

# Rikkyo University's FLER CLIL Seminars: History Course-Design Thought Process and Piloting

Diane C. Obara

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## Abstract

The creation of centers for language education and research that are affiliated to universities in Japan, yet administered semi-separately, has continued to increase over the past ten years. With the establishment of these institutions has come inspiration for the revision and refreshment of their current English language curricula. One such methodology that many centers have latched onto for implementation is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This paper will provide both background information about the development of Rikkyo University's Center for Foreign Language Education and Research (FLER), as well as explain the process for the launch of its new CLIL curriculum, from planning to piloting, and then its execution. In particular, it will focus on one teacher's thought process for the course design of a CLIL History Seminar and a brief reflection on the reality of how a few components of that imagined pedagogy panned out within this specific context.

**Keywords:** *CLIL Seminar, History, Japan, TESOL, Curriculum Design, Rikkyo*

## Introduction

### Background of the FLER Center

Since 2020, Rikkyo University has been in the start-up phase of its new Center for Foreign Language Education and Research (FLER). With its creation, there has been simultaneous planning and design for the launch of a new curriculum, which adds a stream of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) courses for students. CLIL, "a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" (Coyle et al., 2010), is a method popularized in Europe in the 1990s, that has steadily gained momentum in Japan (Japan CLIL Pedagogy Association, 2021) throughout the past ten years and is being implemented across the country, whilst fine-tuned to each individual context and student body. With Rikkyo University's FLER officially up and running since 2020 (despite the onset of the worldwide health pandemic), the new CLIL curriculum will be ready to launch in 2024. For universities who may be considering this method and adding it to their programs, hearing the experience of fellow teachers who have

recently gone through the process may be of interest to them not only in terms of how it is being applied within this specific context, but also how they might be able to apply it to their own environment, should CLIL come their way.

## Process

### Pre-Launch: Planning Committees

As a part of the duties for the *Kyouiku-koshi* (Adjunct Lecturer) position within FLER, teachers are additionally assigned to one or two committees to work on throughout the year. For the years 2020 and 2021, the author was placed on the CLIL planning committee. The first year, the team was small, consisting of only a few members. During this time, reading material related to CLIL (Hoffman-Aoki, 2015; Nitta & Yamamoto, 2020; Obara, 2015, 2020; Ohmori, 2014) was added to a shared Google Drive folder, standards for CLIL that aligned with CEFR descriptors were considered, a list of textbooks for various content was compiled, and committee members shared experiences implementing and teaching CLIL in other programs and at other Japanese university language centers.

A main point of discussion that was continuously brought up was the debate of a comparison between content-based teaching and utilizing an authentic CLIL approach. While content-based teaching has traditionally been around for a long time within Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) contexts, it is the integration of a language thread throughout the material that is the key component of CLIL and what should be stressed to new teachers. With syllabus design well underway, now in 2023, it is clear that this point is being emphasized, as can be seen in the guidelines for writing individual syllabi that were sent to instructors in December of 2022:

\*Special note for CLIL classes:

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) classes offer teaching of both content and language in the classroom. As such, the course objectives and content should reflect them explicitly. It may help to indicate which are content learning objectives and which are language learning objectives separately wherever possible (see attached sample CLIL course with content and language learning objectives). This will set a CLIL syllabus apart from a non-CLIL course (English Electives Committee Interdepartmental Communication, December 20, 2022).

The second year, in 2021, the CLIL Planning Committee grew in size, and was re-classified as a “New Electives (starting in 2024) Committee.” It consisted of six *Sennin* (Professors), two *Tokunin* (Specially-appointed Associate Professors), and seventeen *Kyouiku-koshi*. It was also divided into four categories: CLIL overall framework, Global Communication, Global Studies, and Global Career. The main task for committee members in 2021 was to create

resources for teachers. Members were each assigned 1–2 new electives to choose from, and then asked to create materials which included: a PowerPoint slideshow of “Top 10” Resources for that content area, a sample syllabus (which aligned CEFR descriptors with course objectives), two lesson plans, and a rubric for one course assessment. For CLIL History, some resources the author included in the “Top 10 List” were: *Newsela*, *Facing History and Ourselves*, *Films for Action*, *Short Lessons in World History*, and *U.S. History Skillbook*. One lesson plan focused on the assessment of a historical debate, and the rubric aligned with that. By the end of the term, all committee members’ resources were uploaded to a Google Drive folder for future reference.

