

CLIL in Japan: University Teachers' Viewpoints

Laura MacGregor
 Gakushuin University

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Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) originated in Europe during the 1990s and later appeared in Japan. Beginning with an explanation of the fundamental principles behind CLIL methodology, this paper is a report on a study in Japan based on interviews with CLIL university teachers about five questions: their definitions of CLIL, how they taught CLIL classes, how they evaluated students, the materials they used, and their opinions of CLIL's viability in Japan. Results showed general agreement on a number of characteristics of CLIL (i.e., it is content driven, uses authentic materials, encourages peer cooperation, and uses rubrics for evaluation), and that its success largely depended on student level and choice of materials. However, there was some confusion on how CLIL differed from related methodologies (i.e., CBI, EMI). In order for CLIL to prosper in Japan, there needs to be better understanding through teacher education, institutional support, and more grassroots development through research, writing, and discussion.

CLIL (クリル: Content and language integrated learning) は、1990年代に欧州で始まり近年日本でも急速に広まっている教授法である。筆者は大学でCLILを実践している教員に、(1)各教員のCLILの定義、(2)CLIL授業の指導法、(3)学生の評価法、(4)使用教材、(5)日本におけるCLILの妥当性に関する各々の見解、について質問をした。本論はその研究報告である。研究結果からは、内容重視、生の素材の利用、学習者同士の協力の奨励、評価基準の観点と尺度(ルーブリック)などのCLILの多くの特徴については概ね了解があることが判明したが、関連する方法論(CBI、EMIなど)とCLILの違いについては混乱が認められた。CLILが日本で成功するためには、教授者教育、教育機関の支援、そして、研究・発信・討論を通じたより一層の現場レベルでのCLILの展開が必要である。

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is becoming a well-known term in Japan, particularly among foreign language teachers. It originated in Europe in the early 1990s, and was recognized by the European Union as one way to support its man-

date to promote bilingualism and trilingualism among its citizens. There has been a good deal of activity to support CLIL teaching there, through materials development mainly for primary and secondary levels, CLIL teacher training, and CLIL research.

Many definitions have evolved over the years as CLIL practices have developed but an early definition that crystallizes the fundamental idea behind CLIL is that it is “an umbrella term . . . that encompasses any activity in which a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a nonlanguage subject in which both language and subject have a joint role” (Marsh, 2002, p. 58). In CLIL classrooms, more emphasis may be put on language or content at times, but teaching and learning aim to always include both content and language. It is this “innovative fusion of both” (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010, p. 1) that distinguishes CLIL from other approaches.

CLIL is a flexible and broad term that bridges across well-established teaching approaches, such as content-based instruction (CBI), English for academic purposes (EAP), English-medium instruction (EMI), and full immersion. However, though there are similarities amongst all of these approaches, none are directly equivalent to CLIL. In fact, CLIL may be the most flexible in the way it spreads across a learning continuum, with soft CLIL, giving lots of language support at one end, and hard CLIL, where very little or no language support is given, at the other. Because of this flexibility, CLIL has the potential for adoption by language teachers, specialist subject teachers, and teams of both. Furthermore, CLIL can be implemented on an ad hoc basis by individual teachers, in organized departmental programs, or across institutions.

Brown (2014, 2015), Brown and Adamson (2012), Brown and Iyobe (2014), and Morizumi (2015) have already written extensively on the CLIL/EAP/EMI landscape at the university institutional level in Japan, how it is being fueled at least in part by governmental projects to promote internationalization and globalism (i.e., Global 30; Global *Jinzai*; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2013), and the urgency to increase the population of international students at universities in the face of waning enrollment. The purpose of this paper is to look at the local landscape of CLIL in

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Japan and how it is practiced in universities. In this study, the researcher interviewed a number of CLIL teachers at the university level to find out their views and beliefs about their classroom practices and their opinions about CLIL's viability in Japan.

