Enhancing English and Soft Skills through CLIL and Children's Literature: A Qualitative Case Study of Thai Undergraduates

Preeyapha Wangmanee
Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand
Corresponding author's email: preeyapha.bis@crru.ac.th

Abstract

This study explores the integration of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in a children's literature course at a Thai university. The objective was to enhance English proficiency and soft skills among Thai English major undergraduates. To accomplish this, I used a systematic random sampling method to select 30 third-year English majors from a children's literature course. Over one semester, students participated in CLIL activities, including reading, storytelling, and creative projects, aimed at improving English language skills and fostering essential soft skills. Data were collected through participant observations and semi-structured interviews. The results indicate potential improvements in the sampled students' English language skills, particularly in reading, speaking, and vocabulary acquisition. Observations revealed increased student engagement and positive attitudes towards CLIL activities. Interviews highlighted the enhancement of soft skills, such as teamwork, creativity, and critical thinking, with students expressing positive perceptions of the CLIL approach. The findings suggest that integrating CLIL into children's literature courses can effectively enhance both language proficiency and soft skills, preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce. This approach can serve as a model for similar educational contexts seeking to improve language and soft skill development.

English is considered a global language and an essential tool for communication. For university education in Thailand, students from all disciplines must study basic English, including specific English subjects that are designated in their curriculum or field of study. This requirement aims to improve students' language proficiency, enhance their academic performance, and increase their employment prospects in both local and international job markets.

As repeatedly noted in the literature, Thai students' English language skills and proficiency are relatively low when compared to neighboring countries (Chuanpongpanich, 2021) commonly cited issues related to this low level of a English include Thai learners difficulties in describing or narrating situations, which is attributed to a lack of understanding of the language and an inability to respond, which often stems from a lack of practice opportunities (Inkaew, 2020). In addition, Tetsasonnanan (2021) stated that Thai students' deficiency in English skills and proficiency has negative impacts in several areas, potentially affecting their future careers, their abilities to use English across various fields, such as innovation creation, the economic sector, and communication in diverse social contexts. Moreover, Thararuedee and Wette (2020) point out that higher education instructors in Thailand are aware of the shortcomings in English language learning and suggest that they stem from psychological factors—teachers who are cognizant of these factors engage and support their students, positively impacting their students' psyche and confidence, leading to increased language development.

Furthermore, the innovations and challenges of 21st century education underscore the importance of soft skills such as analytical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, teamwork, leadership, and the use of information technology and computers. According to Yusuk (2021), higher education instructors must change and shift their roles from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered by integrating active learning strategies, which are vital for improving student motivation engagement, and academic performance.

Accordingly, the current research addresses two main issues: effectively developing English proficiency and essential soft skills among

Thai students majoring in English. Both English proficiency and soft skills result from regular practice. In Thailand, problems with these skills are shown in the feedback from several organizations and employers regarding students or employees struggle with effective English communication during their internships, which imparts their job performance and the overall productivity of the company (Karachedee, 2017; Tantiwich & Singwongsuwat, 2021; Western Language Program, 2021). Businesses in the 21st century prioritize soft skills because they enhance collaboration, adaptability, and effective communication (Andullah et al., 2019), which are essential for thriving in dynamic and competitive work environments and employability among graduates. Additionally, employers value persuasion skills, teamwork skills, and adaptability skills as they lead to better problem-solving, leadership, and customer service (Proyrungroj & Chansom, 2021), all of which contribute to a company's success and growth. Therefore, higher educational institutions seek to emphasize the development of these skills alongside academic knowledge.

Literature Review

The Importance of Soft Skills
Soft skills were originally introduced by the US Army during the 1970s and referred to a set of personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance, and career prospects (Britannica.com). Since then, there have been many different definitions and interpretations by scholars, educators, and employers. According to the World Economic Forum (2020), soft skills are the abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively with others, and include communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and problem solving. Forbes describes soft skills as personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people, (Forbes, 2021). They are important because they can affect an individual's ability to succeed in their career and personal life. For example, strong communication skills can help individuals build relationships and work effectively with others, while

problem-solving skills can help individuals overcome challenges and find innovative solutions to problems (Indeed, 2021).

By integrating soft skills training into curricula, educational institutions can better prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce, where employers increasingly seek well-rounded candidates who can adapt, communicate effectively, and lead teams. Indeed, studies have shown that graduates with strong soft skills are more likely to succeed in their careers (Abdullah et al., 2019). Businesses also stress the importance of hands-on application of soft skills to ensure that students can effectively utilize their knowledge in real-world contexts (Penratanahiran & Thongkham, 2021). Overall, soft skills are essential for students as they can enhance their future career success (Panapinun & Phensit, 2021).

