asia is often embedded in rapid bilingual policy initiatives and uneven system readiness, which can shape classroom language practices and teachers' orientations to CLIL (Chen, 2023; Kao, 2022). In Vietnam, recent studies have suggested that CLIL remains at an early stage and is marked by tensions between policy aspirations and school-level capacity, particularly regarding teacher expertise, collaboration, and institutional support (Do, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Importantly, despite the pedagogical sensitivity of the elementary phase, when students develop foundational concepts alongside emergent additional-language literacy (Coyle et al., 2010; Rutgers et al., 2020), Vietnam-based CLIL research has primarily focused on education in general (Do, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024), without paying attention to this elementary education level. In addition, prior studies have seldom explored teacher expertise through an integrated approach that simultaneously considers teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perceptions, as well as the contextual conditions that enable or constrain CLIL implementation (Coyle et al., 2010; Pérez Cañado, 2016; Rutgers et al., 2020).

To address the gaps above, the second aim of this study is to examine how teacher-related factors influence teachers' views on CLIL implementation in Vietnamese elementary schools in Ho Chi Minh City. In doing so, the study aims to refine what teacher expertise entails for CLIL in Vietnamese elementary schools and to offer evidence to inform more context-responsive professional development and support mechanisms. The three following questions are proposed to respond to the two main objectives of this study:

1. What levels of knowledge, experiences, perspectives, collaboration, and administrative support in CLIL implementation do elementary teachers report?
2. What are the relationships between teachers' knowledge and experiences and their perspectives on CLIL?
3. Is there any significant difference in teachers' perspectives on CLIL across groups with different levels of language proficiency?

METHOD

Research Procedures

This study was carried out over six months, from September 2024 to February 2025. To gain a holistic understanding of Vietnamese elementary teachers' expertise in CLIL implementation, a mixed-methods design was employed (Cohen et al., 2018). Quantitative data was collected through an online questionnaire due to the wide distribution of the target population across Ho Chi Minh City, a metropolitan area in Vietnam where many school systems have implemented bilingual education programs (HCMC DET, 2017). Meanwhile, qualitative data was obtained from semi-structured interviews.

To explore Vietnamese primary teachers' knowledge, perspectives, and experiences in CLIL, this study was conducted according to the following steps:

Step 1: Review international literature to select a suitable data collection instrument.

Step 2: Revise the instrument and conduct a pilot study to check the validity and reliability of the instrument in the Vietnamese context.

Step 3: Conduct the formal study to collect the essential data.

Participants

In the pilot study, four experts were invited to assess the content validity of the instrument. These included one expert in English education, one in bilingual education, and two CLIL teachers with



more than five years of teaching experiences. Regarding teachers as the primary participants, the study employed a non-probability purposive criterion-based sampling approach (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Inclusion criteria were: (1) being an elementary teacher, and (2) currently teaching content subjects in English (CLIL/ bilingual programs). Invitations were distributed via email. Regarding the construct validity and internal reliability, a sample of 200 elementary teachers meeting the criteria was invited. Of these, 100 teachers responded, making up 50% of the total invited participants.

In the formal study, to clarify the current situation of CLIL implementation in elementary schools in Ho Chi Minh City, the researchers invited 237 elementary teachers. Notably, 100 participants taking part in the pilot study were not invited in this formal round. A total of 183 teachers responded, accounting for 77.22% of the total number of invites. Participants' information was kept confidential and used solely for the purposes of this study. Their demographics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' demographics.

Characteristics	Pilot study				Formal study	
	Experts		Teachers		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender						
Female	3	75%	63	63%	146	79.8%
Male	1	25%	37	37%	37	20.2%
Not mentioned	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Background education						
Bachelor's degree	1	25%	84	84%	143	78.1%
Master's degree	1	25%	16	16%	37	20.2%
Doctoral degree	2	50%	0	0%	3	1.6%
English proficiency						
Beginner	0	0%	2	2%	5	2.7%
Pre-intermediate	0	0%	17	17%	17	9.3%
Intermediate	1	25%	59	59%	117	63.9%
Advanced	3	75%	22	22%	44	24%
Teaching experiences						
Below 2 years	0	0%	27	27%	26	14.2%
From 2 to 5 years	0	0%	24	24%	41	22.4%
Above 5 years, below 10 years	2	26%	26	64%	48	26.2%
Above 10 years	0	23%	23	23%	68	37.2%

In the formal study group, the proportion of female teachers was 79.8%, nearly four times that of male teachers (20.2%). This is consistent with the gender composition in Vietnamese elementary schools (Trinh, 2023). Second, 78.1% of the teachers had a bachelor's degree, 20.2% had a master's degree, and only 1.6% held a doctoral degree. In terms of English proficiency, most teachers were at the intermediate level (63.9%), followed by 24% at the advanced level, 9.3% at the pre-intermediate level, and only 2.7% at the beginner level. In addition, 37.2% of teachers had over 10 years of experience, followed by 26.2% with 5 to 10 years, 22.4% with 2 to 5 years, and 14.2% with less than 2 years. This indicates a more experienced sample, which may contribute to greater reliability and depth in the study's findings.

