



# Interculturality in the Science Classroom Within the Context of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): Practices from Indonesian Primary Schools

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**Abstract.** Interculturality in science classroom with CLIL context is crucial for establishing intercultural awareness and supporting students in developing relevant abilities to deal with intercultural interactions. Different techniques can be implemented for introducing cultural values within teaching and learning process as well as instructional materials. This is a virtual ethnography of three grade one female science teachers in Islamic primary schools of Indonesia to investigate intercultural practices from the teaching and learning activities and their congruency with the instructional materials. By in-depth interviews, virtual observations, as well as text-book analysis, the data of this study were obtained and then codified to get the emerging themes to discuss. Thematic analysis was employed and members checking was carried out for trustworthiness. Findings revealed that all participants of the study agreed the intercultural practices in their science class. They systematically planned their teaching with intercultural integration but they did not implicitly provide particular section in the Lesson Plan. In fact, they confirmed that they selected texts or resources which possibly strengthen the students' intercultural awareness. While only a participant who used series of books which aligned the international curriculum with Indonesian national curriculum, the other two participants used series of books published in Singapore and London with emphasis on internationally-content based to meet fully requirements of the Cambridge International Examinations Primary Science Curriculum Framework. Each intercultural practice was also discussed in this article. Suggestions are proposed to facilitate an interculturality integrated CLIL science pedagogy that is relevant to Indonesia's socio-educational context.

**Keywords:** CLIL · interculturality · intercultural awareness · primary schools · young learners

## 1 Introduction

English has been introduced into the primary school curriculum of Indonesia since 1990s [1, 2] and it became the most favorite local content subject. For the young learners whose

first language was not English, the delivery challenged the teachers to make the learning meaningful [3–5] since most primary schools English teachers did not have English as their educational background [6–9]. Furthermore, the integration of authentic materials for teaching young learners as well as innovative teaching and learning process should be considered [10, 11].

Based on the recent national curriculum of Indonesia, English is as locally-tailored school subject for primary school students and it provides flexibility for the schools to manage the learning [12]. Moreover, some schools take the advantage of the situation by offering international-tailored program and English is as the medium of instruction. By synchronizing the national and international curricula, the students get the opportunity to learn the subjects like English, science, and mathematics while they are improving their English language skills. The synchronization of the two curricula utilized the approach, termed as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Different from the concept of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) [12], CLIL is beneficial for the students' language learning because of the students' experience in using the language contextually [13].

Utilizing the CLIL as the approach of teaching young learners subjects using English as a medium of instruction, Czura [14] and Mehisto [15] promoted the best practice of conducting CLIL classes in primary school level. For catering the students' knowledge both in content and language, the CLIL's 4Cs (content, communication, cognition, and culture) frameworks should get the attention [16] and the learning materials should be adjusted [15]. In implementing the 4Cs frameworks, Rangarajan [17] found that the use of the language that the students do not speak at home has attracted the students' interest to learn the other culture.

With young learners in primary schools, Sabilah [18] suggested techniques of teaching intercultural competence (IC) such as describing and explaining the culture, dialogues, skits and mini-dramas, masks and puppets, role play, songs and dances, games, outdoor activity, craft and making a poster. Furthermore, those techniques work for teaching English and they can be adapted in CLIL classes that according to Sepešiová [19] requires changing of traditional lesson planning. Kusumaningputri and Widodo [20] suggested the utilization of intercultural tasks for tertiary education but it is possible to be implemented in any levels of education.

Based on the rationales, the research about the intercultural awareness teaching is critical in the international-tailored primary schools of Indonesia that offer International Class Program (ICP) or Cambridge International Program (CIP). As English, mathematics, and sciences are taught in English, it is used more in science for explaining the certain concept than in mathematics which focuses more on numbers and equations. Among three subjects taught in English, this study is limited to investigate the CLIL science teachers' experiences in integrating ICA to teach science using English, virtually due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The recent 2013 curriculum for primary schools in Indonesia amends the shifting the status of English from a subject to an extra-curricular subject. This situation provides a broader arena for Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in Indonesia because of the freedom for the teachers to design the teaching and learning activities. Additionally, the objective of the teaching is providing the young learners the opportunity to practice

using the language. That is the reason why theme-based teaching and learning which is directed to associated activities [22] is approved to provide YLs the opportunity to learn English contextually [23]. This can be initiated by taking the themes from the primary school's thematic lesson for their regular learning. Furthermore, this leads to the condition of integrating a theme/content in language learning as the foundation of teaching young learners content subject using English as a medium of instruction.