Regarding the lack of soft skills among Thai students, Wattanabut (2021) stated that the challenges and barriers to developing soft skills stem from the transmission-based teaching methods of many teachers, a lack of awareness concerning the importance of sustained practice among both teachers and students, limited learning channels to nurture soft skills, and students' indifferences toward self-improvement. Given such problems, I see a need to further promote changes to the mindsets and approaches of English teaching in Thailand, with a focus on increasing opportunities for students to practice and develop English proficiency and soft skills. Fundamentally, I am interested in designing and creating more supplementary activities for students, rather than relying solely on lectures. To achieve this aim, I adopted the framework of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as a guideline for lesson design. This is because CLIL is a dual-sided teaching approach, focusing on both subject content and English skills.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL is popular among scholars and researchers in the field of language teaching, such as in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL), and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). It was originally developed in Europe

in the 1990s as a response to the need for students to become proficient in more than one language (Coyle et al, 2010). The concept was initially proposed by Marsh and Maljers in a report to the European Commission in 1994. It is defined as an educational approach in which subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through an additional language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content and the simultaneous learning of an additional language (Marsh, 2012).

In a CLIL classroom, the focus is on both the subject matter and the language, with the goal of developing both content knowledge and language proficiency. The approach has been shown to improve students' language proficiency (Yang, 2014). The CLIL approach (Coyle et al., 2010) incorporates four Cs: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. Content focuses on teaching subjects through a foreign language, while Communication emphasizes language use for learning and teaching. Cognition involves developing thinking skills and deepening understanding of content, and Culture refers to understanding and appreciating cultural aspects. This last C helps students become more aware of cultural diversity and the role of language in shaping cultural identities (Khamngoen et al., 2020).

CLIL is a practical methodology for English language learning in higher education Phucharoen et al., (2022). In Thailand, for example, Suwannoppharat and Chinokul (2015) conducted a study on the effectiveness of a CLIL course in developing English communication ability among Thai undergraduate students on an international program. They argued that the CLIL course effectively enhanced the students' English communication ability. Similarly, Chansri and Wasanasomsithi (2016) investigated the impact of a CLIL course in Thai on undergraduate agricultural students' writing ability, as well as their content and cultural knowledge. They found a significant improvement in the students' English writing abilities, particularly in organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics of writing. Additionally, Khamkhienm and Kanoksilapatham (2023) utilized CLIL implementation to teach Thai University students how to draft research abstracts and reports.

Their study demonstrated the potential of CLIL as a practical approach to teaching academic writing to students at the tertiary level.

The majority of current research adheres to CLIL principles, emphasizing the 4Cs: Content, Cognition, Communication, and Culture, as highlighted by Khamngoen et al. (2020). In terms of CLIL and literature, Rahmawati and Hartoyo (2018) demonstrated that the CLIL approach leads to substantial enhancements in students' language proficiencies, literary understandings, and critical thinking skills. Similarly, Suwannoppharat and Chinokul (2015) argue how the CLIL course on their study effectively bolstered students' English communication ability. These results underscore the tangible benefits that CLIL can bring to language education, providing a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction to educators. In addition, CLIL in Children's literature for the EFL context can be linked with Nunan and Richards' (2015) ideal that while out-of-class learning will not replace the classroom, ultimately, all successful learners take control of their own learning.

Despite the widespread use of CLIL in Thailand, to the best of my knowledge, research has yet to be done on the efficacy of the CLIL approach to studying English literature at the higher education level. Therefore, this paper proposes a method for teaching EFL through CLIL within the context of literary subjects. Furthermore, it seeks to develop soft skills, which are crucial characteristics of 21st-century learners. The study focuses on CLIL, with activities emphasizing interactions and practical tasks that foster comprehensive soft skills development, such as communication skills, time management, adaptability, teamwork, and so on.

Children's Literature

Using CLIL in a children's literature classroom can offer several benefits. First, CLIL promotes language development by exposing students to the target language in a meaningful context (Yang, 2014). In a higher education setting, CLIL can help students to improve their language proficiency (Charunsri, 2019), which can be valuable for their future academic and professional pursuits. Second, by integrating children's

literature into a CLIL classroom, students can develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter while simultaneously improving their language skills and the 4Cs (Graham et al., 2020). Next, literature is a powerful tool for developing intercultural competence (Rodríguez & Puyal (2012). By incorporating children's literature into a CLIL classroom, students can engage with the material in a more meaningful way, which can promote the development of these important cognitive skills. Lastly, children's literature often reflects the cultural values of a particular society.

