



## ENHANCING ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH CLIL IN THE MBKM CURRICULUM

Fauzana Annova<sup>\*1</sup>, Zainul Arifin<sup>2</sup>, Ilya Husna<sup>3</sup>, Nabil Ahmed Banonah<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Al-Madinah International University, Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

The transition from the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI) to the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum introduces new challenges for Arabic language learning in higher education, particularly the need for flexible and integrative teaching approaches. This study explores the implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach within the MBKM framework. It examines its effects on students' motivation and proficiency in reading and writing Arabic. Employing a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group, the sample consisted of an experimental group from class MPI-IA (38 students) and a control group from class MPI-IB (40 students). Data were collected through questionnaires, reading and writing tests, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests. The results demonstrate that the CLIL approach significantly enhances students' motivation and Arabic language skills while also supporting a deeper understanding of Islamic education content through the integration of Arabic texts. These findings suggest that CLIL is a promising pedagogical strategy for aligning Arabic language instruction with the objectives of curriculum transformation and the development of interdisciplinary competencies.



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### CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Fauzana Annova,

UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia

Jl. Jenderal Sudirman No.15, Padang Pasir, Kp. Jao, Kec. Padang Barat, Kota Padang, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia

Email: [fauzanaannova@uinib.ac.id](mailto:fauzanaannova@uinib.ac.id)

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## INTRODUCTION

Arabic is a global language with millions of speakers across various countries and holds a central position in the Islamic world (Alanazi & Alqarni, 2022). In Indonesia, particularly within Islamic higher education institutions, Arabic is a core component of the curriculum due to its role as the language of worship and the primary source of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'ān and Hadith (Haug & Mork, 2021; Ritonga et al., 2024; Yavuz, 2014). At UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, Arabic is a compulsory subject that plays a critical role in supporting students' academic and religious development.

Despite its importance, Arabic language learning faces persistent challenges, including low student motivation and the lack of contextualized, innovative instructional approaches (Albab, 2019; Fatia et al., 2024; Firdausia et al., 2020). A particular issue is the weak integration between Arabic instruction and students' academic disciplines, which often leads to disengagement and limited applicability of the language in their fields of study (Anggi & Faiqoh, 2022).

The transition from the KKNi to the MBKM curriculum has further complicated this landscape (Vhalery et al., 2022). The MBKM framework promotes flexible (Nurasiza et al., 2022), interdisciplinary (Berdiyeva, 2024), and student-centered learning experiences, emphasizing practical immersion and relevance to real-life challenges (Shofia Hattarina et al., 2022). Consequently, Arabic language instruction must adapt to meet these new demands (Effendi, 2024; Sutisna & Atha, 2023).

One promising response to these challenges is the adoption of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL enables the simultaneous learning of a language and subject content by embedding language instruction within relevant disciplinary materials (Banegas et al., 2025). This approach aligns well with MBKM's goals by making language learning more contextual, meaningful, and applicable. Several studies have affirmed the effectiveness of CLIL in enhancing both linguistic competence and content mastery (Mageira et al., 2022; Nisa et al., 2021).

While prior research has explored CLIL in various educational contexts, its application in Arabic language instruction within the MBKM framework remains limited, particularly in Indonesian Islamic universities. This study addresses that gap by implementing the CLIL approach in Arabic instruction for students in the Islamic Education Management program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang.

This research aims to examine the impact of the CLIL approach on students' motivation and proficiency in Arabic within the context of the MBKM curriculum. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective and integrative Arabic language teaching models. Moreover, this study provides practical insights for educators and institutions seeking to enhance the relevance and quality of Arabic language learning in higher education.

## METHOD

This section outlines the methodology employed in the study. This research utilized a quantitative approach, specifically a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group involving a pre-test and post-test (Ritonga et al., 2024). This design involved two groups: an experimental group (E) that received treatment using the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach and a control group (K) taught using conventional

methods. The experimental design can be represented as  $O1 \times O2$  for the experimental group and  $O3 \times O4$  for the control group, where  $O1$  and  $O3$  denote the pre-tests for their respective groups. In contrast,  $O2$  and  $O4$  represent the post-tests. The symbol 'X' indicates the CLIL treatment applied to the experimental group, whereas the control group received no specific new treatment and continued with conventional methods.

