# EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF CLIL TO ENERGISE A JAPANESE CLASS FOR MIDDLE YEARS STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This report presents and discusses the new Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) "History in Japanese" program at Elwood College. Planning for this program began at the beginning of 2014 and it was implemented in Term 4 of the same year. There have been many positive outcomes as well as challenges in the planning and implementation of the new initiative. In this report, the following questions will be explored to analyse and evaluate the program.

- Aims of the program: What are the aims of the CLIL program at Elwood College?
- CLIL as a method: What is CLIL? Why CLIL?
- Features of the program: How was CLIL realised at Elwood College?
- Outcome of implementation: Were the aims of the CLIL program achieved?

# SCHOOL CONTEXT

Elwood College is a non-selective-entry government secondary school, located in the Southern Metropolitan Region, Victoria. Approximately 520 students from Years 7 to 12 are enrolled at the college. The school offers languages programs in Japanese and French at all year levels. The languages programs are implemented in alignment with the central curriculum of Australian Victorian Essential Learning Standards (AusVELS) and Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).

Being a small school of 520 students, Years 11 and 12 languages classes tend to have small numbers of students. However, the school needs to increase the numbers so that the VCE languages classes are more economically viable. In 2013 the school made a decision to mandate a language subject for Years 7 to 10 students. Previously languages had been compulsory up to Year 9, though with the option of a non-language class such as "cultural studies", but this has been discontinued. This change has brought several new challenges. Firstly, there was a concern that middle years students would find it difficult to maintain their motivation in learning languages as a compulsory subject. Further, new students enrolling throughout the year, which is very common at Elwood College, may need to start learning a new language in the middle years. Consequently, the school is required to offer flexible languages programs that are highly engaging while catering to multiple levels.

# AIMS OF THE PROGRAM

The aims of the new CLIL program are:

- To allow middle years (Years 8, 9 and 10) students to have a high sense of achievement in Japanese classes and;
- To allow students to feel excited by and confident in their future learning of Japanese, including postcompulsory years (Years 11 and 12).

# CLIL AS A TEACHING METHOD

Following the completion of a CLIL teacher training course at the University of Melbourne in 2011, I have integrated the CLIL approach in the Japanese classes at Elwood College. For the new program, I planned to consolidate the approach and extended it by incorporating the history curriculum/content into the school's Japanese curriculum for Years 8, 9 and 10.

CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which a target language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language (Coyle et al. 2010). For example, in a CLIL class at an Australian school, students may learn Geography in French or History in Japanese.

In a CLIL course, languages are used for teaching and learning of new content. When the content is interesting, meaningful and relevant to the learners, they learn through the relevant language, using it to understand the new content and to develop their skills specific to different subject areas. Language is encompassed by the content, which makes a strong connection between language learning and content learning. This gives back an authentic role to the language used in the classroom, which is the facilitating role of language in making learning happen as well as being used for demonstrating, discussing and evaluating the new contents. This revitalisation of language in the classroom could lead to revitalisation of the classroom itself.

If CLIL is implemented successfully at Elwood College, it will enhance the quality of the Japanese language program, student engagement, and most importantly motivation in the language classroom, as suggested by Coyle (2006, 11), resulting in improved student outcomes. Cross (2013) found positive outcomes of CLIL in his evaluation of a CLIL trial conducted by Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in six schools in Victoria. These studies have provided a rationale for my use of the CLIL approach to improve the languages programs at Elwood College.

# PROGRAM PLANNING PROCEDURES

## CHOOSING TOPICS

For the current CLIL program, history has been chosen as an area of study to be integrated into the Japanese curriculum. The reason for this choice was that Japanese history is part of the Australian Curriculum - 7–10 History, which focuses on Asia. After carefully consulting the Australian Curriculum and the school's history curriculum, three history topics were selected for study. These were *The Edo Period: the Shoguns* for Year 8, *The Meiji Period and the Impact of the European Powers on Japan* for Year 9, and *Pop Culture in Japan* (since 1945) for Year 10. These focused periods of history are aligned with the periods and the topics of the Australian Curriculum. I have regularly attended the school's Humanities meetings to learn about the history curriculum at the school as well as to ensure that content in the history and Japanese classes would not directly overlap.