Using CLIL in a children's literature classroom at the higher education level can help to develop critical cognitive skills and promote cross-cultural understanding, which can be valuable in a globalized world (Chou, 2022). CLIL fosters cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity by exposing students to different perspectives and cultural contexts through literature. This equips them with the ability to navigate and appreciate cultural differences, an essential skill in international collaboration, global business, and multicultural environments.

Moreover, the use of CLIL in children's literature classrooms in higher education can have a positive impact on the development of various soft skills among students (Jiang et al., 2022; Namsaeng, 2022). First, CLIL promotes communication and collaboration skills as students must work together to interpret and analyze literary texts in a foreign language (Jiang et al, 2022). This collaborative effort encourages students to share ideas and opinions, negotiate meaning, and build consensus, which are all important communication and collaboration skills. Second, CLIL enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills as students must think deeply about the literary texts they are reading, analyze different perspectives, and develop reasoned arguments to support their interpretation (Namsaeng, 2022). This process encourages students to engage in higher-order thinking, evaluate evidence, and consider different solutions, which are all important critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Third, CLIL promotes creativity as students must think creatively to interpret literary texts and develop their own ideas. This encourages students to approach problems with an open

mind, generate new ideas and solutions, and take risks, which are all important creative and innovative skills. Overall, the use of CLIL in children's literature classrooms in higher education can have a positive impact on the development of important soft skills such as communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and innovation.

Research Objectives
The current research has two objectives:

      1. To study the effects of implementing content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in a children's literature classroom.

      2. To study undergraduates' attitudes toward the implementation of CLIL in a children's literature classroom.

Method

Population and samples
The sample consisted of third-year English majors enrolled in the Children's Literature course in the first semester of the academic year 2023. The sample was selected through systematic random sampling and comprised of 30 students from a list of 62 students across two classrooms. All participants were asked for consent at the beginning of the study and informed that non-participation would not affect their overall grade. Their names would also not be revealed to the public.

CLIL Implementation
In this study, CLIL was used to integrate the teaching of content from Children's Literature course with the teaching of a foreign language, aiming to improve both subject-specific knowledge and language proficiency. CLIL activities were designed to be interactive and student-centered, encouraging active participation and collaboration. The activities were integrated into the lesson over a period of one semester, with sessions conducted once a week. Each session lasted approximately 150 minutes, providing time for in-depth exploration of both language and content. These sessions included activities such as

reading and discussing literature, engaging in creative projects like ceramic craftwork and board game creation, and practicing language skills through various interactive exercises.

Figure 1 shows the integration of literary content, soft skills, and English language skills, and it focuses on helping learners to acquire these three aspects through activities that incorporate the principles of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Figure 1

Literature-Content, Language, and Soft-skills Integrated Learning Model (L-CLSsIL)
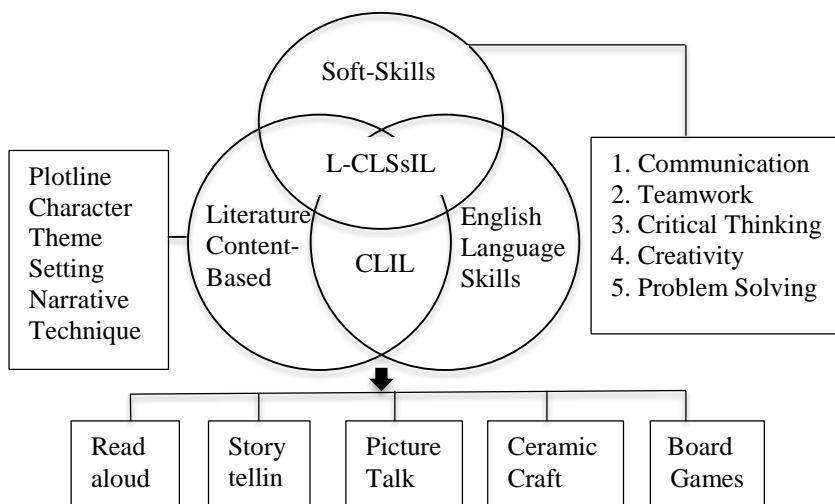
Data collection instruments

The research instruments consisted of participant observation sheets and a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. The observation form consisted of two parts: Part 1 included basic information, such as the date and observations made, and Part 2 listed the observations and the results. The researcher recorded factual observations showing personal feelings and opinions from each activity, described narratively and separated by topics:

- observing classroom behavior.

- observing behavior that demonstrates English language skill practice.

- observing behavior that demonstrates soft skill practice.

- the observation form as a checklist.