The integration of content and English language in an international-tailored schools has made CLIL as the approach of the delivery. This international program is offered as part of innovation in education as the students are exposed to the target language which used as a global means of communication. The principles for conducting the international program used to be initiated by the government in 2000s but it was unconstitutional by Constitutional Court in 2013 because of the government was not ready to finance the requirements that should be fulfilled based on OECD standards [24–26]. This action was taken because of the concern of the earlier the foreign language introduced to pupils at schools the sooner they forget to use Bahasa Indonesia for their national identity.

Coyle et al. [27] affirmed that an additional language, commonly English, can be in used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. For some reasons, the use of English can be supported by the L1, specifically for explaining the lesson. This effort is made because of the students' and parents' needs of advanced education. Today, the phenomenon of running international programs at schools of all levels may be one of the parents' expectations that they are prepared to self-finance their children's education to receive an international-tailored education program. There are 166 schools in Indonesia and over 9,000 Cambridge Curriculum schools in 160 countries that use the Cambridge Primary Curriculum and the International General Certificate of Education. By synergizing the international curriculum like Cambridge Primary Curriculum and National Curriculum, International Class Program (ICP) or Cambridge International Program (CIP) is practiced in some private primary schools. Hapsari [28] also noted that Singaporean and Australian curricula were in used in some of the schools.

When the Cambridge curriculum is used, English is used as a medium of instruction for science and mathematics, while English is taught to all grade levels using the Primary Curriculum Framework. This is related to CLIL because it is content-driven, and it is here that it both extends the experience of learning a language and distinguishes it from current language-teaching approaches [27]. CLIL has been used in primary schools in some European countries due to the positive effects it has on students' English language proficiency and motivation to learn [29–31]. CLIL became an emerging trend in Asia in the early 2000s. There have been some studies that have focused on the possibilities of CLIL in primary schools in China [32], Hong Kong [33], Japan [31, 34]. Similar to the findings in European schools, CLIL in Asian countries evidenced the students' English language progress as well as their confidence and constructive skills in the L2.

CLIL's frameworks which include 4Cs; Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture are framing the implementation of CLIL approach [27]. How to emphasize the 4Cs in the young learners' classroom is not easy because of the young learners' education main focus on playing, singing, drawing, building models, or other activities [27]. Anderson et al. [29] reported five different areas that practitioners should consider: (i) grade- appropriate levels of academic achievement in subjects taught through the CLIL

language; (ii) grade-appropriate functional proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the CLIL language; (iii) age-appropriate levels of first-language competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing; (iv) an understanding and appreciation of the cultures associated with the CLIL language and the student's first language; and (v) the cognitive and social skills and habits required for success in an ever-changing world.

Culture as one crucial area to consider in CLIL because of the use of the target language. Intercultural competence in English for primary schools is of urgency to acquire to equip students with interactional competence in using a foreign language. The so-called competence covers up not merely a social skill, but training sensitivity and awareness of values, point of view, way of life, and way of thinking of the target language users as well. Besides, students' independence in communicating values and personal point of view is also an integral aspect to be aimed for. Intercultural competence in elementary school is to be adjusted to students' characteristics, needs, competence level, and learning styles [18].

## **2 Methods**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This research is an ethnographic in nature. Furthermore, this was carried out virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic that students should learn remotely from homes. For obtaining the data of this research virtual ethnographic study was conducted. Commonly, the ethnographic study involves participant observation, coupled with the interviews that according to Seligmann and Estes [35] can be collected through written archives, life stories and oral narratives that could be of many genres, and audiovisual records along with written documentation. It means that the ethnographic study that has been discussed previously by Creswell [36] as well as Merriam and Tisdell [37] can be developed based on the research origin and needs.

Virtual ethnography necessitates a high level of engagement with mediated interaction that technological advancement becomes critical. This is sophisticated that Achmad et al. [38] took it as a research method to gain the data related to various of data by utilizing the participant observation (online and offline) and combining online and offline interviews, as well as online data from social media like Facebook and WhatsApp. Therefore, the most feasible research design for this study is virtual ethnography.