Table 2. The interviewees' demographics.

No.	Pseudo	Gender	Background education	Teacher type	English proficiency	Teaching experiences
1	Ai	Female	Bachelor's degree	Subject	Intermediate	7 years
2	Bao	Male	Bachelor's degree	Subject	Advanced	9 years
3	Cong	Male	Master's degree	English	Advanced	11 years
4	Diep	Female	Bachelor's degree	Subject	Intermediate	7 years
5	Dung	Female	Master's degree	English	Advanced	8 years
6	Huy	Male	Bachelor's degree	Subject	Intermediate	6 years

Furthermore, to minimize bias from self-reported surveys, six participants from the formal study group were invited to participate in interviews to obtain qualitative insights. Each interview lasted



about 30 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participant’s consent. Table 2 presents the interviewees’ information.

Data Collection Instrument

The CLIL Questionnaire

To explore Vietnamese primary teachers’ knowledge, perspectives, and experiences in CLIL, items from McDougald’s (2015) CLIL questionnaire were adapted and revised. This questionnaire included 20 items addressing four categories: CLIL knowledge, CLIL experiences, perspectives on CLIL with elementary students, and cooperation and administrative support in CLIL. Responses for these items were rated using a Likert scale ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”.

In the pilot study, because the initial questionnaire was developed in English, it was first translated into Vietnamese. The translated version was then back-translated into English to verify the accuracy of the original content by two experts in English and bilingual education. The Vietnamese version continued to be checked by the four experts. Finally, three items from the CLIL knowledge domain and three items from the CLIL experiences domain were revised, while the remaining items were approved.

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis of the CLIL questionnaire in the Vietnamese context.

Factors	Items	1	2	3	4	Percentage of variance
CLIL knowledge	CK_1			.801		18.794%
	CK_2			.754		
	CK_3			.792		
	CK_4			.804		
CLIL experiences	CE_1				.853	18.405%
	CE_2				.861	
	CE_3				.872	
	CE_4				.678	
CLIL perspectives	CS_1	.647				18.001%
	CS_2	.852				
	CS_3	.776				
	CS_4	.604				
	CS_5	.735				
	CS_6	.730				
Cooperation and administrative support in CLIL	CAS_1		.618			16.361%
	CAS_2		.662			
	CAS_3		.750			
	CAS_4		.775			
	CAS_5		.741			
	CAS_6		.714			

After that, to examine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire in the Vietnamese context, the survey was piloted with 100 teachers. The EFA analysis revealed four dimensions that aligned closely with the dimensions initially proposed by the authors and experts (see Table 3), while each category demonstrated good internal consistency with Cronbach’s Alpha from .865 to .898 (Creswell & Clark, 2018) (see Table 4). These results prove that the questionnaire is valid and reliable in the Vietnamese context.

Table 4. Internal reliability of the CLIL questionnaire in the Vietnamese context.

Categories	N items	Cronbach’s α	Sample item
CLIL knowledge	4	.894	I have sufficient knowledge and skills in CLIL implementation.
CLIL experiences	4	.875	I have already taught content areas in English.
CLIL perspectives	6	.898	CLIL helps elementary students develop their language skills and subject knowledge.
Cooperation and administrative support in CLIL	6	.865	I have helped subject teachers teach subject content through English.



The Interview Questions

To collect in-depth insights into teachers' knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and the collaboration and administrative support they received during CLIL implementation, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Accordingly, the participants were asked seven questions, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Guiding for interview questions.

Categories	Interview questions
CLIL knowledge	1. In your opinion, what is CLIL? 2. How is it related to or different from other language teaching methods?
CLIL experiences	3. What kind of training did you receive before teaching CLIL lessons? 4. What strategies do you use in your CLIL lessons? 5. What difficulties do you encounter in teaching CLIL lessons?
CLIL perspectives	6. How do you think CLIL benefits elementary students? 7. What challenges do they typically face in CLIL lessons? 8. How do your knowledge and experiences in CLIL affect your thinking and teaching practices?
Cooperation and administrative support in CLIL	9. What kinds of cooperation and administrative support do you receive when implementing CLIL in your school?