The researcher designed a semi-structured interview form, divided into three parts. Part 1 included the basic information of the interview, such as interview topics, date, month, year, and location of the interview. Part 2 consisted of questions and answers for the researcher to record information from the interview; this was divided into (1) questions about attitudes toward lesson content, (2) questions about attitudes towards classroom activities in developing English language skills: and (3) questions about attitudes towards the significance and importance of learning to develop soft skills. Part 3 contained questions about the interviewee's personal feelings and opinions. Depending on the interviewee's convenience, interviews were arranged as one-on-one or a group discussion and lasted about 15–20 minutes. During the interview, the researcher also recorded the session.

Data analysis and interpretation
For data analysis, the researcher used content analysis. The themes identified related to behaviors in practicing English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and behaviors that demonstrated the practice of soft skills across 12 competencies, including communication skills, time management, adaptability and flexibility, teamwork, analytical and critical thinking, decision-making, creative thinking, complex problem-solving, lifelong learning, persuasion and negotiation, leadership, and maintaining a positive attitude.

Results

Participant Observation
Evidence was gathered through observations of implemented CLIL activities. The findings indicated that CLIL integration enhanced the

students' English language skills according to the following two major categories:

Students' Learning Behaviors
By observing students' learning behaviors both in the classroom during activities in the formats of individual, pair, and group activities. These activities were integrated with content and language (CLIL) to naturally increase the frequency of opportunities for students to practice English skills in real-life situations. This approach ensured that students did not feel force to use English. It showed that students were attentive when listening to the questions and instructions for each activity. For instance, they nodded in agreement when the teacher asked if they understood. This type of behavior indicates classroom engagement, even though they may still need to be able to listen and respond to questions in English immediately.

It was also observed that students showed effort in listening and responding to questions. Some have started using technology to help them listen by recording teacher's speeches on their mobile phones. For speaking skills, every activity provided students with increased opportunities to practice speaking. Although they often spoke in a fragmented manner, mixing Thai and English, students did not exhibit any stress, as observed from their gestures, smiles, and laughter. For example, when practicing reading aloud from the story "The Cat in the Hat," students showed excitement, interest, and determination to read aloud. Even if they made mistakes and the teacher corrected them, the students tried to practice and understand what they were reading without showing disappointment when corrected. When asked if they had ever read this story before, most students replied they had not. Thus, this is considered to supplement students' content knowledge. When asked about the characters related to the story, students described the characters' traits, even if they spoke in single words. This activity is seen to encourage students to use and recall the English vocabulary knowledge they have previously learned.

Moreover, during one activity, students could listen to and answer Wh questions about the storytelling activity using a storyboard. In this activity, the teacher assigned students to read the story "Jack and the Beanstalk" to understand the content and create an eight-panel storyboard to retell the events. Students were also asked to narrate the story in sequence and rewrite the ending according to their imagination. Observations of their behavior revealed that students were highly engaged in creating their storyboards, and most changed the ending to make the giant a friend. The students were enthusiastic about telling the story and tried to explain their reasons for changing the ending in various ways. Even though they used a mix of Thai and English during the narration, they did not appear embarrassed: They were smiling and laughing while telling the story. They tried to recall vocabulary related to the story's characters, such as "giant," "beanstalk," and "golden axe". These behaviors indicated some development of the student's English language skills.

Additionally, when students participated in the ceramic activity using characters from the children's story "The Cat in the Hat," it was found that they researched additional information from the internet, especially images of molding examples, character illustrations, and vocabulary related to various molding tools, to describe the process of creating their work. This activity seemed to enhance their English skills, particularly the expansion of their English vocabulary related to the tools used in the activity. Observations of their behavior also showed that students were enthusiastic about gathering information to write explanations in English sentences. When the teacher asked for reasons behind their choice of characters, the students attempted to explain in English, providing reasons such as "I like this character," "I choose the cat because it is the main character of the story," and "I wanted to make the fish because it is easy to make." This process allowed students to express their opinions in English. Although students sometimes paused while speaking, they tried to complete their sentences and asked for confirmation from the teacher, such as "Do you understand me, teacher?"

Another activity involved designing a board game wherein students could practice answering Wh questions. Students had to understand the story they used to design the board game. The English skills incorporated into this activity included summarizing, explaining the game's rules, and writing instructions for playing the game. Observations showed that students researched English information online to write sentences and presented their work in English to explain how the game was played to the teacher. Group members divided the presentation tasks among themselves. During the presentation, students demonstrated their effort to explain in English, and when they could not remember vocabulary, they asked their peers. While presenting, students used gestures and enjoyed explaining, and their enthusiasm was evident from their tone of voice and laughter when the instructor understood their explanation.