## **3 Findings and Discussion**

### **3.1 Lesson Preparation for Raising Intercultural Awareness in CLIL Science Classrooms**

Intercultural Awareness (ICA) has been raised by the participants of this study because of their beliefs that valuing the students own culture and respecting the culture of the language that they use as a medium of instruction is critical. This is in line with Victoria's and Sangiamchit [46] that by integrating ICA, the teacher is developing their own

intercultural competence. They argued that it was necessary to include ICA in all lessons despite their limited time of preparing it.

It was reported that before teaching science using English within CLIL setting, the teachers had to select the topic and do critical analysis on the textbooks prior to deciding types of activities to raise intercultural awareness.

### 3.2 Topic Selection

Topic should be selected carefully for teaching content subject using English because of the discussion using CLIL approach should facilitate students in obtaining new insights about the lesson with balanced language exposure [14]. Despite its urgency, the participants of this study clarified that they had not include activities to raise the students ICA in all science topics that they taught. For selected topics, Teacher A provided example such as *Animal Senses*, *Growing Plants*, and *Types of Weather* which included the activities in raising ICA. Teacher B explained that she could promote intercultural awareness in some topics like *Animal Senses*, *Healthy and Unhealthy*, and *Sound Around Us*. Meanwhile, Teacher C affirmed that the students could practice intercultural communication while learning the topics such as *In What Ways Are We Similar and Different?*, *Growing Plants*, and *What Are Some Sounds Around Us?*. For teaching all of those topics, the teachers set the objectives of integrating ICA in their teaching.

Selected topics are crucial for providing the students experience of promoting ICA that will be detailed in activities. Munandar and Newton [39] suggested that the topics should be linked with the teaching materials. All participants agreed that exemplifying some topics with ICA benefited the students with meaningful activities that they set by focusing the students' learning experience despite the teachers' efforts to find out the most suitable activities in addition to the those provided by the series of textbooks.

### 3.3 Critical Analysis on the Textbooks

Textbook is one of vital supports for interculturality in education. It should provide intercultural activities which attract the students' engagement [46]. It was reported that international science textbooks were used by the teachers and students in the three schools. Teacher A used a series of science books which exclusively published and fully aligned to Cambridge Primary Curriculum Framework and the National Curriculum of Primary School of Indonesia. Meanwhile, Teacher B and Teacher C opted to use internationally standard series of science books without any specific acknowledgement to the National Curriculum of Primary School of Indonesia. As the result, Teacher A got easier ways in connecting the topic with ICA. Because the students had learned about growing plants like Sunflowers from the Student Book, the teacher chose to provide activity related to the students' immediate environment. She used an Indonesia folklore entitled *Timun Mas* for Read Aloud activity. Extending the example of growing plant from growing sunflowers to growing cucumber was considered wise related to the Indonesian situation in common.

Teacher B analyzed that *Animal Senses* topic was excellent to be selected and integrated with activities to promote ICA. As senses tell animals about their environment, teacher B used all the materials provided by Student's Book to differentiate the animal

senses and extended her analysis on the textbook by posing a case of one most sensitive animal like a dog. The discussion also considered Islamic teaching about raising a dog to help humans for specific need.

Teacher C found Growing Plants as one of the topics to be analyzed. The teacher considered of making virtual laboratory for growing plants topic. What is meant by virtual laboratory was conducting experiment remotely by following the steps provided by the Activity Book. She analyzed that by following Worksheet 1 to Worksheet 6 students were put in situation that they had to decide which of the activity worked with them and to find solution if they should be substituted according to the current situation. Teacher C examined that different way how to name the experiment supplies could be the attention grabber of intercultural dialog.