CLIL Fundamentals

To begin, it may be helpful to explain three pedagogical underpinnings of CLIL as a backdrop for the discussion of the teacher interviews. First, according to Coyle (Centro del Profesorado de Granada, 2014), who is one of the frontrunners in CLIL's development since the 1990s, the essential and defining feature of CLIL is the 4Cs: content, communication, cognition, and culture (Figure 1). In this model, the 4Cs are interconnected, with culture as the central feature. In the 4Cs, culture refers to small-c culture, that is, aspects of deeper level culture, such as cultural understanding and cross-cultural communication in communities, in nations, and across nations. Additionally, "CLIL learners learn about the 'culture' of a subject," and how to "think, write and speak like specialists" of the subject they are studying (Dale & Tanner, 2012, p. 13).

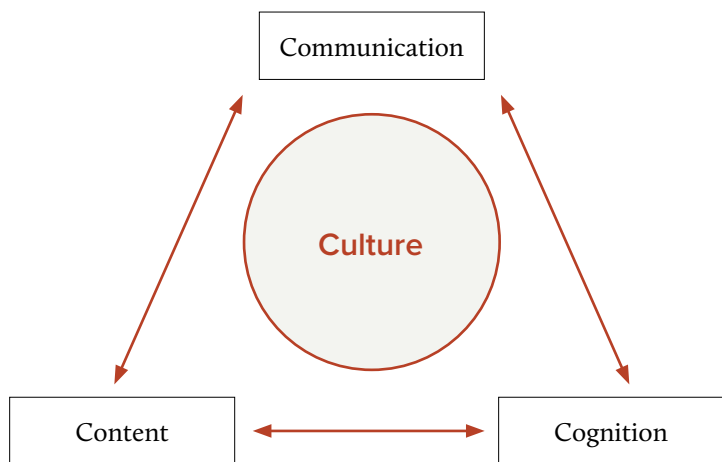


Figure 1. The 4Cs of CLIL (based on Coyle, 2005, as cited in Gierlinger, n.d.).

Looking at the other Cs, content, at its basic level, is the knowledge and skills to be learned. At a deeper level, learners internalize and personalize their understanding. Therefore, in order to learn, students need to think on many levels (cognition) and inter-

act with others (communication). In this way, all four Cs depend on each other for CLIL to work.

In addition, there are three kinds of language that need to be operational for learning to occur in CLIL: the language *of* learning, the language *for* learning, and the language *through* learning (Figure 2). These ways of thinking about language and the teaching of it are not unique to CLIL; they are simply part of good teaching practice. Nevertheless, they are necessary for CLIL to occur.

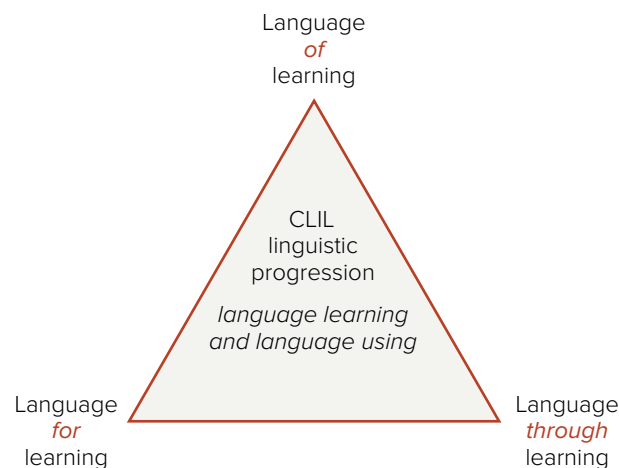


Figure 2. The language tryptique (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010, p. 36; reprinted with permission from Cambridge University Press).

Finally, because thinking skills and the application and extension of the thinking outcomes are important to CLIL, Bloom's taxonomy is useful (Figure 3) when considering the range of thinking skills that CLIL aims to develop.