Limitations in Using English
From the practice of reading through CLIL activities, the researcher observed that the students had noticeable limitations in their use of English. When practicing reading stories aloud, students showed signs of lacking confidence in their reading skills or understanding of the blending of consonants and vowels, indicating a need to develop reading skills and a deeper understanding of word structures in English. For example, the pronunciation of vowel sounds in words like /tall/, /fall/, and /hall/, as well as /u/ in words like /shook/, /hook/, and /shut/ indicated that they struggled with accurate sound production, highlighting the areas where improvement is needed. There were also issues with reading words aloud where the stress pattern called for an anapestic tetrameter—a rhythmic meter frequently employed by Dr. Seuss in his work "The Cat in the Hat".

Another phonological issue involved students reading poems with a monotonous tone, which seemingly reflected challenges in deep reading skills, particularly in recognizing and using rhythm and intonation in English. Reading poems that require appropriate rhythm and pitch, such as in Anapestic Tetrameter, demands a profound

understanding of linguistic forms and expressive intonation. This finding suggest that further practice could help enhance reading and understanding of English in various formats.

Interview Results

To explore the second research objective, which focuses on students' attitudes, interviews were carried out. The findings revealed that, in general, the students had positive attitudes towards CLIL in the children's literature classroom and can be seen in the following three major categories.

EFL Classroom Environment and Interaction

Based on interview responses regarding students' perceptions of the content of the course, several key insights emerged. First, many students conveyed a strong sense of enjoyment (associated with the course content). Responses from students 1, 6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 21, 24, and 25 indicated a highly positive and enjoyable learning experience (facilitated by the course's implementation). This favorable emotional response implies that the classroom environment and teaching methods were effective in creating a positive learning atmosphere, which is indispensable for the success of EFL instruction (Zulfiqar et al., 2020).

Second, eight students mentioned that they found the course content to be easily comprehensible (responses from students 2, 4, 7, 10, 13, 19, 20, and 29). Notably, students reported gaining insights into various literary works and children's literature, contributing to increased cultural awareness and a broader worldview. This feedback underscores the positive impact of the EFL classroom environment and interaction.

English Language Practice Opportunities

When asked which activities most enhanced their skills, many students identified reading "The Cat in the Hat" as particularly beneficial. They noted benefits in reading aloud, comprehension, and mastering correct reading techniques. Specifically, pronunciation practices, such as reading aloud from "The Cat in the Hat" or undertaking other reading activities,

were seen by 13 students as strengthening their speaking abilities and correct pronunciation (students 1, 2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 19, 21, 24, 27, and 28).

In addition, some students felt that diverse classroom activities— ranging from exercises and answering questions to watching videos— were instrumental in enhancing their English skills. They opined that opportunities to speak and engage in English communication within the classroom setting were indispensable for improving their abilities to communicate effectively in English (students 1, 7, 9, 12, 15, 22, 26, and 29). Furthermore, certain students pointed out that creativity-driven activities, such as designing board games or developing storyboards, were effective in reinforcing both their language skills and innovative thinking (students 3, 13, 18, 20, and 23). Significantly, the students' responses frequently underscored the importance of reading, communication, and speaking skills, suggesting these are areas they believe need further attention.

Opportunities for Soft Skills Practice

Based on interview responses, when students were asked about which content they deemed most beneficial and why, a notable number found the content of "Jataka Tales" to be the most advantageous. They believed it was beneficial because it imparted lessons, teachings, and warnings about the importance of caution, the dangers of carelessness, and the dangers of excessive kindness. Such teachings directly resonated with the experiences of learners, especially from their childhood (students 4, 5, 9, 14, 16, 19, and 29). These insights underscore the depth and applicability of the Jataka Tales, showcasing them as valuable learning tools that impart values, moral lessons, problem-solving skills, and real-life decision-making principles.

Furthermore, students expressed that they had opportunities to think critically, unleash their imagination, foster creative writing skills, and engage in reflective thinking during the course (students 4, 11, and 16). Additionally, five students indicated that they had enhanced their collaboration skills (students 5, 13, 19, 20, and 29). Student 25 mentioned

improvements in time management skills related to homework assignments. In their responses, students 12, 17, 23, and 28 reported continuous learning and adaptability. Furthermore, Student 11 highlighted that the course contributed to their cultural awareness and understanding, and Student 24 even mentioned the development of leadership skills. In summary, many students conveyed that the course had a positive impact on their soft skills development, encompassing communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and creativity. This suggests that the course effectively integrated opportunities for students to acquire and apply these essential skills.

Discussion

From the observed behaviors of practicing English skills through five integrated activities based on CLIL, the findings revealed positive behaviors among students, such as preparation for reading, attention to detail, questioning, excitement, positive attitude, interactive learning, enthusiastic communication, presentation and feedback reception, participation and enjoyment, and preparation and presentation of work. These behaviors reflect the students' desires to develop their English language skills.