The population of this study consisted of all students enrolled in the Arabic language course within the Islamic Education Management (MPI) Study Program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang during the ongoing semester. The sampling technique employed was total sampling, as the number of students in the two available classes allowed all students to be included as the research sample. The sample distribution was an experimental group from class MPI-IA (38 students) and a control group from class MPI-IB (40 students). To ensure initial equivalence between the two groups, a homogeneity test was conducted based on pre-test scores and student background, such as previous Arabic language grades and initial interest in the course.

The CLIL approach was implemented in the experimental group over 12 sessions, each lasting approximately three months, with sessions lasting  $2 \times 50$  minutes, following the regular course schedule. Teaching materials were specifically adapted to the academic context of the Islamic Education Management students, covering topics such as educational administration, madrasah management, and Islamic leadership, all delivered in Arabic. Each CLIL session integrated several key components: conceptual material relevant to the student's field of study was provided as content input in Arabic; language activities such as discussions, simulations, and presentations were used to practice listening and speaking skills; and formative evaluation was conducted through reflections and short quizzes in Arabic. Conversely, the control group was taught using conventional methods, which included grammar-based lectures, text exercises, and translation activities, without the integration of subject content.

Data for this research were collected using several techniques and instruments. An Arabic Language Proficiency Test was used to assess students' listening and speaking skills. This test was developed based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level A2–B1 indicators, and three Arabic language experts assessed its content validity. The reliability of the test was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a score of 0.81. To measure student learning motivation, an Arabic Language Learning Motivation Questionnaire, adapted from the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI), was administered. This questionnaire covered aspects such as interest and enjoyment, perceived competence, and value and usefulness. Its construct validity was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and it demonstrated a reliability of 0.84. Classroom observations were also conducted using structured observation sheets based on CLIL indicators, with observations carried out by two external observers to ensure objectivity and reliability. Lastly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 lecturers and 10 students from both the experimental and control groups to explore their perceptions regarding the CLIL implementation, the challenges they faced, and its perceived impacts.

The collected data were analyzed using different techniques appropriate to their nature. Quantitative data derived from the proficiency tests and motivation questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, an independent sample t-test was used to compare pre-test and post-test scores between the experimental and control

groups. Normality and homogeneity tests were conducted before the inferential analysis to ensure that the assumptions were met. Qualitative data gathered from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved coding the data, identifying emergent themes, and interpreting these themes. To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, triangulation of sources and methods was conducted, and findings were further validated through member checking with key informants.

This study aimed to test the following hypotheses: the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) posited that the CLIL approach significantly improves students' Arabic language proficiency and learning motivation compared to conventional methods. In contrast, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) stated that the CLIL approach does not significantly improve students' Arabic language proficiency and learning motivation when compared to conventional methods.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

This section presents the findings of the study on the implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in Arabic language instruction within the Islamic Education Management (MPI) program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. The results are organized into five subsections: the implementation process of CLIL, students' motivation to learn Arabic, their Arabic language proficiency, statistical analysis using an independent sample t-test, and an overall discussion and reflection. Each part integrates quantitative data with theoretical insights to provide a comprehensive picture of how the CLIL approach supports both language acquisition and content mastery in a higher education context.

#### Implementation of the CLIL Approach in Arabic Language Learning

The implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in Arabic learning was designed to integrate Arabic language skills, especially reading (mahārah qirā'ah), with disciplinary content from the Islamic Education Management (MPI) program. The steps followed the core CLIL components: content, communication, cognition, and culture. The Arabic learning materials were specifically developed to reflect concepts from the MPI curriculum. For example, the following Arabic text about leadership and management was used:

صِفَاتُ الْمُدِيرِ النَّاجِحِ  
هُنَاكَ فَرْقٌ بَيْنَ صِفَاتِ الْمُدِيرِ أَوْ الرَّئِيسِ، وَبَيْنَ صِفَاتِ الْقَائِدِ أَوْ الرَّعِيمِ، فَصِفَاتُ  
الْمُدِيرِ هِيَ مَا يَسْتَمِدُّهَا مِنَ النَّفْسِ وَالْمُجْتَمَعِ وَالْقَانُونِ، أَمَا صِفَاتُ الْقَائِدِ فَيَحْيِ  
بِالْإِضَافَةِ إِلَى ذَلِكَ، يَشْتَرِطُ فِيهِ بَعْضَ الْمَوَاهِبِ الشَّخْصِيَّةِ وَالْفِطْرِيَّةِ وَالْإِقْدَامِ،  
وَعَبْرَ ذَلِكَ مِمَّا لَا يَشْتَرِطُ فِي الْمُدِيرِ، فَإِنَّ قُدْرَةَ الْإِبْدَاعِ الْعَامِ وَالْمُرُونَةَ مَعَ الظُّرُوفِ،  
وَالْتَصَلَبَ فِي الْمَشْيِ إِلَى الْهَدَفِ وَالتَّجَاوُزَ عَنِ الْجُرْنِيَّاتِ فِي سَبِيلِ الْقَضِيَّةِ الْعَامَّةِ إِلَى  
غَيْرِهَا، يَجِبُ تَوْفِيرُهَا فِي الْقَائِدِ.