## CREATING CLIL HISTORY RESOURCES

In order to allow students to learn the history content in Japanese, I wrote texts presenting the content in Japanese. For each of the three topics, three or four short texts have been written under different sub headings, as follows.

Edo Period (for Year 8)

Text 1. Who is above? Who is below?
[LI [Learning Intention]: Understand the hierarchy system under the shogunate in the Edo Period)
Text 2. Tokugawa Shoguns' Politics
[LI: Understand the power of the shoguns and evaluate their policies]
Text 3. The Great City of Edo
[LI: Search for the characteristics of Edo, one of the world's largest cities at that time]
Text 4. Issues in Edo
[LI: Analyse art works to understand the problems Edo faced as well as their causes]

Meiji Period (for Year 9)

Text 1. *Edo Period to Meiji Period* (LI: Learn the series of events that led to the end of the Edo Period and triggered the birth of the Meiji Period) Text 2. *New National Systems* (LI: Understand the new national systems introduced in the Meiji Period, influenced by Western countries) Text 3. *New Culture* (LI: Analyse art works to learn about the new culture that arose in the Meiji Period)

Pop Culture in Japan (for Year 10)

Text 1: *1945 – 1960s* (LI: Know the pop culture in Japan between 1945 and the 1960s and its impact on society) Text 2: *1970s and 1980s* Text 3: *1990s and 2000s* Text 4: *2010 –* 

## LANGUAGE USED IN THE TEXTS

In order to make the content presented in the texts accessible for the middle years students, several scaffolding strategies have been used. Firstly, the language used in the texts has been lexically or syntactically simplified and has included more common and general words replacing specific and technical terms. For example, for the title of one of the texts, "People in the Edo Period" was employed instead of "Hierarchy system in Edo Period". Also, where possible, short sentences were used rather than combined sentences (see Appendix 1).

## VISUAL AIDS

Rich and relevant visualisation such as art works, photographs and symbols were included in the texts. For example, each paragraph of the second text for the Meiji Period has a drawing that should facilitate students' comprehension of the text (see Appendix 2). Visual organisers are also included to supply visual aids. The table attached to the same texts, for instance, helps students to summarise the changes in the nation's systems between the two periods.

## QUESTIONS ON THE TEXTS

The most important feature of the texts is the set of questions in Japanese attached to each text. The questions are carefully chosen so that they activate different types of thinking in the students, ranging from understanding to evaluating and creating. For example, the second question in the Meiji Period Text 2 asks students to rank the new systems from most favourite to least (evaluative thinking). For Question 6 in the Edo Period, Text 2 states "If you were a shogun, what kind of policy would you make?", aiming to promote students' creative thinking. There have been questions included that would require an Internet search (see Appendix 3). "What was the population of Edo between 1700 and 1800?" and "Edo was a city of recycling. What did they recycle?" are examples of this. This Internet search is expected to be done in Japanese.

#### LISTS OF VOCABULARY

Lists of vocabulary are prepared for each of the topics (see Appendix 4). For Pop Culture in Japan, for example, 34 words are strategically chosen (for example, more general/versatile words are chosen over topic specific/ technical terms) from the texts and listed and ordered based on syntactical features (e.g. verb) with their meanings in English for students to refer to. A list of question words (e.g. what, when) is also prepared.

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

## TEACHING AND LEARNING JAPANESE HISTORY IN JAPANESE

The three History in Japanese CLIL units were implemented over six to seven weeks during Term 4 in 2014. They were run during normal Japanese language periods, which comprised five periods of 75 minutes fortnightly. There were three teachers of Japanese who taught the three history units across the three year levels.

Each week, the class worked on one text. Students were expected to respond to all questions in the text in Japanese. Upon completion of all questions in all texts, students' responses to the questions were collected for checking.