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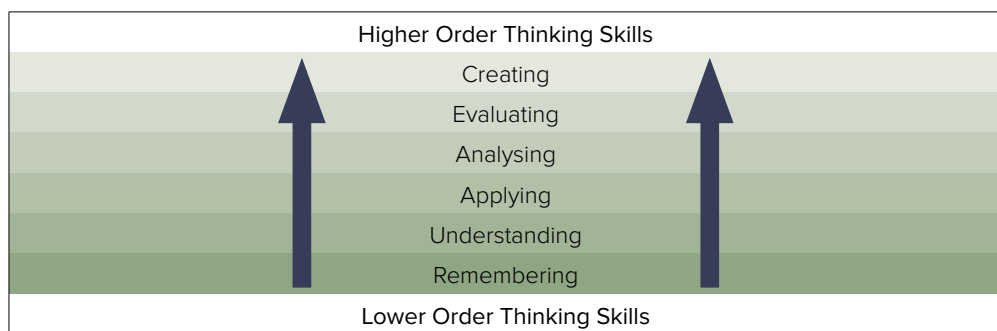


Figure 3. Bloom's taxonomy of learning (1a, 2012).

The six elements modeled in Figure 3 can be divided into two groups, lower order thinking skills (LOTs) and higher order thinking skills (HOTs), briefly explained in Figure 4.

LOTs

- Remembering (e.g., recalling facts, memorizing lists)
- Understanding (e.g., translating, summarizing, demonstrating)
- Applying (e.g., problem solving, experimenting, designing)

HOTs

- Analyzing (e.g., identifying and interpreting patterns and trends, organizing ideas)
- Evaluating (e.g., assessing, rating, judging, comparing, evaluating outcomes)
- Creating (e.g., using old/known concepts to develop new ideas, inventing)

Figure 4. Bloom's Taxonomy explained.

See Kugelman (n.d.) for lists of keywords, questions that can be asked, and assessment methods for each of the six Bloom's Taxonomy elements.

To summarize then, core CLIL features include the 4Cs—content, cognition, communication, and culture; the three elements of language learning—the language of, for, and through learning; and the types of thinking skills that CLIL encourages. These features reflect the pedagogical underpinnings of CLIL as it was developed for Europe. What then, is CLIL in Japan? The next section reports the findings of a small-scale interview project with university CLIL teachers in Japan.

The Study

Thirteen university teachers (who identified themselves as CLIL teachers or who were teaching in CLIL or EMI programs) responded to an open invitation to participate in individual interviews lasting approximately one hour. The interviews were conducted over a 3-month period in 2015 in person ($n = 11$) and online ($n = 2$). Two participants were Japanese nationals and the rest were from the UK, Canada, and the US. Their teaching experience ranged from 2-20+ years. Twelve participants were undergraduate English language teachers either implementing CLIL independently or teaching in institutionally organized CLIL or EMI language programs. One was a linguist and used CLIL to teach undergraduate linguistics. The interviews were recorded with the permission of participants to allow for transcription and review, with the understanding that any information published would be reported anonymously. Interviewees were asked five questions in the otherwise free-form interviews: their definitions of CLIL, how they taught CLIL classes, how they evaluated students, the materials and activities they used, and their opinions as to CLIL's suitability for Japan. The next section presents a qualitative description of the responses and is followed by a discussion of the results and a conclusion that considers the future of CLIL in Japan.

Results

Definitions of CLIL

CLIL language teachers defined CLIL in various ways, mentioning the roles of content and language, how it was similar to or different from other teaching approaches, and the types of activities that define CLIL. Nearly all of them said that CLIL was first about teaching content and second about teaching language, with language instruction supporting the content being learned. In other words, language was not taught in isolation, for its own sake. As one teacher put it, "CLIL is teaching a subject using a textbook/materials in English. CLIL is NOT teaching English using a text that covers a certain subject." Other characteristics of CLIL that came through in their definitions were task based, learner centered, and dual focused.