### Pilot Courses

The next phase of this process involved piloting the courses. While some *Sennin* began this in 2022, piloting trickled down to the *Kyouiku-koshi* in 2023 as well. In the fall of 2022, before the schedules came out in December, a *Tokunin* reached out to the author to ask about availability of piloting a course. The author responded with a willingness to teach the CLIL history course, since this is the content area that was focused on for the author’s two years on the planning committees, and the one in which materials had already been created and compiled; thus, the instructors on those committees should all seemingly be interested in trialing them with students. CLIL History and the historical debate assessment are also threads that the author has woven throughout previous freshmen Academic Communication classes at another university, and had good success with, so the thought of testing them out as electives in FLER’s context seemed an interesting comparison.

In addition to this, after the elective courses were assigned to instructors for the following year, an email was also received from the Electives Committee Chief around the end of December, with guidelines for creating syllabi and links to the Google Drive folders with syllabus templates and samples. Included in these folders were the pilot CLIL courses from 2021 and 2022. Having a look at the “CLIL (Spring 2022)” folder, we can see that there are eight sample syllabi: *Intro. To Global Studies (Natural Science)*, *CLIL Seminars: Literature, Current News, Intercultural Studies*, *Introduction to Global Studies (Humanities)*, *Introduction to Global Studies (Social Science)*, *Multimodal Communication*, and *Self-Directed and Reflective Language Learning*. Of these eight syllabus samples, only four of them mention the minimum requirements:

**Minimum requirements:** CEFR B2+ level, TOEFL (R&L) 785, TOEFL iBT 87, TOEFL ITP570, GTEC325, IELTS 6.5 言語自由科目オナーズ・モジュール科目

Only three of them directly mention how the course weaves in CEFR descriptors and how they will be applied, such as the following example.

Throughout this CLIL course, students will learn how to:

1. understand a clearly structured lecture, and take notes on major points (L)
  2. understand and use target specialist vocabulary required in 1) academic lectures and 2) literary topics (L)
  3. respond appropriately using questions and responses in discussions and presentations (L)
  4. describe and analyze features of contemporary literary writing (C)
  5. show understanding of language and literary features such as narrative structure and theme (C)
  6. apply knowledge of contemporary literature in society in reflective writing and presentations (C)
- \*L = Language goal, C = Content goal

None of the courses use a textbook. The authors recall from time at another university that when that Language Center was starting, the difference between content-based teaching and the CLIL methodology was stressed to new teachers. While it is true that both methods teach content, the latter clearly weaves and integrates a language thread into the course design. To prevent new teachers from feeling overwhelmed with material development and attempting to create their own language corpus thread with their own materials prior to the course commencement, the committee often recommended books such as Cambridge's *Academic Encounters* Series (Sociology, Human Behavior, The Natural World), with word lists in the back of their textbooks connected to that content and also the Academic Word List in order to have a language thread sustained throughout. Alternatively, teachers could choose authentic textbooks, such as this one used for a Journalism Writing Course (Tate & Taylor, 2013), that is not technically "CLIL," but is used in high school courses in the U.S. It has a comprehensive glossary in the back of the text, and short lessons from chapters can easily be extracted and adapted to EFL/ESL courses. Finally, even though the self-directed and reflective learning course syllabus sample in the folder uses no textbook, we can clearly see from the instructor's notes on the syllabus how the CLIL component will be integrated.