#### WORKSHOP

During each class, students participated in a small group workshop of 15 to 20 minutes. Three workshop sessions were run in every class, allowing small group interaction (six to eight students in each workshop). Being in a small group, students had more opportunities to talk as well as listening to and closely observing the teacher and the other students.

Workshop sessions provided opportunities for the teacher and the students to work together to understand the texts and respond to the set questions. During the workshop, I spoke to the students predominantly in Japanese. Students often responded in Japanese and sometimes in English. A range of scaffolding strategies were used in the workshop to facilitate the learning of the content and the language in Japanese. The following table shows some examples:

Strategies	Examples/Explanation
Picture cards	The teacher hands out pictures of the key words in the text to each of the students. As the teacher or the students read the text aloud, the student holds his/her card up when the key word on the card is read. Picture cards are also used for activities such as role-play, ordering and snap.
Highlighting words in the texts	As the teacher reads the part of the texts, he highlights important or familiar words. He also highlights repeatedly used words, using different colours for different words.
Pointing to words and pictures	As the teacher speaks, he points to the words he is using and the pictures he is referring to in the text.
Using symbols	The teacher uses symbols such as arrows and equal signs to link meanings and ideas in the text.
Gestures including "sign language"	For example, the teacher shows his arm muscle when he uses the word "strong".

In order to consolidate student learning of the history and the language, students were involved in a series of hands-on and interactive activities during the workshop. For the learning of the new systems in the Meiji Period, for example, students and I sat around the table with five different pictures representing the new systems. We played a snap game during which I read out a feature of one of the new systems (e.g. everyone went from six years old) in Japanese and students sought the matching card (in this case, school). For the Pop Culture unit we again used cards, picking up one, showing it to the group and asking questions such as "Do you like it? Why (not)?" and "What influence has this pop culture had?", all in Japanese. After learning about the hierarchy system in the Edo Period, we did role-play of people from different classes of society (e.g. daimyo, peasants). Each student was given a card for a class (except one student who played the role of interviewer) and acted as a member of that class during the interviewer treated each student differently according to their social class (e.g. by greeting politely or not greeting at all).

#### PRE-READING

During the times that students were not in the workshop with the teacher, they worked on pre-reading of the texts, searching for answers to the questions by using different resources. They adopted a variety of reading strategies taught in the workshop, such as:

- Looking at the genre writing features of the text (e.g. title, subtitles)
- Reading questions to identify the key information to look for in the text
- Identifying a key word within the question
- Identifying words that appear repeatedly in the text
- Identifying familiar words in the text before searching for new words
- Word search in the vocabulary list (and Google Images and Translator if necessary)
- Full use of visuals and general knowledge

Students also used this time to respond to the questions in writing.

Overall, a majority of the students were successful in responding to most of the questions in Japanese after the workshop, where Japanese was the medium of learning. This means most students have met the set learning intentions (shown in the "planning" section).

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OF JAPANESE HISTORY AND LANGUAGE

Assessment tasks for the three History in Japanese CLIL units have been set as follows (summary).

#### Edo Period (for Year 8)

Why did the Edo Period last so long? Why was the city of Edo so big? Write an essay responding to these questions in Japanese (see Appendix 5).

#### Meiji Period (for Year 9)

Imagine: You are in Japan in Meiji Jidai. Today, you had a very interesting day by experiencing "new things" (e.g. culture, policy). Write a blog entry about the day in Japanese.

#### Pop Culture in Japan (for Year 10)

Choose one area of Japanese pop culture (e.g. music, entertainment such as anime and games, sport, fashion). Conduct research and present your findings in Japanese.

These tasks are broken down into several questions requiring a range of thinking skills from understanding to evaluating and creating. For example, the first question for the Pop Culture presentation asks students to list particular brands of pop culture (e.g. music) in chronological order of their appearance, while the last question requires them to create an advertisement for the pop culture of their choice. The assessment rubric focuses on student demonstration of their understanding of the contents and use of the language (see Appendix 5).

At the time of this report being written (early November 2014), student work for the assessment tasks are still in progress.