Data Analysis

For Likert scale questions, they were analyzed with mathematical statistical methods through SPSS software. First, the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) were calculated to determine the levels of teachers' knowledge, experiences, perspectives, cooperation, and administrative support in CLIL implementation. Second, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were analyzed to examine the relationship between teachers' knowledge and experiences and their views on CLIL. Finally, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the differences in teachers' perspectives on CLIL across three English proficiency groups: low, intermediate, and advanced.

The data from interviews were analyzed using Merriam's (2009) deductive coding process to identify findings in four domains: (1) CLIL knowledge, (2) CLIL experiences, (3) perspectives on CLIL, and (4) collaboration and administrative support. The analysis process began with identifying relevant data and was followed by organizing the data into categories and themes. Table 6 summarizes the interview-data coding scheme.

Table 6. Coding scheme.

Evidence	Codes	Categories	Themes
"CLIL is a learning orientation that integrates the learning of academic subjects with a language different from the learners' mother tongue" (Diep).	Learning subjects through foreign language	Basic insights	Basic insights
"It emphasizes students' development in both language and subject knowledge" (Huy).	Dual development		
"... mainly introduced what CLIL is and its benefits for elementary students but lacked guidance on how to actually implement it in the actual classroom" (Bao).	Theoretical insights	Workshop participation	Relevant experiences
"These sessions did not provide any model lessons or examples of integrated teaching practices..." (Huy).	Insufficient practice		
"I often use simplified language combined with visual support to help my students understand the lesson more easily" (Ai).	Instructional strategies	Individual adaptation	
"... Actually, we do not receive any specific guidelines or suggestions on how to teach CLIL. Therefore, each of us teaches primarily based on our own thoughts and experiences" (Dung).	Individual interpretation		
"CLIL effectively integrates English with subject knowledge, enriching students' vocabulary and broadening their understanding of the subject..." (Cong).	Dual development	Positive perspectives	Mixed perspectives
"In CLIL lessons, students become more active because they need to interact, think, and use English to learn the subject" (Bao).	Active learning		

**Table 6 (Continued).** Coding scheme.

Evidence	Codes	Categories	Themes
"...those with higher English proficiency often support peers with lower proficiency" (Cong).	Collaboration		
"... In fact, we can clearly see that students with higher English proficiency learn better in our bilingual lessons" (Diep).	Suitable for intermediate - level students	Low-proficiency students are left behind	
"In my class, I see that it is difficult for students with lower English proficiency to understand my lessons" (Huy).	Left behind		
"In fact, my colleagues never actively offer to help me. I always have to ask them" (Dung).	Limited collaboration	Limited collaboration	Limited collaboration and support
"... and sometimes it depends on who you are working with" (Diep).	Person-dependent collaboration		
"There are no official policies or clear guidelines, no scheduled meetings, and most of the time, we just try to figure things out on our own" (Bao).	Self-reliance	Limited support	
"My school assigned me to teach Science in English. This arrangement was inappropriate because I am an English teacher and I do not have enough knowledge in natural science to teach the subject effectively" (Cong).	Unqualified teachers		

RESULTS

Teachers' Expertise in CLIL Implementation in Elementary Schools

Levels of Teachers' Expertise in CLIL Implementation in Elementary Schools

To identify the levels of teachers' knowledge, experiences, perspectives, collaboration, and administrative support in CLIL implementation in elementary schools, descriptive statistics were used. The results were presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Teachers' expertise in CLIL implementation in elementary schools.

Categories	Sample item	Mean	Std.Dev.
CLIL knowledge	I can explain how CLIL is related to and differs from other language and content learning approaches.	3.9467	.6176
CLIL experiences	I have designed lessons integrating content and language.	3.6038	.8669
CLIL perspectives	CLIL is only suitable for intermediate students of English.	3.9126	.6678
Cooperation and administrative support in CLIL	I am fully supported by the administration on CLIL implementation.	3.9126	.6678

Generally, elementary teachers possessed high levels of knowledge, experience, positive perspectives, collaboration, and administrative support in teaching CLIL, with all mean scores above 3.6. Most participants self-reported that they have essential knowledge and skills related to CLIL ($M = 3.967$, $SD = .7405$). In terms of experiences, teachers reported that they had positive experiences in teaching certain subjects in English ($M = 3.738$, $SD = 1.1227$). Specifically, 36.8% taught foreign languages, followed by Mathematics (23.9%) and Natural Sciences (17.5%). The remaining participants taught other subjects, such as Arts, Information Technology, and Physical Education, in smaller proportions. Furthermore, teachers had opportunities to participate in CLIL workshops ($M = 3.705$, $SD = .9495$), and they already applied specific instructional strategies in their CLIL lessons (Mean = 3.6038, $SD = .8669$).