Throughout this CLIL course, students will learn how to:

1. create learning goals and reflect on progress applying knowledge of a target academic field (C)
2. describe features and stages of learning plans and classify points to develop (C)
3. consider aspects of individual learning histories in relation to culture and learning backgrounds (C)
4. implement and reflect on individual language learning plans (L)
5. show understanding of subject-specific vocabulary of a target academic field and related to interests (L)
6. respond appropriately using questions/replies in presentations and cooperate in group

discussions and presentations (L)

\*C = content-related goal, L = language-related goal

### **Thought Process for Creating the Pilot Syllabus**

Since FLER's CLIL courses are listed as electives, syllabi need to be input into the *CampusMate* system at the beginning of January, so that students are able to review them when they are choosing their courses for the spring term, which starts in April. In addition to the email and guidelines from the FLER Electives Committee Chief that was delivered in December of 2022, piloting instructors assigned to these courses also received a packet in the mail from the university administration, with the deadline for input included. For 2023, the deadline was January 17th.

Before planning any course at Rikkyo, teachers might want to consider the following questions:

- Which campus will this course be taught (Ikebukuro or Niiza)?
- What are the major colleges on those campuses? (e.g., Tourism, Psychology, Economics, Intercultural Communication, etc.)
- What day of the week and what period is it? (e.g., Monday, 1st or Thursday, 3rd)
- Is it once or twice a week?
- How many students will be enrolled? (Although there is no way to know this until after registration a week before the semester starts)
- Should a textbook be required?
- If so, how much will it cost?
- What's typically worked well and been successful with other electives I've taught in the past?

With these questions in mind, the author started by considering the textbook. Taking into consideration the sample syllabus in Google Drive, and also looking at the materials collected during the committee planning process, there were two textbooks that the author began contemplating. One was a skill book (Henry, 2019) for the practice and application of historical thinking skills for the Advanced Placement U.S. History course tests in American high schools. The idea that the skills were clearly isolated, such as: separating facts from opinions, analyzing documents and establishing their credibility, and how to use maps and graphs effectively seemed like it might work well. This approach seemed flexible for managing the content. The second was a textbook that has short lessons in world history (Churchill & Churchill, 2006a). The lessons are fairly traditional, with short readings and critical thinking discussion questions. There are also maps connected to the readings and crossword puzzles for review at the end of each chapter that integrate vocabulary and comprehension of the readings.

Taking all of this into account, the author settled on not assigning a textbook to purchase, since that was the direction the samples from the chief seemed to suggest. Instead, sampling a few readings from the world history textbook as the main content for the course and a few lessons from the skill book as students begin researching and preparing for their first historical debate, and then supplementing the rest of the materials with audio-visuals and articles found online was decided upon as the approach. One reason for this was that after a more careful review of the skill book, for the actual practice and application of the skills, it required students to draw on previous knowledge of U.S. History. Readings to work from were not included in the chapters. This would be a challenge for local students and require the teacher to supplement them with more materials. With this text, it is also fairly easy to pick and choose skills in isolation to apply to lessons, so sampling one or two to try out could be done. In contrast, when skimming through the readings from the world history textbook and the glossary at the back, based on the author's sixteen years of teaching in the Japanese context, it was imagined that this is content that students would have studied in high school in Japanese, and so they will likely already have prior knowledge in the L1.

Finally, an understanding of TESOL methodology, is that despite a class being designed with CLIL or not, a basis for all language classes is that they include the four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. For many of the electives the author has taught in the past, something that has always been successful, is to create long listening close exercises as a warm-up activity, with the listening audio tracks taken from authentic sources (History.com, National Geographic, etc.) related to the content. These can add balance with that final fourth skill that is lacking in readings, writing homework, and discussion.

### **Launching the Pilot Class**

Approximately a week before each semester begins, teachers can see on the *Rikwes* system how many students have enrolled in their course. This "CLIL History Seminar" pilot was scheduled for the fall semester of 2023, on Thursdays during 2nd period, on the Ikebukuro Campus. Although the instructor had predicted that at least 8–10 students would sign up, only two ended up enrolling. Including the teacher, all participants are from different first language backgrounds and fields of study. Five weeks into the course, and despite the fact that there are only three of us all together, the individual strengths and weaknesses of students seemed to be nicely balanced. As a result of coming from a variety of specializations, some students are well-versed and innately knowledgeable of all of the material that is included in our readings, so there is little need to explain or review. Others are also knowledgeable of the material, having studied much of it in high school, but also have strong communication skills, and keep the pace of discussions smooth from a communicative standpoint.