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Some believed CLIL to be different from language teaching in the way it exposed learners to content (a subject) that was sustained and developed over a long period of time, such as several weeks or an entire semester. They said that CLIL teachers needed to be prepared to come up with the language support on their own. They needed to be ready to anticipate the language needs, to address them adequately, and to build on the language learned to support further learning.

CLIL Features

Core features of CLIL methodology that came up in the interviews included the following: CLIL is content driven, uses authentic materials, requires scaffolding, encourages critical thinking, and features peer cooperative tasks. Respondents also said that they encouraged students to help set content, to determine their learning goals, and to evaluate themselves and their peers using rubrics. Finally, they believed that teachers should be facilitators.

In more detail, authentic materials were thought to be a requirement for CLIL. Teachers felt that if students were going to be exposed to content, then it should not be modified or simplified for learner use. Instead of modifying the materials, they spoke about using scaffolding activities to work up to the language level and the subject awareness students needed in order to deal with authentic material. At the same time, however, some expressed that it took so long to cover material by doing this, they could not adequately train students in academic skills, such as writing research papers and making presentations.

Some teachers asked students to participate in making decisions about what they would study and gave students a choice for their assignments. When it came to evaluation, students also participated through peer and self-review. Rubrics were either developed by teachers or by students to facilitate both student and teacher assessments and evaluations. Teachers explained that doing these things encouraged students to take responsibility and be accountable for their learning. Furthermore, these responsibilities supported the critical thinking skills that teachers felt could be developed in CLIL classrooms.

Materials

The literature is full of lesson plans and CLIL teaching ideas created for use in Europe, but nearly all of the materials published there are for primary and secondary school subjects such as math, science, and geography. Although materials made by language and

subject teachers and reported on in the literature are beginning to emerge in Japan (see Appendix), what are the teachers in this study doing?

The interviewees tended not to use ready-made CLIL-specific materials or even look for them. Instead, they emphasized using authentic materials they found on their own, from sources such as US or other countries' high school or freshman university subject texts in English and resources from the public domain (e.g., news articles, TED talks, novels). It was somewhat of a surprise to find that the activities teachers used could be generalized into a neat group that included jigsaw reading, jigsaw listening (in a CALL room), information gaps, dictogloss, pair share, extensive reading, and journal or learning diary writing. There was a lot of emphasis on helping students develop their reading skills, their information retrieval skills, their ability to evaluate materials, their writing skills, their ability to formulate good questions, and to a much lesser extent, their discussion skills. One of the few teachers who spoke about the importance of speaking skills made the following comment, "In CLIL, students need to talk a lot. To support meaningful discussion and cognitive development, students need to be trained to be discussion participants and discussion leaders (facilitators)." One teacher thought it was very difficult to use CLIL for listening skill development; apart from that there was no mention of listening skills by any of the other interviewees.

Judging by the frequency with which they were mentioned, text-based materials seemed to be the most important for learning, for discussions, and as source material for writing research papers. This contrasts the emphasis in the CLIL literature on audio and visual media in addition to texts in class (Mehisto, 2012, p. 22). Discussion was obviously important for task and skill development, but most teachers did not elaborate more than to say that discussion activities were used as an extension of reading.

There may be a connection between the materials teachers used and the following teacher's statement: "There is no single CLIL—the type of CLIL you teach depends on the institution, the level of the students you teach, and the expected outcomes. Over the duration of a course, the type of CLIL you teach can change" (i.e., move along the soft to hard CLIL continuum). Therefore, it would seem necessary for teachers to tailor-make their materials to suit the environment and respond to the changes in students' learning needs.

Assessment

Three types of assessment were commonly reported: self-, peer, and teacher assessment. The importance of using rubrics was strongly emphasized by nearly all respondents. Some gave traditional pencil and paper tests (when required by their institutions), but

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most preferred to assess students through papers and presentations and to a lesser extent through graded discussions. There was variety in grading criteria: Sometimes teachers put more emphasis on content or language; other times they evaluated the two equally. Apart from stating the above, interviewees did not go into detail, suggesting the need for follow-up in future research.