Regarding teachers' perspectives on CLIL, the findings indicated that they considered CLIL suitable for elementary students ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .88$). Specifically, teachers agreed that CLIL supports the development of language skills and subject knowledge ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .91$). However, they also viewed CLIL as most appropriate for students with intermediate English proficiency ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .91$). During CLIL implementation, the participants reported receiving administrative support and cooperation to a relatively high extent ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .67$).



Teachers' In-depth Insights and Actual Experiences with CLIL Implementation in Elementary Schools
To explore participants' insights into CLIL implementation in elementary schools, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six teachers. The findings were organized into four primary themes: (1) basic insights, (2) relevant experiences, (3) mixed perspectives, and (4) limited cooperation and administrative support.

First, the interview findings indicated that all six teachers viewed CLIL as learning subject content through a foreign language. For example, Diep stated, "CLIL is a learning orientation that integrates the learning of academic subjects with a language different from the learners' mother tongue." Teachers also recognized CLIL as an innovative approach that aims to develop both language and subject knowledge simultaneously. As Huy noted, "it supports students' development in both language and subject knowledge." Their understanding aligns with the definition by Coyle & Marsh (2010) and García (2011), who described CLIL as an educational approach that integrates subject teaching with foreign language learning to simultaneously foster students' language skills and subject knowledge.

In terms of teachers' actual experiences, although they had some opportunities to participate in CLIL workshops, they reported that the number of workshops was limited, and they primarily focused on theoretical insights rather than practical ones. According to Bao, these workshops "mainly introduced what CLIL is and its benefits for elementary students but lacked guidance on how to actually implement it in the actual classroom." Huy complemented that "These sessions did not provide any model lessons or examples of integrated teaching practices, which made it hard for us to visualize how to incorporate CLIL into our classrooms."

In fact, teachers have already applied specific instructional strategies in their CLIL classrooms. For instance, when teaching Science in English to fourth graders, Ai used simplified language and visual aids. In a lesson on the water cycle, instead of using complex terms such as "evaporation," "condensation," and "precipitation," she used expressions like "water goes up," "water turns into a cloud," and "water falls down as rain." To support students' understanding, she displayed a large, colorful diagram of the water cycle and used arrows and icons to show how water moves through each stage. She also pointed to each part while speaking, helping students connect the visuals with the simplified English phrases. However, such simplification of academic language may potentially lead to scientific misconceptions among students if not carefully scaffolded (Belobrov & Nygård Larsson, 2020). While using expressions like "water goes up" can facilitate immediate linguistic comprehension, it may blur key mechanisms, such as phase change and condensation, and thereby contribute to incomplete or inaccurate concept formation (Joyce et al., 2008). This risk is particularly salient in CLIL contexts, where learners simultaneously negotiate new content knowledge and an additional language (Huang, 2020; Piacentini, 2021). Therefore, simplification should be treated as an entry point rather than an endpoint in instruction. To mitigate misconceptions, teachers should systematically bridge everyday expressions to canonical scientific terminology through explicit scaffolding strategies, such as gradual revoicing and the parallel use of everyday and scientific language (Belobrov & Nygård Larsson, 2020). Such strategies help preserve conceptual precision while maintaining linguistic comprehension.

Although these practical strategies suggest that teachers made efforts to incorporate CLIL into their teaching, they still tended to rely on personal interpretation and adaptation due to a lack of specific guidance. "... Actually, we do not receive any specific guidelines or suggestions for implementing CLIL. Therefore, each of us teaches primarily based on our own thoughts and experiences" (Dung). Consequently, CLIL implementation remained inconsistent and may not have fully aligned with the intended pedagogical principles (Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020).

The findings also revealed that teachers held mixed perspectives on CLIL implementation with elementary students, with some viewing it as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the participants highlighted several benefits for young learners. Cong noted that "CLIL effectively integrates English with subject knowledge, enriching students' vocabulary and broadening their understanding of the



subject and the world around them.” Bao also highlighted the authenticity of CLIL, stating that “CLIL’s alignment with real-life situations makes students’ learning more familiar and meaningful.” In addition, it was observed that “In CLIL lessons, students become more active because they need to interact, think, and use English to learn the subject” (Bao). Teachers further noted that higher-proficiency students often supported their peers, fostering a collaborative classroom atmosphere (Cong, Ai). Overall, these findings, consistent with McDougald (2015), reflect teachers’ belief that CLIL can be applied across all age groups and is not limited to a specific educational level.