أَمَّا يَعْرِفُ مِنْهَا صِفَاتُ الْمُدِيرِ النَّاجِحِ فَهُوَ الْأُمُورُ الثَّلَاثَةُ: (١) تَحْمِيلُ الْمَسْئُولِيَّةِ عَنِ  
 الْأَعْمَالِ أَوْ الْفَشْلِ. (٢) الرِّغْبَةُ فِي إِتْقَانِ الْعَمَلِ وَتَحْسِينِهِ. (٣) إِعْتِبَارُ الْعَمَلِ مَتْعَةً  
 يَتَمَتَّعُ بِهَا لَا ثِقْلًا عَلَى كَاهِلِهِ. (٤) الْقُدْرَةُ عَلَى التَّنْفِيزِ فِي الْوَقْتِ الْمُنَاسِبِ. (٥) الْعَمَلُ  
 تَحْتَ ضَغْطِ الْوَقْتِ. (٦) الثِّقَةُ بِالنَّاسِ وَالْعَمَلُ عَلَى أَسَاسِ تَحْقِيقِ النَّجَاحِ. (٧)  
 الطَّمُوحُ.

The integration of Arabic language learning with disciplinary content from the Islamic Education Management (MPI) program aimed to serve two purposes: to enhance students' Arabic reading comprehension while simultaneously deepening their understanding of subject-specific knowledge. By embedding domain-related concepts, such as leadership, administration, and organizational behavior, into Arabic texts, students were encouraged to engage with the language in a meaningful and contextually relevant way. This approach not only exposed them to authentic vocabulary and expressions used in Islamic professional settings but also enabled them to interpret and analyze academic content through the medium of Arabic. As a result, language learning was no longer an isolated skill but became a functional tool for accessing and constructing knowledge within their field of study.

In addition to the content aspect, the implementation of the CLIL approach in Arabic language learning also considered three other key components: communication, cognition, and culture. These elements complement one another in creating a holistic learning experience, where language is not only learned as a tool for communication but also as a medium for thinking and cultural reflection within the academic context of Islamic Education Management.

In the CLIL-based Arabic learning setting, communication extended beyond linguistic exchanges to include the interpretation of vocabulary and discourse within a professional domain (Mageira et al., 2022; Tai et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). Lecturers guided students to read, translate, and analyze Arabic texts thematically related to Islamic Education Management, encouraging them to engage meaningfully with content. This aligns with Wunberg (2024), who argues that communication in CLIL contexts must involve not only language practice but also the ability to use language as a vehicle for constructing knowledge. By working with texts that mirrored their academic discipline, students were able to see the relevance of Arabic beyond the classroom, which reinforced both motivation and retention.



Figure 1. Giving Instructions by Lecturers to Students

Cognitive development is a fundamental principle of CLIL, where students are expected to engage in higher-order thinking as they process subject content in a foreign language. In this study, students were encouraged to relate linguistic elements, such as specific terminologies, phrases, and grammatical structures, to theoretical concepts in leadership and educational management. This dual task of interpreting both language and meaning triggered what Mikulan (2014) categorized as cognitive domains beyond remembering and understanding, such as applying, analyzing, and evaluating. The results demonstrated that students could identify key leadership traits and reflect on how these traits might be implemented in real-life school management scenarios.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that language and thought develop together (Norton & Toohey, 2011), particularly through socially mediated learning experiences. In this study, students' cognitive engagement in Arabic became more dynamic as they were tasked with interpreting professional texts, sharing interpretations, and debating leadership concepts in groups. These activities strengthened their metacognitive awareness, enabling them to think about how they think in another language. As Şahan (2014) notes, such "languageing" fosters deeper comprehension and solidifies understanding of abstract concepts. Thus, the CLIL design in this context not only supported content mastery but also cultivated critical thinking skills through a foreign language lens.