# OUTCOME OF IMPLEMENTATION

#### STUDENT SURVEY

At the completion of learning of the contents through the texts, students were asked to complete a short survey. It was done online (a Google form) and anonymously. Students were asked to identify their year level, the history topic and the number of years they had been learning Japanese. This survey is aimed to reveal the students' self-evaluation of their learning of the History content and Japanese language through the CLIL units. The two short questions and student responses are shown below.

#### Question 1.

How much Japanese HISTORY do you feel you have learnt IN Japanese?

	Year 10		Year 9		Year 8	
So much that I'm proud of myself	0		0		0	
A lot	8	(40%)	2	(22%)	5	(56%)
Some	9	(45%)	6	(67%)	3	(33%)
A little bit	3	(15%)	0		1	(11%)
Very little	0		1	(11%)	0	
Total	20	(100%)	9	(100%)	9	(100%)

(as of 9 November 2014)

#### Question 2.

How much Japanese LANGUAGE do you feel you have learnt through the history topic?

	Year 10		Year 9		Year 8	
So much that I'm proud of myself	1	(5%)	0		0	
A lot	5	(25%)	1	(11%)	3	(33%)
Some	9	(45%)	3	(33%)	4	(44%)
A little bit	5	(25%)	4	(44%)	2	(22%)
Very little	0		1	(11%)	0	
Total	20	(100%)	9	(100%)	9	(100%)

#### (as of 9 November 2014)

These results indicate that a majority of the students felt they learnt history through the medium of Japanese to some extent. Interestingly, students rated their learning of the content slightly higher than that of the language.

In the survey, a space was provided for students to write comments on learning history in Japanese as an option. There have been several positive comments to date (9 November 2014).

- "Great" (Year 10)
- "Very good topic, had a lot of fun learning about the history of pop culture. I feel like I know a lot more than I used to." (Year 10)
- "It has been a very enjoyable class." (Year 10)
- "Japanese is really fun." (Year 10)
- "It is not as hard as I thought and some of it has been quite interesting." (Year 10)
- "I have learnt about the history of Japan Meiji Jidai and it improved my Japanese and makes me more interested in the language itself." (Year 9)
- "I learnt a lot about the history and a little bit about the language." (Year 8)

The current History in Japanese CLIL units have been successful, to some degree, in allowing middle years students to have a high sense of achievement in Japanese classes, which is one of the aims of this program.

Further, the number of Year 10 students who pre-enrolled in Japanese study in post-compulsory years in 2015 has risen significantly (15 out of a total of 36 students). If the sample is limited to the group of Year 10 students who have been learning Japanese (in the CLIL style) at the school since Year 7 or 8, the percentage of students who intend to continue their learning of the language at school is as high as 55%. This suggests that the CLIL units the students have been engaged in for some three years may be the key to success in having students feel excited by and confident in their future learning of Japanese, including post-compulsory years.

# TEACHERS' OBSERVATIONS, REFLECTIONS AND EVALUATIONS OF THE PROGRAM

Careful planning of the units was the key to the success of the program. In particular, careful selection of topics and language to be used was paramount. As I am not a history teacher, I had to study the school's curriculum and the Australian Curriculum of History as well as the history itself. For this I worked with my colleagues individually and attended Humanities staff meetings. Teacher collaboration requires lots of time and effort; however, it is one of the benefits of CLIL, as I learnt a lot from my colleagues.

In terms of creating learning resources, especially texts, it is important to establish a structure. In the previous three years, we had already developed a structure where a topic is presented through three or four short texts with one to several questions and tasks attached to each text. Having this structure made it easier for me to write the history texts for students.

The students were already familiar with the learning sequence in the CLIL units. They appeared to be aware of the necessity of pre-reading to be actively involved in the workshop, participating in the workshop to learn, turning in their responses to the set questions to demonstrate their understanding, and receiving teacher feedback for improvement. The students were also used to using Japanese in this process, whether it was spoken or written language. It was reported by the teachers that the CLIL approach allowed the teachers and the students to use the language much more frequently and meaningfully than with a non-CLIL approach.