On the other hand, some teachers recognized that CLIL can exacerbate educational inequity. They viewed CLIL as more suitable for students with higher language proficiency and noted that it can leave lower-proficiency students behind. “In fact, we can clearly see that students with higher English proficiency learn better in our bilingual lessons” (Diep). Meanwhile, students with lower English proficiency often struggled to keep up with lessons, which reduced engagement and limited their understanding of subject content (Ai, Duyen, & Huy). Such challenges may result in some students being left behind. This concern is consistent with Romo Escudero and Durán-Martínez (2019) and Chen (2023), who noted that without adequate linguistic support, CLIL can widen achievement gaps between students with different language abilities.

During CLIL implementation, although teachers received some cooperation and administrative support, these were still limited. According to Diep, collaboration often depends on personal relationships rather than a systematic approach within the school. She noted, “We only receive support from English teachers when we actively ask for it, and sometimes it depends on who you are working with.” Bao further shared that although the school leaders were generally supportive by providing some reference books on teaching Math and Science in English, “There are no official policies or clear guidelines, no scheduled meetings, and most of the time, we just try to figure things out on our own. Additionally, the participants also noted the assignment of unqualified CLIL teachers, resulting in inconsistent teaching quality. Cong further shared his case, “My school assigned me to teach Science in English. This arrangement was inappropriate because I am an English teacher and I do not have enough knowledge in natural science to teach the subject effectively.”

The Relationships between Teachers’ Knowledge, Experiences, and Perspectives on CLIL

Pearson correlation and multiple regression were analyzed (see Table 8 and Table 9) to examine the relationship between teachers’ knowledge and experiences and their views on CLIL.

Table 8. The correlations between teachers’ knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on CLIL.

Factors	CLIL knowledge	CLIL experiences	CLIL perspectives
CLIL knowledge	1	.706**	.678**
CLIL experiences		1	.520**
CLIL perspectives			1

Note: ** = $p < .01$.

Table 9. The predictors of teachers’ perspectives on CLIL.

Factors	Predictors	B	SE b	β	R ²	ΔR^2	F (sig)
CLIL perspectives	CLIL knowledge	.671	.083	.621	.463	.463	77.637 ***
	CLIL experiences	.062	.059	.081			

Note: B: unstandardized coefficients B; SE b: unstandardized coefficients std. error, β : standardized coefficients beta, R²: R square, ΔR^2 : Adjusted R square. *** = $p < .001$.

Prior to conducting the multiple regression analysis, key statistical assumptions are examined. Linearity is assessed using scatterplots of standardized residuals against predicted values, indicating an approximately linear relationship (Field, 2018). Independence of errors is supported by the Durbin–Watson statistic (DW = 1.55), which falls within the commonly accepted range suggesting minimal autocorrelation (Field, 2018). Multicollinearity is not a concern, as tolerance values are .50 and VIF values are 1.996, well within recommended cutoffs (Field, 2018). Examination of standardized residuals suggests approximate normality, with residuals centered around zero (M = .00,



SD = .99), and the residuals-versus-predicted plot does not indicate problematic heteroscedasticity (Field, 2018). Potential outliers are screened using standardized residuals, with no evidence of extreme values beyond commonly used thresholds ($|z| > 3.29$) (Field, 2018). Overall, the assumptions for multiple regression are adequately met.

The regression analysis reveals positive relationships between teachers' knowledge and experiences and their views on CLIL with elementary students in terms of supporting language skills and subject knowledge development. In more detail, teachers' knowledge shows a significantly strong and positive correlation with their perceived suitability of CLIL ($r = .678, p < .001$), while their teaching experiences also exhibit a moderately positive and significant correlation with these views ($r = .520, p < .001$). These results suggest that teachers who are more knowledgeable and experienced in CLIL tend to perceive it as more appropriate and beneficial for elementary students.

Furthermore, Table 9 indicates that CLIL knowledge is a significant predictor of teachers' perspectives ($\beta = .621, p < .001$), accounting for 46.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .463$). In contrast, CLIL experiences do not significantly contribute to the model ($\beta = .081, p > .05$). This suggests that it is their understanding of CLIL, rather than mere teaching experience, that most strongly shaped their perceived appropriateness and value of CLIL for elementary students. Specifically, Ai shared, "When understanding how to balance both language and content objectives, I could teach CLIL lessons to my students effectively." Duyen emphasized that her growing familiarity with CLIL principles through workshops allowed her to recognize its effectiveness in enhancing students' language proficiency. Similarly, Bao noted that with more accurate insights from some training programs, he became better at selecting appropriate strategies, making CLIL lessons more accessible to his students. These reflections illustrate how sufficient expertise shapes teachers' well-informed perceptions of CLIL with elementary students.