At five weeks into the semester, the class has covered three readings related to: Early Civilizations (Egypt and Sumer), Greeks and Romans, and Other World Civilizations (The Americas, Asia, and Africa). For the first reading, we worked through the comprehension



questions and maps together, so that the students could get an understanding of how to do them on their own for homework later. For the next two lessons, 1–2 pages of homework was assigned (comprehension and map questions), and we reviewed it in class together.

For writing, in addition to the homework, we have been taking breaks throughout the homework review discussions to answer the critical thinking and application questions included in the textbook. Students take a few minutes to write their answers, and then we discuss.

Finally, for listening, two close exercises related to the content, both taken from National Geographic's online sites, were used. The first was about Cleopatra, and the second was related to the Inca Civilization in South America. It was about the World Heritage Site, Machu Picchu, in Peru.

From a CLIL perspective, the language is integrated through this historical content, and recycled in all of the individual activities. At the beginning of the term, we reviewed the glossary in the back of the textbook together, and students confirmed that they both knew at least eighty percent of the vocabulary. Since many of the words are related to names of people and places and written as *Katakana* (foreign words) in Japanese, it is easy to understand how students would know as much vocabulary related to history as they do.

At week five, we are now also ready to start preparing for our first “debate.” The original logic behind using a debate as an assessment, was that students would have taken a debate course during their freshman year, as one of the mandatory skills classes (which are currently: Reading and Writing, Presentation, Discussion (spring), Debate (fall), and e-Learning. Now entering and advancing to the “content” elective seminars, ideally, teachers should be able to apply those required skills to these CLIL courses.

However, with only two students, the author is thinking this might pose a slight challenge, since they do not have a partner to work with on their debate team, as they did during freshman year, when there were approximately twenty students in their class. Instead, the instructor and the students discussed it as a class and decided to make the debates more like presentations, with each student presenting their research for one side of the proposition, either for or against it.

In addition, we have also decided as a class what the debate proposition will be. Everyone agreed that they would like to do something different from their major classes. And also, even though the debate is about an event from the past, the class also agreed that it should be relevant presently to our lives somehow, in order to consider how these issues are still applicable, and what lessons can still be learned from them.

Thus, the class decided what the debate proposition considering an event from 1911: Hiram Bingham should be able to take a research team from Yale University to Machu Picchu and receive funding from the university for it. After the in-depth listening about the Inca Civilization and the World Heritage Site of Machu Picchu, students were intrigued by the history and “discovery” of this site in the early 1900s, since they were mostly familiar with it from a tourism perspective. Since both students belong to seminars and are familiar with

professors taking trips with their students, everyone agreed that this was a topic they could relate to, even though it is more than a hundred years old.

With that decided, weeks five through seven have been spent preparing and researching for the debate presentations. The process began by reviewing one of the listening activities (*Historypod*) and asking follow-up questions about it. Here are the questions students generated:

1. Why was Machu Picchu hidden/abandoned and remained?
2. Why wasn't anyone living there?
3. Why was Machu Picchu made with stone?
4. What is the PanAmerican Scientific Congress, and who is meeting there?
5. Why didn't the Spanish Conquistadors find it? What was their relationship with the Incas? How did they treat them?
6. What is some other important information that Bingham discovered at that time about the Incas and this site?
7. What are some details about the farm boy who introduced Machu Picchu to him?
8. Who owns Machu Picchu?
9. What is some more background information about Bingham? What is his specialization? Does he speak Spanish? Were there local Peruvians on their research team?
10. What were the dangers there in the early 1900s?

For the remainder of class five, students tried to find answers to these questions, through basic internet searches. Students each bring their laptop computers to every class, so they use their own devices.