While many benefits of the CLIL approach have been reported by the teachers, some challenges have been discussed. One of the aims was for students to produce a "History-related" text, such as a history essay or report, as part of the assessment task at the end of the unit cycle. As the teachers progressed through the units, they realised this requires extensive time and teaching of the relevant language and the specific genre of writing. Because that could not be provided, not many students were able to complete their history text. We would therefore recommend that students work on their texts paragraph by paragraph (or section by section) constantly during the course of the unit. For example, as soon as students understood the different social classes in the Edo Period through the first text, they would write the first paragraph of their history text and avoid feelings of being overwhelmed and having to refer back to the first text that they may have worked on five or six weeks ago.

The teachers involved were presented with some challenges. After one Japanese teacher came to my class for observation, he commented he felt guilty for speaking in English too much in his own classes. I had assumed he was speaking in Japanese all the time like I was, but he was finding it difficult to continue speaking Japanese when some students did not seem to understand. I responded that speaking in English is fine if necessary, but the teacher said he felt he could be speaking more Japanese after seeing the way I did it in class (see the *Workshop* section above for the scaffolding strategies). Ongoing professional learning, especially peer observation, is vital to the successful CLIL program.

Another Japanese teacher noted that she really enjoyed teaching about the Meiji Period to Year 9 students. This part of Japanese history was her area of specialty at her university. Careful consideration of the topics that play to teachers' strengths is very important. In the meantime, it must be remembered that she was a very recent graduate and wholly unfamiliar with CLIL. She joined our team at Elwood College only a few months prior to this History program. Due to this context, she mentioned it was very difficult when she had to run an Art in Japanese CLIL unit when she first came to the school. Again, ongoing professional learning and team collaboration are paramount.

# FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Even though there is already evidence of some success with the current History in Japanese CLIL units, more careful analysis of the survey data and more interpretation of the results are necessary. It is also critical to review the unit contents as well as the teaching practices with a view to further improvement. The survey data suggests there is plenty of room for improvement in terms of student learning.

Ongoing teacher collaboration and professional learning are critical. Peer observation, collaborative planning, school visits, participating in the relevant teacher networks and undertaking the relevant teacher training are all highly recommended in developing and consolidating CLIL programs.

Overall, this report has explored the potentials of CLIL as revealed in middle years Japanese classrooms at Elwood College. It would be interesting to see if any of the elements of the school's CLIL program could be applied in other schools.

# REFERENCES

Coyle, D. 2006. "Content and Language Integrated Learning Motivating Learners and Teachers." Scottish Languages Review 13: 1–18.

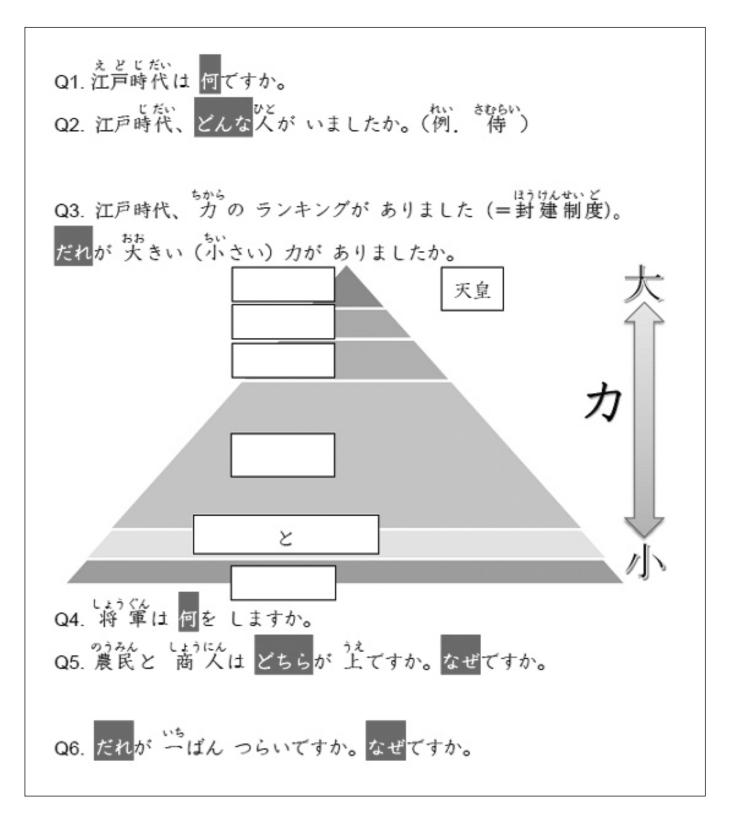
Coyle, D., P. Hood, and D. Marsh. 2010. CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cross, R. 2013. Research and Evaluation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Approach to Teaching and Learning Languages in Victorian Schools. Melbourne: Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