Opinions About CLIL

Teachers had quite a lot to say about what they thought of CLIL, but some trends emerged, and the generally positive points about CLIL are as follows:

- CLIL classes are highly motivating for teachers.
- CLIL is a good way to give students the motivation to get their language skills more developed.
- CLIL teaches towards a goal. Students are doing something worthwhile in English in an academic context.
- CLIL suits language teachers because they know what students can and cannot do in terms of language; they can monitor students' language needs and evaluate materials for class [at least from the point of language].

There were more mixed opinions about CLIL, however. Teachers felt that it was difficult to adequately address students' language weaknesses in CLIL classes, in part because there simply was not enough time. Student level was seen as critical in the amount of time it took to cover material and do project work, as the lower the level, the more scaffolding of language and classroom skills (i.e., how to make a presentation) is needed. As a solution, one teacher thought that students should take both CLIL classes and language classes, in part to allow for more time to address language needs.

Another said that although CLIL did not fully succeed in addressing language needs, it was good for developing reading skills (reading comprehension and reading speed), and higher order thinking skills ("the ability to put things together from different sources"). CLIL classes may fall short when it comes to students' language learning expectations too, because, as one teacher said, "[Students] can't see how many new words or which grammar point they learned." Therefore, it was clear that students needed to understand how CLIL classes were different from language classes; namely, that they would learn a subject first, and that grammar and vocabulary learning would be addressed incidentally, as they worked with the subject.

As noted above, student level seemed to be a big factor in the success or failure of CLIL. The same was said for the choice of materials, and many thought that it was very difficult to select good materials that were at an appropriate level, that were interesting, that had some learning value, and that were relevant to and motivating for students. Teachers tended to avoid textbooks made for EFL or at least shunned them because they addressed specific language points at the expense of content, and the topics tended to change from chapter to chapter. They thought that CLIL worked best when topics could be taught over a span of several weeks but noted that there were few texts that did this at an appropriate level.

Though the teachers in this study recognized that as CLIL teachers, they were expected to be both content (subject) teachers and language teachers, they acknowledged how difficult it was to actually do that: "It's hard to teach content that you are not a specialist in so that students are learning and you are not just showing." And, though all teachers agreed that finding, selecting, and developing materials for classes were extremely time consuming, very few complained about it. Instead, they found it interesting and rewarding. They also recognized that CLIL classes were not just time consuming for teachers: "Students need to be prepared to do a lot of the work themselves, be proactive, follow their interests, and share what they have learned." CLIL, then, requires a lot from both teachers and learners.

Perhaps one of the biggest concerns about CLIL was its relevance for Japan: "The literature and materials are mostly from Europe, and CLIL is mostly being used in alpha-based L1 settings." How then, should teachers approach CLIL in the context of Japan?

Discussion

Despite the fact that many of the teachers were familiar with some of the literature on CLIL (see Appendix), none of the teachers specifically mentioned the 4Cs, Bloom's taxonomy, or the language triptych, all of which are said to make up the core principles of CLIL.

However, many of their beliefs aligned with the literature from Europe in their definitions and applications of CLIL (i.e., Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). For example, there was mostly a consensus that CLIL involved both the teaching of content and the teaching of language and that the content should be an academic subject relevant to both student and teacher interests. This corresponds to the dual-focused approach that is so often mentioned by CLIL specialists (e.g., Mehisto, 2012, p. 15). There was also agreement that CLIL classes should forefront the content and the language should be interwoven

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to meet learner needs and support their language progress as they learned more deeply about a subject. Nearly every teacher mentioned the need to scaffold content and language to bring materials and tasks within students' reach (see Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008, p. 29), but few gave examples of scaffolding tasks, suggesting that they may not fully understand what this entails.