Moreover, the analysis of the results revealed that the integration of CLIL can potentially enhance students' vocabulary knowledge, which is consistent with Sanad and Ahmed (2017), who state that CLIL can develop EFL reading comprehension skills, vocabulary skills and retention among college students; additionally, the findings support Rodríguez and Puyal (2012), who underscore how the enhancement of students' intercultural understanding can be done through the strategic inclusion of literary texts in English within a CLIL framework, and that such an approach can engage students both cognitively and emotionally, employing innovative and demanding activities aimed at cultivating intercultural competence—a core element of this content-driven teaching approach with similar to this research.

The findings also echo Inwan and Charoensap's (2021) study, which highlighted the importance of activities in teaching and learning.

Activities allow students to express themselves linguistically and apply their knowledge meaningfully. Such activities emulate real-life situations, fostering a need and desire for communication and promoting collaboration, thereby building positive classroom relationships. Moreover, the students expressed positive attitudes toward the course due to the teaching methods and CLIL activities (e.g. reading aloud, ceramic crafts, and creating board games with process-based writing). This finding concurs with Suwannoppharat and Chinokol (2015), who point out that CLIL is an educational approach that uses various language supportive methodologies. When its application has been well planned and prepared for, the CLIL approach can help produce real-world learning environments, motivate students toward learning, and increase their self-confidence to become strong communicators.

The result of this study confirms that CLIL can be beneficial in English language development and contents, which is consistent with Chansri and Wasanasomsithi's (2016) recommendation that CLIL should be implemented or implied in a language course based on an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course/ curriculum. However, the results from this study seem to display a slightly different perspective in terms of language integration due to the nature of Children's literature courses, which are different from ESP courses. The content of the Children's Literature course aims to help students understand stories, often embedding moral and ethical values. English language skills are integrated through question and response activities, including narrative writing practice about the story they have learned. In contrast, ESP courses focus on learning specific vocabulary and language used in particular contexts, such as terminology and sentences used in presentations, vocabulary and communication in public relations, specialized terms used in the tourism industry, and communication in meetings and business negotiations. So, it can be said that not only ESP courses, but also content-based courses can be implemented using CLIL; however, language teachers need to be prepared and well trained (Charunsri, 2019).

In addition, CLIL in the Children's Literature course presents some issues and limitations regarding its application with Thai student classrooms. Even though the teacher used English materials, spoke English, and created a friendly learning environment, it was not easy for he/she to encourage all students to use English and be active learners, especially while in the classroom or working in groups due to their learning characteristics. Successful CLIL classes not only depend on enthusiastic teachers and learners, but also require appropriate support systems (Suwannoppharat & Chinnokul, 2015). These systems include resources that address students' language proficiency levels, ongoing professional development for teachers, and strategies to foster student engagement and motivation.

In terms of soft skills enhancement, the findings suggest that CLIL can lead to the development of soft skills in a language classroom environment, which is consistent with Zorina and Chikova (2019). They argue that CLIL can help to build students' basic 21st century skills and promote autonomy and lifelong learning of soft skills (Messouab & El kasri, 2019). Nevertheless, while incorporating children's literature into a CLIL approach for EFL university learners can be a dynamic and enriching approach to language teaching, it requires thoughtful planning and execution to navigate the potential challenges and maximize benefits.

The findings also support the idea of Rodríguez and Puyal (2012) that literature in a CLIL context can effectively promote cultural understanding and enhance intercultural awareness which is one of the soft skills; as remarked by Graham et al. (2020), children's literature can meet the goals of CLIL as put forth by the 4Cs and has the potential to enrich the learning of EFL/ESL students.

Conclusion
In today's dynamic global environment, there is a heightened emphasis on equipping learners not only with linguistic proficiency but also with the soft skills necessary for successful interpersonal interactions and professional endeavors. This research demonstrates the potential of

integrating CLIL, especially within the context of children's literature, to achieve this dual objective. Specifically, this study confirmed the potential of integrating CLIL into children's literature courses to enhance undergraduate students' language proficiency and soft skills development. It also revealed that incorporating soft skills into a CLIL approach can have a beneficial impact on learning outcomes that serve the need for 21st-century skills. The findings indicated that children's literature provides multifaceted cognitive and emotional engagement opportunities. Applying the CLIL approach in this context enhances these benefits by ensuring that students actively engage with the content while developing their language abilities. This integration facilitates a holistic educational experience, making learning contextual, meaningful, and applicable to real-world scenarios.

The findings of this research highlight the significance of adapting teaching methods and activities to different subjects by employing appropriate instructional styles. The results also identified critical limitations in learner priorities that require attention. In the Thai context, implementing CLIL presents challenges due to specific learner characteristics and attitudes. Although teachers strive to promote CLIL activities in the classroom, it is important to work on a balance between enhancing both language skills and soft skills.