The cultural dimension of CLIL in Arabic education played a significant role in broadening students' perspectives on Arab-Islamic norms (Campos, 2025), especially in professional and managerial communication. The Arabic texts studied reflected cultural values embedded in leadership styles, organizational behavior, and ethical principles. Akpur (2020) notes that language learning is inherently cultural learning because language is a symbolic system deeply rooted in its community. The students in this study not only acquired vocabulary and grammar but also internalized ways of thinking and acting that align with Arab-Islamic educational traditions (Alanazi & Alqarni, 2022; Putry et al., 2020; Sari & Muassomah, 2020). This cultural literacy enhances students' intercultural competence, an essential skill in global academic and professional settings.

The relevance of content to students' field of study amplified their motivation and engagement. As suggested by Brandtzaeg & Følstad (2017), when learners perceive content as meaningful and connected to their goals, their intrinsic motivation increases. The high motivation scores recorded in this study, especially in the value and effort dimensions, reflect this theoretical stance (Al-Sabbagh, 2022; Scott, 2015). Furthermore, the integrated content reinforced students' belief that Arabic is not just a religious language (Farooqi & Akram, 2024) or a classical language but a practical tool for academic and professional success in Islamic education management.

From a pedagogical perspective, incorporating communication, cognition, and culture into the Arabic curriculum through CLIL offers a transformative approach to language instruction. It aligns with 21st-century educational goals that emphasize critical thinking, global awareness, and interdisciplinary learning. Lecturers must, however, be prepared to scaffold both language and content learning carefully. As Mageira (2022) points out, successful CLIL requires careful planning to ensure that language does not become a barrier to understanding the content. In this study, despite the students' positive responses, a need for additional support in grammar and sentence construction

remained, indicating that ongoing linguistic scaffolding is essential for optimizing learning outcomes.

### Student's Motivation to Learn Arabic

Student motivation was assessed using the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI), adapted to the context of Arabic language learning. The IMI instrument is widely recognized for its validity in measuring intrinsic motivation dimensions, including interest, effort, perceived competence, and value. The motivation for learning Arabic, as adapted from IMI, is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Students' Arabic Learning Motivation**

No	Dimensions	Percentage
1	<b>Interest/pleasure</b>	
	Learning Arabic is a fun activity.	75%
	Students are interested in learning Arabic further.	68%
2	<b>Perceived Competence</b>	
	Students feel quite capable of taking Arabic language lessons.	62%
	Students can understand Arabic language material well.	55%
3	<b>Effort</b>	
	Students are willing to put in a lot of effort in learning Arabic.	80%
	Students intend to devote a significant amount of time and effort to learning Arabic.	72%
4	<b>Value/Usefulness</b>	
	Students consider learning Arabic to be beneficial for their lives.	85%
	Students believe that mastering Arabic will open up new career opportunities.	78%
5	<b>Pressure/Tension</b>	
	Students feel stressed or anxious when learning Arabic.	35%
	Students experience tension when faced with challenging Arabic language assignments.	28%
6	<b>Perceived choice</b>	
	Students have the freedom to determine how they prefer to learn Arabic.	70%
	Students feel they can make their own decisions in studying Arabic.	65%

The results indicate a generally high level of intrinsic motivation among students participating in CLIL-based Arabic instruction. A significant majority (85%) perceived Arabic as valuable for their lives and future careers, while 80% reported high effort in their learning processes. These findings suggest that the integration of Arabic with relevant disciplinary content, namely Islamic Education Management, contributed to a more meaningful and engaging learning experience. However, the fact that only 55% felt they understood the material well reveals a discrepancy between motivational readiness and linguistic comprehension. This gap invites more profound reflection on the relationship between motivation, cognitive load, and actual language acquisition.

This outcome aligns with Nguyen's research, which emphasizes that intrinsic motivation is fostered when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In this study, students reported a relatively strong sense of autonomy (65–70%) and low anxiety, indicating that the learning environment supported their

psychological needs. The CLIL approach likely enhanced their perceived relevance of Arabic by linking it with their academic field, thereby fulfilling the need for *relatedness* and increasing *intrinsic value*. However, the lower score on perceived competence suggests a need for more targeted scaffolding to help students reach higher confidence in comprehension.