Interestingly, they shared a common understanding of a number of skills and the task types to develop them, which, perhaps coincidentally, help students move up through the skill stages in Bloom: communicating with each other in class (e.g., jigsaw reading and listening, group discussions); thinking about the content (e.g., asking and answering questions); seeking answers to questions by researching, developing, and sharing new knowledge and insights (e.g., writing and presentations); and taking responsibility for their learning (i.e., self-assessment, peer assessment). These could become areas for future materials development for the CLIL teaching community in Japan.

From talking with teachers, two groups emerged: CLIL teachers in language programs and CLIL teachers in EMI programs. Some of the key differences between them were as follows: First, the language program teachers tended to teach students with a range of language abilities but, not surprisingly, the EMI program teachers generally had students with very high language abilities. Second, in some institutions, the EMI teachers worked directly with or parallel to content specialists, and one of their jobs was to mirror the material covered in the specialist classes and to support language development. CLIL language teachers, by contrast, were faced with organizing the content materials from scratch, developing the necessary supporting language and academic skills materials, and managing the students' learning of all three. Finally, the CLIL classes in EMI programs were felt to be highly relevant to students in the way they directly supported their specialist classes, but CLIL language teachers in general education programs questioned the relevance of their content choices. These comments suggest the need for a better interface between CLIL in language programs and students' specialist studies and the skills they require.

More than half of the teachers believed they had been CLIL teachers long before coming across the term, not surprising as CLIL embraces a number of teaching approaches, as mentioned earlier. For that reason, several teachers felt unsure about how CLIL was different from these, particularly the difference between CLIL and CBI, and more importantly, how they should teach CLIL.

If CLIL is defined by the 4Cs, as Coyle (Centro del Profesorado de Granada, 2014) and others (e.g., Ikeda, in MacGregor, 2016) claim, then the teachers' comments may reveal the source of the confusion. Of the 4Cs, content and communication were evident in

what teachers said about how they designed their classes: They were content driven and featured activities in which students communicated for a clear purpose. However, cognition, apart from two mentions of critical thinking, was not addressed, and neither was culture. Without observing these teachers' classes, as Lyobe and Li (2013) did in their study of an economics class, or examining their course materials in detail, it is difficult to know whether they were teaching CLIL classes or not. If teachers and administrators are genuinely committed to CLIL, then better support and training is needed.

Conclusion: The Future of CLIL in Japan

Given the current trend towards the promotion of programs at universities that respond to the demands of a globalized society by offering more classes taught in English, the climate in Japan seems right for CLIL to flourish. Certainly, greater institutional recognition and support of CLIL programs could help forefront it and streamline it across a curriculum, as long as teachers are on board to participate. To support them, there need to be teacher training programs and workshops for both language and content specialist teachers. Coupled with these is the need for teaching materials suitable for university classes of all types, for various levels of learners, and for Japanese learners in particular. Discussions with teachers indicated that for CLIL to flourish, there should be dialogue among teachers and administrators in institutionalized programs, an agenda for CLIL education with clear information and direction, and teacher support. Finally, a network or networks of teachers of all subjects at all levels in Japan would further CLIL and CLIL-based education. How CLIL develops will depend on the top-down and bottom-up activities that emerge as education in Japan continues to adapt to 21st-century demands.

Bio Data

Laura MacGregor is a professor of English at Gakushuin University in the Faculty of International Sciences, which opened in April 2016. She is currently researching into how CLIL is approached and taught in Japan and would like to get in touch with more CLIL practitioners and researchers. She is also interested in university student note-taking practices and teacher note-taking instruction and implementation in class. <laura.macgregor@gakushuin.ac.jp>

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Appendix

An annotated bibliography of some of the key writings on CLIL, including a selection of CLIL-related websites and a list of some of the articles related to CLIL in Japan, is available for download at <http://www.slideshare.net/LauraMacGregor1/clilbooks-j-articles?utm_source=slideshow&utm_medium=ssemail&utm_campaign=post_upload_view_cta>.