Differences in Teachers' Perspectives on CLIL by Language Proficiency Levels

To examine whether there are significant differences in teachers' perspectives on CLIL across three English proficiency groups: low, intermediate, and advanced, a one-way ANOVA was conducted (see Table 10).

Table 10. Differences in teachers' perspectives on CLIL across three levels of English proficiency.

Test	Value	p
Levene's test	$F_{(2, 180)} = 6.675$.002
ANOVA	$F_{(2, 180)} = 1.764$ Partial $\eta^2 = .031$.174
Games–Howell test	All comparisons	$> .05$
Group means	Low = 3.6894 Intermediate = 3.9160 Advanced = 4.0152	.08

Levene's test indicates a violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption ($F_{(2, 180)} = 6.675, p = .002$). The ANOVA results show no statistically significant difference in CLIL perspectives across three language proficiency groups ($F_{(2, 180)} = 1.764, p = .174$), and the effect size is small (partial $\eta^2 = .031$), indicating that language proficiency explains only a limited proportion of variance in CLIL perspectives. Given the violated homogeneity assumption, the Games–Howell post hoc comparisons are used and indicate no significant pairwise differences among the groups ($p > .05$).

However, the group means reveal an upward trend: teachers in the low proficiency group have a mean score of 3.69, those in the intermediate group have a mean of 3.92, and those in the advanced group report the highest mean of 4.02. This suggests that while the recorded differences are not statistically significant, higher proficiency may be associated with more positive perceptions of CLIL in elementary schools. This trend aligns with Lasagabaster & Sierra (2010) and Pérez Cañado (2018b), who indicated a clear correlation between language proficiency and acceptance of CLIL. These authors argued that higher proficiency increases teachers' confidence in teaching subjects through a foreign language, which fosters supportive attitudes toward CLIL.



DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

Teachers' Expertise in CLIL Implementation in Elementary Schools

For the first question about levels of teachers' knowledge, experiences, perspectives, collaboration, and administrative support in CLIL implementation in Vietnamese elementary schools, the findings indicated that teachers in Ho Chi Minh City possessed basic CLIL insights. This may be explained by recent Vietnamese institutional initiatives that have emphasized the integration of CLIL into language education (Do, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024), thereby enhancing teachers' familiarity with it. However, such familiarity does not necessarily translate into shared, operational understandings of how CLIL should be enacted in everyday classroom practices.

In terms of teachers' experiences, this study found that the workshops that the participants used to participate in were limited, and they primarily focused on theoretical insights rather than practical ones. As a result, in actual teaching practices, teachers rely on their own interpretation and adaptation. Consequently, CLIL implementation remained inconsistent and may not have fully aligned with the intended pedagogical principles (Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022). This pattern suggests that when training does not provide model lessons, subject-specific task design, or established routines for co-planning and feedback, teachers' experience may remain fragmented and practice-driven, rather than developing into systematically refined CLIL expertise (Milla Lara & Casas Pedrosa, 2018; Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020). This is particularly critical at the elementary level, where effective CLIL requires careful sequencing of content concepts alongside language demands (Coyle et al., 2010; Rutgers et al., 2020). In Vietnam's early-stage CLIL implementation, the issue is not effort or exposure, but experience gained without a clear CLIL pedagogical compass (Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Therefore, future workshops should offer more concrete examples such as model lesson plans, classroom demonstrations, and subject-specific integration strategies to help teachers better understand how to effectively implement CLIL in their classrooms (Milla Lara & Casas Pedrosa, 2018; Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020).

Regarding teachers' perspectives, they viewed CLIL as a double-edged sword, bringing both benefits and drawbacks. They also worried that it could leave lower-proficiency students behind. Their mixed views can be interpreted as a response to a structural tension. While CLIL can enhance engagement and meaningful language use, learning opportunities may become uneven when students' language proficiency varies and systematic support is limited. Such concerns have been reported in prior studies on elementary bilingual or CLIL programs (Durán-Martínez & Beltrán-Llavador, 2020; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022). In this study, disparities in students' language proficiency emerged as a significant barrier to effective CLIL implementation in practice, underscoring the importance of differentiated instruction, appropriate language support, and carefully prepared materials so that all students, regardless of proficiency, can engage with and benefit from CLIL lessons (Durán-Martínez & Beltrán-Llavador, 2020).