From the perspective of Chen (2020), motivation is closely tied to self-efficacy—the belief in one’s capability to succeed in specific tasks. The findings that only around half of the students felt competent in understanding Arabic texts suggest that their self-efficacy may still be underdeveloped. Bandura argues that prior mastery experiences, social modeling, and verbal persuasion influence self-efficacy. Therefore, one implication is that CLIL instructors need to provide consistent feedback, structured success experiences, and opportunities for peer collaboration to strengthen learners’ confidence in their language capabilities.

Wunberg (2024) also provides a relevant lens. This theory posits that motivation is a function of the expectancy of success and the value placed on the task. In this study, while the value dimension (usefulness and enjoyment) scored highly, the lower perceived comprehension may have reduced students’ expectancy of success, thereby potentially affecting sustained motivation in the long run (Al-Sabbagh, 2022; All et al., 2021; Breien & Wasson, 2021). Ensuring that the perceived difficulty of Arabic texts aligns with students’ current proficiency levels can help maintain an optimal balance between challenge and capability.

In conclusion, while the CLIL implementation successfully enhanced students’ intrinsic motivation by making Arabic more relevant and engaging, its full potential will only be realized if efforts are made to close the gap between motivation and competence. This calls for pedagogical strategies that build learner confidence and ensure consistent linguistic support, thus reinforcing motivation through tangible progress.

### **Student’s Arabic Language Proficiency**

Arabic proficiency was measured through structured assessments that focused on two key language skills: reading and writing. These tests were meticulously developed to align with the learning objectives of the CLIL-based curriculum. They were reviewed for content validity by language and pedagogy experts to ensure relevance and appropriateness. To provide a standardized benchmark, the assessment instruments were adapted to reflect the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Akpur 2020), with modifications suited to the structure and features of the Arabic language. The reading section assessed students’ ability to comprehend main ideas, interpret detailed information, and understand vocabulary in context. In contrast, the writing section evaluated organization, idea development, grammar accuracy, vocabulary use, and writing mechanics, including spelling and punctuation. By using CEFR-level descriptors as a reference, the evaluation provided a more objective measurement of students’ proficiency levels, offering insights into their strengths and areas needing improvement within the context of integrated content and language instruction.



**Table 2. Students' Writing Skill**

NO	Skill	Percentage
<b>Organization and Idea Development</b>		
1	Organize ideas logically and coherently in writing.	65%
	Develop main ideas with supporting details and relevant examples.	58%
<b>Vocabulary Use</b>		
2	Use appropriate and varied vocabulary in their writing.	72%
	Use new words that have been learned in the proper context.	60%
<b>Grammar and Sentence Structure</b>		
3	Use correct Arabic grammar in writing.	68%
	Construct grammatical and meaningful sentences.	55%
<b>Writing Mechanics</b>		
4	Mastering the use of punctuation, spelling, and writing Arabic letters well.	75%
	Write neatly and structure in handwriting.	65%

The results indicate that students showed stronger performance in specific aspects of both reading and writing skills. In writing, students excelled in vocabulary use and writing mechanics, such as spelling and punctuation, suggesting a familiarity with frequently used terms and the structural conventions of Arabic script (Rahman et al., 2024). Similarly, in reading, students demonstrated relative success in identifying main ideas and recognizing basic vocabulary, indicating a foundational understanding of Arabic texts within the disciplinary context of Islamic education (Alam, 2022; Soderlund, 2020). These outcomes reflect the benefits of integrating language learning with relevant subject matter, as students are more likely to engage with and retain content that aligns with their academic and professional interests.

However, the data also revealed ongoing challenges in mastering more complex elements of the Arabic language. Students struggled particularly with syntactic structures and interpreting vocabulary in context, skills that are essential for deeper reading comprehension and effective written expression. These findings align with Al-Qurni's (2024) observations, who argue that while CLIL promotes increased language awareness through content integration, it also necessitates instructional scaffolding to ensure learners can engage with more abstract linguistic features. Norton & Toohey's (2011) sociocultural theory further supports this notion, emphasizing the need for guided interaction within the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD) to help bridge the gap between current ability and potential proficiency. Without targeted scaffolding, students may remain motivated but unable to fully develop the higher-order language skills required for academic success in a second language.