Limitations and Future Research

This study investigated how CLIL implementation impacted English and soft skills in the children's literature content at the university level. Moreover, the study only focused on qualitative data from interviews and observations, which can be subjective. Thus, future research could extend the research site, incorporate quantitative measures, and use various assessment tools to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of CLIL's effectiveness. Moreover, the study was carried out over one semester, yet more time is needed to fully assess the long-term effects of CLIL implementation on students' language proficiency and soft skills development. It is recommended that more longitudinal studies be conducted to better understand the lasting impact of CLIL.

In terms of language skills, this study did not control the students' language proficiency level regarding language skills. Moreover, the absence of pre- and post-test measures limited the abilities to assess any improvement statistically. Thus, future studies should consider developing and testing interventions focusing on pronunciation challenges, sentence clarity, coherence in writing, and speaking for Thai EFL university learners. Intensive training modules or workshops on connecting sentences and proper word relationships within sentences may be beneficial. In addition, comparing the results with foreign students from different educational or linguistic backgrounds might offer insights into whether these challenges are universal or specific to this group.

In terms of soft skills, there are limitations, particularly in assessing the success of acquiring soft skills. Since the research is designed as a qualitative study, it relies on observations determine whether student possess soft skills, which remains a broad assessment. It is recommended that researchers design tools that can measure soft skills or possibly design the study to include statistical measurements in order to obtain clearer and definitive statistic results. Moreover, future studies should consider exploring specific skills such as emotional intelligence, leadership qualities, or conflict resolution as they could provide more focused insights. Apart from student feedback, understanding educators' and peers' perceptions can offer a more holistic view of soft skill development. Also, as digital tools become increasingly prominent in education, research can examine how technology can facilitate or hinder the development of soft skills in a CLIL setting. By focusing on these areas, future research can build upon the foundation established by current studies, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of soft skill development within the framework of CLIL in other literary classrooms.

Acknowledgements

References

Abdullah, A. R., Muhammad, M. Z., & Nasir, A. (2019). The role of soft skills on business graduates' employability. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business, 7*(2), 83–94. https://doi.org/10.17687/jeb.v7i2.463

Chansri, C., & Wasanasomsithi, P. (2016). Implementing CLIL in higher education in Thailand: The extent to which CLIL improves agricultural students' writing ability, agricultural content, and cultural knowledge. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*, *51*, Article 2. https://doi.org/10.58837/CHULA.PASAA.51.1.1

Charunsri, K. (2019). The challenges of implementing content language integrated learning in tertiary education in Thailand: A review and implication of materials. *Advance in Language and Literary Studies*, *10*(4), 125–129. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.10n.4p.125

Chou, M. J. (2022). Let's CLIL with children's storybooks. *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, *10*(1), 21–30.

Chuanpongpanich, S. (2021). The challenges of Thailand in promoting the students' English skills to be an effective ASEAN citizen. *Santapol College Academic Journal. 7*(2). 229–238.

Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *Content-and-language integrated learning.* Cambridge University Press.

Forbes. (2021). *The top 25 soft skills remote workers need in 2021—and 3 ways to get them.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/markcperna/2021/01/12/the-top-25-soft-skills-remote-workers-need-in-2021-and-3-ways-to-get-them/?sh=52560eb1d78b

Graham, K. M., Mathews, S. D., & Eslami, Z. R. (2020). Using children's literature to teach the 4Cs of CLIL: A Systematic review of EFL Studies. *Latin American Journal of Content & Language Integrated Learningm*, *13*(2). 163–189. https://doi.org/10.5294/laclil.2020.13.2.2

Indeed. (2021). *10 Best Skills to Put on Your Resume*.
https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/
best-resume-skills

Inkaew, M. (2020). A Simple but unanswered question of why Thai
students lack practical English communicative skills. *Journal
of Rattana Bundit University*, *15*(1), 1–10.

Inwan, B., & Charoensap, N. T. (2021). English speaking ability of
students at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna
Lampang through using communicating language activities.
*Rattanakosin Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities:
RJSH*, *3*(2), 82–97.

Jiang, P., Akhter, S., Azizi, Z., Gheisari, A., & Kumar, T. (2022).
Exploring the role of content and language integrated learning
approach in developing transversal skills in university students
with respect to the mediating role of emotional intelligence.
Frontiers in Psychology, *13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.
2022.988494

Karachedee, P. (2017). *Needs for English communication skills of Thai
employees in a multinational company* (Publication No. 55921456)
[Master's thesis]. Burapha University.