During CLIL implementation, teachers received limited cooperation and administrative support. They also noted the assignment of unqualified CLIL teachers, resulting in inconsistent teaching quality. This pattern aligns with relevant studies showing that CLIL quality depends heavily on cross-curricular coordination and school supports, but that such structures are frequently underdeveloped in monolingual contexts (Pavón Vázquez & Méndez García, 2017; Moreno de Diezmas, 2019; Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020). In Vietnam, the findings resonate with prior studies describing tensions between policy aspirations and school-level capacity, including gaps in guidance, staffing, and sustained professional development (Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Contextually, teachers in Ho Chi Minh City may have greater exposure to bilingual initiatives than many other regions. However, the lack of formalized routines, such as scheduled co-planning time, mentoring, and clear instructional and assessment guidance, can still push teachers toward isolated practices and uneven CLIL quality.



The Relationships between Teachers' Knowledge, Experiences, and Perspectives on CLIL

For the second question on the correlations between teachers' knowledge, experiences, and their perspectives on CLIL, the findings indicated that teachers' knowledge and experience were positively associated with their perspectives on CLIL, with knowledge emerging as a significant predictor. These current findings align with previous studies that emphasize the relationship between teachers' knowledge, experiences, and their perceptions of CLIL. Specifically, Coyle & Marsh (2010), Cenoz et al. (2014), and Rutgers et al. (2020) concluded that teachers with greater familiarity and expertise in CLIL are more likely to perceive it as beneficial for elementary students. Similarly, Campillo-Ferrer et al. (2020), Durán-Martínez et al. (2020), Marsh (2012), and Pérez Cañado (2018b) noted that experienced CLIL practitioners often report higher levels of confidence and hold positive attitudes toward CLIL in enhancing both language proficiency and subject knowledge.

Rather than merely confirming prior research, this study highlights why knowledge, more than experience, plays a stronger role in shaping teachers' accurate perceptions and attitudes toward CLIL. First, CLIL is not a single method but a dual-focused instructional approach that requires teachers to attend to content learning, language development, and cognitive engagement in an integrated way (Coyle et al., 2010). At the same time, CLIL is often understood and interpreted differently across contexts, with persistent ambiguities around its defining features and implementation expectations (Cenoz et al., 2014). In addition, terminological and conceptual blurring, such as CLIL being conflated with other bilingual models, has also been noted, which can further complicate shared understandings of what CLIL entails in practice (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010). In this sense, stronger CLIL-related knowledge can help teachers develop a more coherent understanding of CLIL and its classroom enactment, reinforcing the need for targeted professional development to build that knowledge systematically (Rutgers et al., 2020).

Second, experience remains fragmented when it is accumulated through individual and inconsistent adaptations. As reported earlier, the participants in this study described the professional development they received as largely theoretical and noted limited practical guidance, collaboration, and school-level support. As a result, classroom practices often depended on their personal interpretation. When professional development training, collaboration, and school-level support are insufficient, CLIL implementation becomes inconsistent and teachers' perceptions vary substantially (Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022). This helps explain why experience alone may not predict teachers' perspectives and attitudes.

Third, in Vietnam, CLIL has been developing within policy-driven bilingual initiatives, while uneven school readiness can constrain classroom enactment and place additional demands on teachers (Do, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). In this context, knowledge functions as a stabilizing resource by supporting teachers' decisions about integration, scaffolding, and balancing content rigor with language accessibility (Coyle et al., 2010). Accordingly, teachers who develop clearer CLIL knowledge are more likely to hold accurate and positive perceptions, even when institutional conditions for implementation are still limited (Rutgers et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023).

In summary, the current results highlight the critical role of teacher expertise in shaping accurate perceptions and positive attitudes toward CLIL. These findings point to the need for training programs that combine theoretical grounding with practice-oriented support through modelling, classroom-based examples, and subject-specific integration strategies, and that are embedded in school routines such as co-planning and peer observation so that teachers' experience becomes cumulative and transferable (Pérez Cañado, 2016; Milla Lara & Casas Pedrosa, 2018; Porcedda & González-Martínez, 2020).

Differences in Teachers' Perspectives on CLIL by Language Proficiency Levels

Regarding the third question about the differences in teachers' perspectives on CLIL across three different teacher groups of language proficiency levels, this research found no statistically significant difference in CLIL perspectives across three groups. However, this study also recorded an upward



trend, which showed that higher proficiency may be associated with more positive perceptions of CLIL in elementary schools. This pattern can be interpreted in the two following ways.