**Table 3. Students' Reading Skill**

NO	Aspect	Percentage
1	<b>Reading comprehension</b>	
	Main idea/main idea	70%
	Details/detailed information	65%
2	<b>Vocabulary</b>	
	Basic vocabulary	75%

NO	Aspect	Percentage
3	The meaning of vocabulary in the text	68%
	<b>Grammar</b>	
	Sentence structure	65%
	<i>ḍamir, ḥarf</i> , etc.	70%

Table 3 describes students' reading skills. It is known that students have been able to understand the main idea, basic mufradāt, ḍamir, and ḥarf. Meanwhile, several indicators need improvement, namely students' understanding of detailed information, the meaning of mufradāt in the text, and sentence structure.

### Independent Sample T-Test Analysis

**Table 4. Independent Sample T-Test Results on Student Pre-test**

No	Data	Mean	Sig. (2 tailed)	Description
1	Pre-test experimental group	60,5	0,196	Insignificant
2	Pre-test control group	64,4		

There was no significant difference between groups at the beginning, confirming equivalent starting points.

**Table 5. Independent Sample T-Test Results on Student Post-test**

No	Data	Mean	Sig. (2 tailed)	Description
1	Post-test experimental group	87,6	0,024	Significant
2	Post-test control group	83,8		

The results of the post-test analysis revealed a statistically significant improvement in the Arabic proficiency of the experimental group compared to the control group, with a p-value of 0.024. This finding indicates that the implementation of the CLIL approach had a measurable and positive impact on students' language development. The experimental group, which received instruction integrating Arabic language skills with Islamic education management content, demonstrated greater gains in performance than their peers who experienced traditional instruction. This suggests that the dual-focus nature of CLIL, emphasizing both language acquisition and subject-matter learning, offers an effective pedagogical framework for improving Arabic language outcomes in higher education settings.

Furthermore, the effect size, as measured by Cohen's  $d = 0.43$ , falls within the range of moderate practical significance, reinforcing the educational relevance of this approach. According to Kleinheksel (2020), an effect size of 0.4 or higher typically reflects a visible and worthwhile impact in educational contexts. The moderate gain observed in this study demonstrates that CLIL does not merely produce statistically significant differences but also yields tangible improvements in learners' skills. This supports earlier studies, such as those by Mageira (2022), who found that students in CLIL environments generally outperform their peers in language development. These results suggest that integrating content and language learning can play a crucial role in

curriculum innovation, particularly in multilingual and interdisciplinary university programs, such as those at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang.

The implementation of CLIL in Arabic language instruction at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang demonstrated promising results, particularly in enhancing students' motivation and proficiency. These findings support the results of Arifin (2023), who noted the effectiveness of CLIL in knowledge integration. However, this study also acknowledges certain limitations. First, the scope was limited to one institution and one discipline (MPI), which affects generalizability. Second, individual learner differences, such as learning styles and prior Arabic exposure, were not fully examined, although they likely influenced the outcomes.

Moreover, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data could be strengthened. For instance, observational data or student reflections could further clarify how CLIL affected classroom dynamics and learner autonomy. Future research should investigate the longitudinal effects of CLIL and compare it with other content-based methods in diverse settings. Despite these limitations, this study contributes valuable insights into CLIL implementation in the Indonesian context. If scaled up, this approach could help meet MBKM curriculum goals by enhancing both language skills and disciplinary content mastery, key competencies for global competitiveness.

## Discussion

The findings in Table 1 reveal high student motivation in learning Arabic, particularly in the dimensions of *value and usefulness* (85%) and *effort* (80%). This indicates that students not only recognize the personal and professional benefits of mastering Arabic but are also highly willing to invest time and energy into learning. This finding aligns with research by De Smet et al., who discovered that learners' perception of utility significantly enhances their engagement in language learning under CLIL instruction (De Smet et al., 2023). The interest/pleasure dimension also shows encouraging percentages, suggesting that students find the learning process enjoyable, which is essential for sustaining long-term motivation.

Although motivation is generally high, the perceived competence (62%) and language comprehension (55%) are slightly lower, indicating that while students are motivated, some lack confidence in their skills. Conversely, the pressure/tension scores are low (35% and 28%), indicating that CLIL may help reduce anxiety. According to Lin, learners under CLIL settings report lower levels of performance anxiety due to contextualized and meaningful input (Lin, 2025). This demonstrates that CLIL not only enhances motivation but also provides a psychologically safe space for language acquisition.

In Table 2, students' writing skills show strong development, particularly in vocabulary use (72%) and punctuation and writing mechanics (75%). These results confirm the findings of Nkeokelonye et al., who noted that integrating content and language instruction enhances lexical variety and orthographic accuracy (Nkeokelonye et al., 2020). The ability to organize ideas (65%) and develop main ideas with supporting details (58%) suggests a moderate ability to structure arguments, which may require further scaffolding in instruction.