In class six, the lesson goal was to try to refine research skills by utilizing Rikkyo University Library's databases. Through an advanced search, students narrowed down the databases to historical newspapers, which includes access to historical collections of *The New York Times*, *The Japan Times*, and *The Yomiuri Shinbun*, to name a few. The remainder of this class was spent with each student searching for 1–2 historical newspaper articles from 1900–1930 of reports about information related to Hiram Bingham and/or his “discovery” of Machu Picchu. After finding and silently reading the articles, each person explained them to the other. One article was a 1908 obituary of Bingham's father (The New York Times, p. 9), which included biographical information about this family history. Another was a report from December 1924, about Bingham having been elected as a senator to Connecticut (Howe, p. XX6). This article told of his work as a scholar, explorer, and specialist on Latin America. At the end of this lesson, we also decided which side each student would “present” on for the debate—either affirmative or negative. Students made outlines with their reasons. On the affirmative side, the reasons included: Easy Access, Cooperation with Other Organizations, and Ownership/Access to Documents and Data. On the negative team, who is arguing that Bingham



should not be able to take a Yale University-funded research team to Machu Picchu, the reasons were: Cost, Danger, and Work Responsibilities. For homework, students were asked to bring in one more historical newspaper article. One of these included a review of a book that Bingham's son had written about him (Buckley Jr., 1989).

Although the class has slightly deviated from the schedule, the intention for week seven is for students to start creating their PowerPoint slides for their presentation. At the start of this class, we watched the beginning of a video of an advanced debate elective that the instructor had taught at the Niiza campus in 2019, where two students were debating the proposition "Should foreign companies be required to use solar power in South Africa." That class was also small in size, and so students in that course ended up giving persuasive presentations as well, either for or against the proposition. It seemingly worked well. After that, students agreed upon more specific guidelines for the presentations. Ultimately, students will need to have a minimum of fifteen slides in their slideshow, and must include historical maps, photos, and newspaper articles. After giving their "opening speech" presentations in week eight, which includes background information about Bingham's discovery and their supporting or opposing views of the proposition, students will slowly practice cross-examining and rebuttals together as a class in a semi-controlled style.

### **Adjustments**

As a result of the small class size and individual differences, as mentioned above, adjustments have had to be made as the class progresses. The main adjustment thus far has been the adaption from a traditional "team" debate to a "debate presentation," similar to the persuasive presentations that are required in the mandatory presentation classes. A second adjustment has been to hold off on the materials from the skill book for analyzing historical documents. Depending on how the first round of presentations go, those skills can hopefully be added to the final debate. One final adjustment regards the learning environment. The class is located on the fifth floor of building five on the Ikebukuro campus. The morning sun has greatly affected progress and slowed the class down. The room becomes incredibly hot during this time period, and since the air conditioning is regulated by the administration and changed to the heating setting after November, attempts to cool down the room have been unsuccessful. Both the teacher and the students have been having trouble concentrating. Albeit, not related to the content itself, but creating a comfortable learning environment holistically in order for learning to be optimized, should remain on any ESOL teacher's to-do list since students operating in a second language often tend to have their other senses heightened at this time, and teachers are aiming to keep the focus on the language.

## Conclusion

### Future Direction

Up until this point, the biggest change that the author plans to make for a future CLIL History Seminar course is to eliminate the debate as an assessment. While the author has indeed had great success with this assessment in past classes, this is attributed to the fact that they were freshman courses that met twice a week for twenty-eight weeks. There was time for other lengthy readings and discussions, and it consisted of twenty students who could work together in dynamic teams.

For a CLIL History Seminar elective within FLER, the author personally thinks that it is enough to use Discussion Tests as a main assessment. Overall, students still generally seem to have positive feelings about those courses, and many comment that they are some of the only college classes where they can talk to new people and make new friends. Applying this skill that they still feel positively about within new content areas might be a great way to practice and level-up, communicatively—which has historically been a strength of this university! If students want to debate, they can choose to take that as an isolated elective and/or instructors can build those previously learnt debate skills more softly into other assessments less directly.

\*\*\* Due to the fact that the CLIL curriculum will officially launch in April 2024, the author has decided to publish this article before this CLIL seminar pilot has officially concluded, in order to better assist new teachers in their curriculum design within this context.

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