All examples provided by the participants in critically analyzing the series of textbooks for science were related to their prediction what would happen if particular topic was presented and integrated with intercultural awareness. Teacher A explains, “...After finding that the activities provided by the books less interesting, I chose to use Indonesian Folklore to invite my students’ active participation while learning Growing Plants topic. The folklore is as a reminder of how any kinds of seeds grow in the same way like in the folklore.” (Teacher A/WhatsApp Chat/I) Furthermore, Teacher B affirmed that she explained the animal senses according to the learning materials provided by the books. Her emphasis on the relations between animal senses and their environments aims at providing the students’ knowledge that animals which live in the environment close to them might have different sensed from those from some other parts of the world. She confirms, “...I add my explanation with new insight about butterflies in Indonesian Bantimurung’s National Park.” (Teacher B, WhatsApp Chat/I) In addition, Teacher C verified that she was lucky because the books had provided the teacher and students materials for conducting virtual laboratory. She mentions, “...I only need to raise the students’ attention by discussing the learning materials from the books and connects them with the current situations and how they were explained in Indonesian.” (Teacher C/Personal Communication/I).

### 3.4 Lesson Planning

The following are the samples of how intercultural awareness was raised from the teachers’ selected topic. In fact, the participants of this study had not included detailed intercultural activities into their lesson plans. Therefore, they were exclusively developed by the researchers from the observations to show feasible activities and their flows in teaching and learning process. The activities were carried out during 30–45 min real-time remote learning. To support, additional time was spent by the students to complete their learning by reading references or doing some extended activities. According to Monbec [40], time allocation is important to be set according to the students condition in common. Hence, all time allocation could be flexibly set by involving synchronous and asynchronous modes of delivery. Setyaningrum and Purwati [12] had investigated the importance of setting the time allotment for children’s forced-remote learning based on the parents-teacher agreement. This flexibility is considered to promote the students’ engagement so that they will get the opportunity in practicing their skills and times for

**Table 1.** Teacher A: Using Stories and Conversation

<b>Teaching Phase</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Pre-Teaching	Introducing the story by making conversation with the students 1. Asking the students what story they like to listen. 2. Asking possible story to read. 3. Telling the students that the story is about growing plants.
Whilst-Teaching	Mutual Read Aloud 1. Asking one of the students to read the title 2. Asking the students whether they experience reading the story in Indonesian version or not. 3. Reading the story with different tones 4. Asking volunteer to read particular parts of the story 5. Asking the students about the plant in the story
Post-Teaching	Connecting the story with the science lesson 1. Showing the cucumber's life cycle 2. Discussing the similarities of planting the cucumber in the story and the cucumber's life cycle 3. Explaining the reasons of eating cucumber in different countries and grouping the cucumber within fruits or vegetables according to its functions. 4. Connecting the science lesson and Al-Qur'an (growing seeds) 5. Asking the students about the story and the cucumber

**Table 2.** Teacher B: Grouping the Students to Discuss Animals' Senses and their Environment

<b>Teaching Phase</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Pre-Teaching	Exploring the facts about the students' pets 1. Asking the students to show the pet they have at home 2. Asking the students to mention their pets' unique characteristics 3. Examining the students' different ideas about choosing pets to raise and their experience in raising particular pet.
Whilst-Teaching	Finding the facts about animals' senses 1. Analyzing humans' and animals' senses 2. Finding out the senses that different animals use and group them 3. Explaining how their senses help them 4. Inviting the students to tell their idea about raising an animal like a dog and connecting it with Islamic teaching
Post-Teaching	Finishing the workbook 1. Matching pictures of different eyes to the animal they belong to 2. Choosing the animal and draw it and explaining how the animal uses its different senses

feedbacks from teacher (Lohmann, et al., 2021). The following are the sample of lesson plans for raising the students' intercultural awareness.

**Table 3.** Teacher C: Virtual Laboratory

Teaching Phase	Activities
Pre-Teaching	Preparation 1. Asking the students to provide supplies for a growing seeds experiment 2. Checking all students supplies and finding out a solution if the students could not find the supplies 3. Reading a comic strip: How do seeds grow into plants?
Whilst-Teaching	Explaining how seeds grow 1. Asking the students idea about Tom's and Lily's experiment of growing beans with and without water as well as 2. Asking the students idea about growing seedling in two pots with and without light and water 3. Discussing with the students about growing plants in Indonesian environment and in a farming land abroad 4. Carrying out the experiment and following the steps of experiment
Post-Teaching	Reporting the experiment 1. Asking the students to fill up the worksheet to report five-day growing seeds 2. Monitoring the students daily report on words or pictures 3. Asking the students to state their conclusions

Table 1, 2, and 3 describes how the teachers raised the intercultural awareness during different teaching phase. Teacher A tended to integrate culturality during all teaching phases, but she emphasized the intercultural awareness during the post-teaching phase. Meanwhile, Teacher B and C focused to raise intercultural awareness during the whilst-teaching phase. In fact, all participants in this story integrated interculturality in form of dialogs/discussion for a posed case.