Grammar mastery, including sentence construction, scored 68% and 55%, respectively. This moderate performance suggests that although CLIL enhances contextual learning, students still encounter challenges with Arabic grammatical complexity. In line with Oga-Baldwin, grammar acquisition under CLIL develops progressively when students are

exposed to authentic academic language (Oga-Baldwin, 2019). Therefore, extended exposure to written Arabic within content-based tasks is needed to support further grammatical accuracy.

Table 3 shows that students performed well in reading comprehension, with scores of 70% for identifying main ideas and 65% for retrieving details. These results indicate that CLIL strategies support active reading through authentic texts. Tarrayo & Hernandez emphasize that CLIL fosters reading comprehension by integrating schema activation and content familiarity (Tarrayo & Hernandez, 2023). This confirms that contextual input provided through CLIL not only boosts engagement but also aids in the deeper processing of reading materials.

The highest scores in reading are in vocabulary (75%) and grammar features such as *ḍamīr* and *ḥarf* (70%). This reflects the benefits of vocabulary exposure in meaningful contexts, as CLIL presents vocabulary in disciplinary settings. Research by Kalay supports this, asserting that repeated exposure to academic vocabulary in CLIL improves retention and use of both receptive and productive skills (Kalay, 2021). Students develop an understanding of how language functions in texts, which in turn enhances their decoding and inference skills.

Based on Table 4, no significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups in the pre-test (Sig. = 0.196). This confirms that the two groups started from comparable proficiency levels. Establishing this baseline is crucial for validating the impact of CLIL instruction. Ensuring initial equivalence between groups strengthens the reliability of experimental research in applied linguistics.

Table 5 reveals a statistically significant difference in post-test scores (Sig. = 0.024), with the experimental group outperforming the control group. This confirms the positive effect of CLIL on Arabic language proficiency, particularly in writing and reading. The moderate effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.43$ ) aligns with Cimermanova's meta-analysis, which shows CLIL's consistent positive effect on language acquisition across domains (Cimermanova, 2020). This supports the strategic value of integrating CLIL into university-level Arabic instruction.

The findings support the suitability of CLIL in Indonesia's MBKM curriculum, particularly in enhancing interdisciplinary literacy and global readiness. The integration of Arabic with Islamic education management fosters both linguistic and professional competence. Instructional models aligned with MBKM must encourage both domain knowledge and 21st-century skills, which CLIL effectively promotes. Thus, the study demonstrates how CLIL aligns with national educational reforms in Indonesia.

Future studies should investigate the implementation of CLIL across various disciplines and institutions, as well as explore the long-term retention and application of skills. Additionally, examining the role of digital CLIL (D-CLIL) can offer insights into technology integration. Research by Adipat shows that digital CLIL enhances learner autonomy and collaborative skills through multimodal engagement (Adipat, 2021). Therefore, future researchers may investigate the synergy between digital platforms and CLIL pedagogy in Arabic education contexts.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach significantly enhances both the motivation and Arabic language proficiency, specifically in reading and writing, of students in the Islamic Education Management (MPI) program at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. Empirical evidence shows a notable improvement in the experimental group's post-test scores ( $M = 87.6$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ) compared to the control group, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.43$ ), underscoring the practical impact of CLIL in the learning process. This approach not only fostered linguistic competence but also deepened students' understanding of disciplinary content by embedding management concepts within authentic Arabic texts. Despite these promising outcomes, the research is limited by its scope, as it is conducted at a single institution and focuses exclusively on Arabic instruction. Future studies are encouraged to replicate this research across varied educational contexts and explore the use of CLIL in other subject areas, including its long-term effects on graduate competencies. Overall, CLIL demonstrates strong strategic potential to support the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum by fostering interdisciplinary literacy, critical thinking, and global readiness among students.

This study provides a replicable model for integrating content and language learning aligned with the MBKM framework. It enhances interdisciplinary skills and student engagement. Future research should explore CLIL across institutions and disciplines, including its long-term impact and digital integration to support 21st-century learning outcomes.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

[FA] organizes the study, obtains and evaluates the data, and writes the manuscript. [ZA] created the research idea and managed the investigation. [IH&NA] wrote the methodological section of the paper. Moreover, compiled by all of the authors contributed to the compilation of pertinent references and literature.

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