First, language proficiency operates as an enabling condition for CLIL teaching, as teachers need sufficient language proficiency to manage classroom interaction, explain subject content, and respond to learners through the target language (Pérez Cañado, 2018b; Nguyen et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers' language proficiency and preparedness have been consistently highlighted as central requirements in CLIL implementation (Pérez Cañado, 2018b). However, language proficiency may not be the dominant constraint when compared with systemic conditions such as teacher preparation, professional development, and institutional guidance. In Vietnam, CLIL has remained underdeveloped, with challenges stemming largely from limited professional learning opportunities and policy-practice gaps. These constraints can restrict coherent classroom enactment even when English proficiency alone is not the primary issue (Nguyen et al., 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Consequently, the observed upward trend without statistical significance likely reflects both methodological factors, such as group imbalance, and contextual realities, in which proficiency matters but is moderated by stronger system-level constraints.

Contextually, these findings suggest that developing teachers' English proficiency can be beneficial. However, such efforts need to be integrated with CLIL pedagogical development and school-level support structures. Otherwise, fostering language proficiency alone are unlikely to result in more coherent CLIL practices (Pérez Cañado, 2018a; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024).

This study investigates teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on CLIL implementation in elementary schools in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The findings show that teachers had a basic understanding of CLIL and positive experiences. However, their application often relied on personal interpretation and adaptation, leading to inconsistent implementation that may not fully reflect CLIL's principles (Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020). These results highlight the need for CLIL workshops that provide concrete examples, such as model lesson plans, classroom demonstrations, and subject-specific strategies, to support more effective and consistent CLIL integration (Milla Lara & Casas Pedrosa, 2018; Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020).

Second, the participants reported several obstacles, including the lack of official policies and guidelines, unsuitable syllabuses, insufficient practical training programs, limited teaching materials, and the assignment of unqualified teachers to CLIL. Although some cooperation and administrative support were provided, these remained limited. In line with previous studies (Pavón Vázquez & Méndez García, 2017; Moreno de Diezmas, 2019; Szczesniak & Luna, 2022), the current findings highlight the need to strengthen collaboration between English and subject teachers and to enhance administrative support in areas such as curriculum planning, clear instructional and assessment guidelines, appropriate teacher assignments, and targeted professional development to ensure that teachers are CLIL-qualified.

Third, teachers considered CLIL beneficial for elementary students regarding developing both language skills and subject understanding. However, some concerns were raised, particularly regarding the risk of students with limited language proficiency falling behind (Romo Escudero & Durán-Martínez, 2019; Chen, 2023). This highlights the need for teachers to adopt differentiated instruction strategies and carefully design learning materials to ensure all students, regardless of their English proficiency, can access and benefit from CLIL lessons.

Furthermore, the study found positive relationships between teachers' knowledge, experiences, and their views on CLIL, with knowledge emerging as a significant predictor of their perspectives. In addition, a positive trend was identified between their English proficiency and their perceptions of CLIL. Specifically, teachers with higher language proficiency tended to report more favorable perspectives. These findings highlight the critical role of teacher expertise, experiences, and language proficiency in shaping accurate perspectives on CLIL (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010; Pérez Cañado,



2018b). Therefore, training programs that provide both theoretical and practical insights, along with efforts to enhance language proficiency, are essential to address varied perceptions.

Limitations of the research

Although this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the data were collected exclusively from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, which may not fully represent the national context. Regional differences in school resources, English exposure, and CLIL-related initiatives may lead to different patterns of teachers' expertise. Future studies should therefore broaden the sampling frame to include multiple provinces and regions, and, if possible, employ stratified sampling across school types to enhance generalizability.

Second, the study relies primarily on online self-reported questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the findings may be affected by self-report bias, including social desirability and possible over- or under-estimation of teachers' actual CLIL expertise. In addition, these methods may limit the study's ability to capture how CLIL is enacted in real-time classroom interactions, including scaffolding moves, language choice, differentiation for low-proficiency students, and assessment practices. Future research should triangulate self-reported data with classroom-based evidence such as lesson plans, teaching materials, classroom observations, and interviews with multiple stakeholders, such as school leaders, English teachers, and students. Moreover, longitudinal or intervention-based studies exploring the impact of targeted professional development, such as modelling lessons, co-planning routines, and scaffolding training, could provide more concrete evidence to inform improvements in CLIL implementation in Vietnamese elementary schools.

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Ethics and Conflict of Interest

This study involved voluntary participation of in-service elementary teachers and did not include any physical or psychological interventions. All procedures were conducted in accordance with research ethics principles and the guidelines. Specifically, participants were invited via email and were clearly informed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses. The survey was administered using Google Forms, and participants had the option to provide their email addresses or remain anonymous. All participants were fully informed about the study and provided their informed consent by completing a consent form at the beginning of the Google Form survey. They could proceed to the main questions only after confirming their agreement to participate. In addition, no potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Author Contribution

All authors made equal contributions to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of this manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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