#### APPENDICES

1. Edo Period Text 1





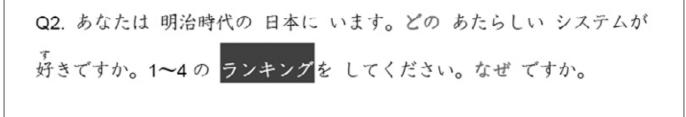


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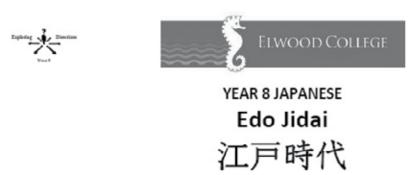
<sup>えど</sup> 江戸時代の システム	めいじじだい 明治時代の システム	モデルの国
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てらこや		
ありませんでした。		
<sup>さむらい</sup> 侍		
	イギリ ドイツ	





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	か.ご 英語	Eng	lish	政府	government	お	金	money
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「日本のポップカルチャー」の たんご



#### THE TASK:

Why did Edo Period last so long? How did the city of Edo become so big? Write an essay on Edo Period in <u>JAPANESE</u>.

#### **Key Questions**

S	What kind of system is Hoken Seido (in Japan in Edo Period)? What are its characteristics? (日本の 江戸時代の) 封建制度は どんな システム ですか。とくちょうは 何ですか。	understand analyse explain
S	What kind of policies did Tokugawa Shoguns make? Which one is good one? Which one is bad? 徳川将軍はどんな きまりを つくりましたか。 どれが いい きまりですか。わるい きまりですか。	evaluate explain
Z	<u>How</u> big was the city of Edo? <u>Why</u> so big? 江戸は <u>どのぐらい</u> 大きい 町でしたか。 <u>なぜ</u> 大きかったですか。	understand analyse explain
R	What kind of problems did they have in Edo? How could you solve them? 江戸に <u>どんな</u> もんだいが ありましたか。 <u>どうやって</u> 解決できますか。	understand create

## Assessment Rubric

Criteria	Quality of Content	Quality of	Effectiveness of Language A variety of language is used highly accurately. Extensive use of language is done successfully.	
Progression		Presentation		
10	All of the key questions are responded with elaboration.	Effective and appropriate structure to the text type.		
9		Text is supported by visuals effectively.		
8	Most of the key questions are responded with elaboration.	Appropriate structure to the text type with paragraphing/ sections. Text is supported	Relevant language is used accurately. Extensive use of language is done with some	
7	claboration.	by different visuals.	success.	
6	One of the key questions is responded with elaboration.	Some appropriate text type features and paragraphing/	Some relevant language is used, making the text	
5	Another one is responded very briefly.	sectioning. Relevant visuals are included.	comprehensive.	
4	Questions are responded but without elaboration.	A few appropriate text type features or paragraphing/ sectioning.	Some relevant language is attempted but often difficult to understand. Or little	
3			language is used.	
2	Very little content is presented or the content has little relevance to the	All the words/sentences are in one section. It only has some flow/order.	Some relevant language is attempted but very difficult to understand. Or very little	
1	task.	some now/order.	language is used.	