### 3.5 Raising Intercultural Awareness in CLIL Science Class Activities

To raise intercultural awareness, CLIL science teachers in primary schools have to pay attention to how they connect the activity with science content, practice intercultural communication, and evaluation through the teaching and learning process. They are explained by the following findings.

### 3.6 Connecting the Activity with Science Content

Trans-semiotizing which emphasizes on the utilization of different kinds of resources to clarify the information explained orally made it possible for the CLIL science teachers to connect the lesson taught in English with her spoken language encoded into stories as well as pictures [42–45]. This is essential for young learners' learning especially when they had double responsibility to learn English and science content. As it has been described by the samples lesson plans, the following figures help clarify how the activity could be connected to science context.





Fig. 1. Golden Cucumber Folklore and science context

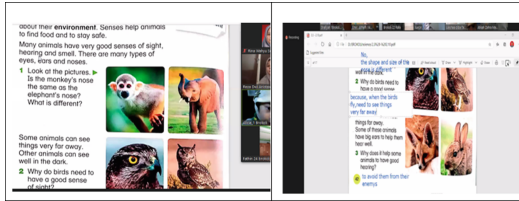


Fig. 2. Understanding Animal Senses

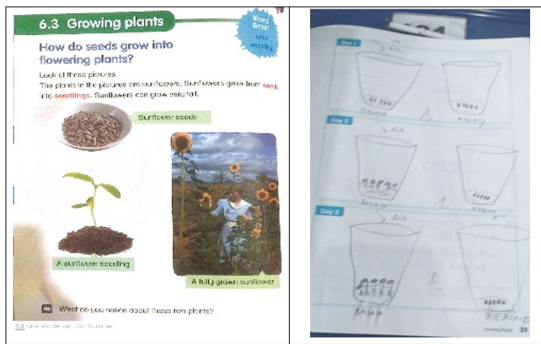


Fig. 3. Growing Sunflowers and Growing Mung Bean

Figure 1 showcases how the folklore could be connected to the science learning. It looks sophisticated as the story could be as an attention grabber for the students before learning about planting the cucumber, a locally Indonesian vegetable.

Figure 2 elucidates how Teacher B introduced different species of animals from different parts of the world. She also defined particular animal's characteristics, connected to senses and environment. As follow up she instructed the students to answer the questions to guide them understand the content, gradually. Moreover, using Zoom's annotate feature, the teacher wrote the students answer and permitted them to copy the answer to their Student's Book.

Initiating virtual laboratory within virtual forced-response learning had made the teacher asked the students to prepare experiments supplies that they could find at home (Fig. 3). As the students could not find Sunflowers seeds displayed by the picture, they could use mung bean from their kitchen's drawer. While mentioning the Sunflowers,

Teacher C also attracted the students' attention by asking questions about Indonesian different flowers which grow from seeds.

### 3.7 Intercultural Communication Practices

English has been a common medium of intercultural communication for people who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background [46]. Specifically for pedagogical objective in a non-English speaking country like Indonesia, Kusumaningputri and Widodo [20] analyzed that English as language of intercultural communication deals with linguistic and cultural dimension the language. Intercultural components should be included in the curriculum so that both teacher and students could be practiced in various settings. The participants of this study explained that they practiced intercultural communication by using different strategies.

Using stories and conversations, Teacher A integrated ICA in her teaching and learning process. To make it happened, she affirmed that she should have competencies in using English to explore culture, discover the way how to get involved in intercultural interaction, and find intercultural identity. That was the reason why she selected the most appropriate series of books which could provide required knowledge. She also chose *Timun Mas* as an Indonesian folklore for Read Aloud activity to invite the students' participations in class such as reading the English text, asking questions, answering the questions, as well as doing related activities. From the observation, it was evidenced that the activities could showcase the students' identity to be self-directed in learning. One of the students said that she had a cucumber, the vegetable told in the folklore, while the teacher explained that the cucumber could grow like in the story and was explained in detail within her cucumber's life cycle picture.