Khamkhienm A., & Kanoksilapatham, B. (2023). Teaching Thai
university student how to write research article abstract and
research reports: The case for science using CLIL. *MEXTESOL*,
47(4), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.61871/mj.v47n4-7

Khamngoen, S., Seehamat, L., & Khongjaroen, K. P. (2020). The
knowledge synthesis of English teaching based on Content and
Language Integrated Learning Approach (CLIL). *Journal of
Roi Et Rajabhat University*, *14*(1), 249–260.

Marsh, D. (2012). *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL):
A development trajectory* (Publication No.60884824) [Doctoral
dissertation, University of Córdoba]. Campus de Rabanales.
https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/60884824.pdf

Messouab, I., & El kasri, A. M. (2023). Autonomy and life-long learning as soft skills: Perceptions of English department university students. *Moroccan Journal of Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, *15*(3), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.48379/IMIST.PRSM/mjqr-v5i3.41727

Namsaeng, P. (2022). The potential of CLIL for promoting critical thinking skills in Thailand. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSOKKU)*, *39*(1), 182–206.

Nunan, D., & Richards, J. C. (Eds.). (2015). *Language learning beyond the classroom*. Routledge.

Panapinun, S., & Phensit, T. (2021). Soft Skills that are essential for music students Suan Sunadha Rajabhat University. *Art Pritas Journal*, *Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts*, *9*(2), 108–112.

Penratanahiran, R., & Thongkham, K. (2021). Survey of solf skills needed in the 21st century workplace. *Rajabhat Ramphai Barni Researh Journal*, *15*(1), 59-69.

Phucharoen, K., Intasingh, S., Swathanan, S., & Nguenyuang, S. (2022). Guidelines of using CLIL in EFL learning management for higher education. *Humanities and Social Sciences Journal of Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University*, *16*(1), 1–13.

Proyrungroj, P., & Chansom, N. (2021). Soft skills factors affecting to worker performance effectiveness of Y generation group in Bangkok. *Rajapark Journal. 15*(42).117–128.

Rahmawati, Y., & Hartoyo, A. (2018). Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in teaching English literature: Indonesian context. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 9*(6), 1243–1252.

Rodríguez, L. M. G., & Puyal, M. B. (2012). Promoting intercultural competence through literature in CLIL contexts. *Atlantis*, *34*(2), 105–124.

Sanad, H. A., & Ahmed, M. G. (2017). Using content and language integrated learning (CLIL) to develop EFL reading comprehension skills, vocabulary skills and retention among college students. *Journal of Research in Curriculum Instruction and Educational Technology*, *3*(4), 101–131. https://doi.org/10.21608/jrciet.2017.24355

Suwannoppharat, K., & Chinokul, S. (2015). Applying CLIL to English language teaching in Thailand: Issues and challenges. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, *8*(2), 237–254. https://doi.org/10.5294/laclil.2015.8.2.8

Tantiwich, K., & Singongsuwat, K. (2021). Thai university students' problems of language use in English conversation. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, *14*(2), 598–626.

Tetsasonnanan, C. (2021). *Psychology for English language learners and teachers*. Chulalongkorn Press.

Thararuedee, P., & Wette, R. (2020). Attending to learners' affective needs: Teacher knowledge and practices. *System, 95*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102375

The Goldmaster.com. (2021, March 17). *12 soft skills that are essential for working in the digital age*. https://www.britannica.com/money/soft-skills

Wattanabut, B. (2021). Factors affecting that impact on soft skills development of Thai youth in 21st century. *The Journal of Research and Academics*, *4*(1), 87–94. https://doi.org/10.14456/jra.2021.8

Western Language Program. (2021). *Internship Student Evaluation Report of Academic Year 2021*. Chiang Rai Rajabhat University.

Yang, W. (2014). Content and language integrated learning next in Asia: evidence of learners' achievement in CLIL education from a Taiwan tertiary degree programme. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *18*(4), 361–382. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2014.904840

Yusuk, S. (2021). An implementation of active learning in Thai university students' English language classroom. *Journal of Liberal Arts, Maejo University*, *9*(1), 112–135.

Zorina, E. & Chirkova, E. Z. (2019). Using content and language integrated learning to building students' basic skills in professional training. In A. Nordmann, L. Moccozet, V. Volkova, & O. Shipunova (Eds.), *CSIS'2019: Proceedings of the XI International Scientific Conference Communicative Strategies of the Information Society* (pp. 1-6). Association for Computing Machinery. https://doi.org/10.1145/3373722.3373793

Zulfiqar, A., Frazana M., & Tariq., K. (2020). Creating positive classroom environment for learners motivation towards communicative competence in the English classroom. *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, *57*(1), 317–322.