In addition, Teacher B clarified that she instructed her students to mention animals and their senses. She asked her students to show their pets to their friends and guessed the pets' senses. By telling their pets' senses, the students could relate the animals' senses with the humans'. Therefore, Teacher B justified that she should have competencies in understanding intercultural knowledge, navigate, analyze, and evaluate it. As the action, she used pictures of different animals from different countries for explaining the animals' senses which are different based on the environments. In teaching and learning process, Teacher B used English and allowed the students to express their ideas using English or Indonesian.

Teacher C understood that ICA as an effort of respecting the culture of language that people learn which is related to the ability to figure out differences of practices in the students' culture from others. To make the learning efficient, she planned the lesson which included intercultural awareness tasks such as observing different parts of plants that the students could find at home and presenting the observation results to their friends. Moreover, she assured that by understanding and negotiating both linguistic and cultural differences with people of other cultures appropriately using language and their capacity to relate to otherness. She used pictures, realia, stories, and movements to support her teaching.

### 3.8 Evaluation through the Teaching and Learning Process

From the teaching and learning process as well as from the books used in class, the data about the integration of ICA in CLIL science instruction materials were investigated. From the teaching and learning process, the teachers' explanation about different concepts in science endorsed by the book series in Indonesia and in foreign countries were investigated.

In fact, Teacher A argued that she evaluated the teaching and learning process from their students' spoken language. From the dictions that the students used, Teacher A evaluated the students' spoken English, connected to science topic. Meanwhile, Teacher B evaluated herself by looking at the students' understanding about the topic that she taught as well as from the responses to the tasks. Additionally, Teacher C evaluated her teaching by looking at how she could make learning meaningful from the students' intention to do mutual activity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, evaluation is not only carried out for students but also for the teacher since they "experiment" many of the learning activities that they had never used during the face-to-face teaching and learning sessions. According to Monbec [40], the result of evaluating the students' learning during the pandemic should provide the teachers information about the effects of their students' learning during this challenging time. In fact, Teacher A mentioned that interculturality should be explored during forced-remote learning to decrease the students' learning boredom. Teacher B clarified that interculturality could raise the students' ICA by inviting students' more participation in learning. According to Teacher C, students could interact well when they do something that they have understood. That was the reason why foreign culture should be linked to the students' own culture during teaching and learning process.

## 4 Conclusions and Suggestions

ICA should be deepening because it cannot be separated from the CLIL effectiveness for its role related to second language acquisition. CLIL cannot solely applied without closely related factors such as skill and understanding of the content, language knowledge and skills, communicative interaction, as well as students' engagement in cognitive acquisition process. That is the reason why raising intercultural awareness is urgent in CLIL classrooms. ICA has been integrated into the curriculum for providing the students opportunity to compare and contrast their own culture with others to reflect similarities and differences [47].

ICA which is widely known as intercultural competence, involves some dimensions like attitudes, knowledge, and skills [48]. Each of them should be integrated in the lessons and embedded into classroom activities. This study, therefore, provides the information of how the CLIL science teachers in primary schools of Indonesia integrate the intercultural awareness in their teaching, as well as the integration of intercultural awareness in instructional materials. Hence, the teacher should integrate the ICA into selected topics, plan the learning, and analyze the learning resources. Additionally, ICA could be raised in science class activities by connecting the activity to science content, intercultural practices, and evaluation through teaching and learning process.

Additionally, since all participants of this study aware of urgency of raising intercultural awareness, they agreed to get through the process of the integration. However, they still have their own way to do it. Among all, Teacher A could integrate the ICA into her teaching very well. She followed all the principles of ICA without any significant problem in preparing and raising ICA. It was a good idea that Teacher B conducted a virtual experiment, however, it should be prepared in details so that both teacher and students could make it precisely. Lengthy introduction before the experiment made the remote learning ran slowly. For Teacher B, raising the students' intercultural awareness could be practical for face-to-face mode of delivery.

It is suggested that intercultural awareness to be raised by systematic planning. There should be teachers' professional development to be conducted in order to provide established pattern how it could be practiced in primary school CLIL classrooms. In fact, what had been practiced by the teachers could be practiced widely by maximizing the students' learning resources and the teachers' teaching resources, such as trans-semiotizing.

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