

Japanese Media Studies: A Year 10 CLIL Program

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Introduction

The purpose of the presentation on which this paper is based was to educate other teachers about the practicalities of implementing a CLIL program and to highlight the ways that CLIL may enhance Japanese teaching and learning across a variety of school contexts. My intention was for teachers who attended my presentation to leave the room with the confidence to attempt even just one CLIL lesson and to then build an online network of teachers interested in teaching Japanese CLIL programs. ‘The price of admission’ to the online community was to commit to planning for and teaching at least one CLIL lesson and then sharing experiences with the group online. My presentation focussed on my experiences in implementing a Year 10 Japanese Media Studies CLIL program at my school, San Sisto College.

Background

San Sisto College is a Catholic girls school in Brisbane, with approximately 700 students. The school offers both Japanese and Italian. Students are required to undertake two years of compulsory Languages study in Year 7 and 8, in their chosen language. The Japanese department runs a three-week Japanese Immersion tour every two years and there is an Italy Trip every three years. At the time of my presentation, Languages was experiencing a growth period at the college and my introduction of a CLIL program capitalised on this growth. The Year 10 Japanese Media Studies course (run for the first time in 2016) was the product of approximately two years of research into and experimentation with CLIL. Conditions overall were favourable for the introduction of a new course. I was blessed to work with a Languages-focussed Principal for the years leading up to this. Logistically, conditions were also favourable. For the first time during my tenure at the college we had two Year 10 Japanese classes for 2016. This allowed for students to opt in to the CLIL program and for there to still be a ‘standard’ Year 10 Japanese course running on the same timetable line. Much of the literature I encountered and staff I met with from other schools indicated that an opt-in program was the preferable approach.

I introduced a CLIL program at San Sisto after approximately three years of action research into ways of improving students’ speaking confidence and proficiency, having noticed students’ reluctance to verbally express themselves in the target language. I was fortunate enough to visit a number of schools with bilingual programs in Queensland and Victoria, and this inspired me to develop and implement a program suitable for my school’s context.

I believe one sentiment that is common to all Japanese teachers is that we want more people to be able to speak Japanese. The hard truth, though, is that once Japanese becomes an elective, attrition rates are high (De Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2008). Another common sentiment amongst Japanese teachers is that we want our students to be able to use the language with confidence. But in my experience (both as a student of high school Japanese in the early 2000s and in my discussions with students), many learners feel as though they

cannot interact in a meaningful way in the language, even after many years of study. I chose to implement a CLIL program to turn these things around at my school.

Program

Before launching a full-year program, I read widely on the topic of CLIL. Some of the resources that were most useful for me are included at the end of this paper.

I experimented with different CLIL delivery methods over an 18-month period, using a 'sampler approach' where I ran a variety of isolated lessons and mini units based on a range of topics. My focus throughout each session was on ensuring I used no English and gathering feedback from the students in terms of their levels of success and enjoyment. I made the decision to use no English because I needed to set the bar high for both myself and the students. If I commenced with the mindset that some English was permissible, then I was concerned I could become complacent as a non-native speaker and gradually use more and more English, and therefore not maintain the integrity of a bilingual program. Of course, there were some occasions where I did use English, but I made a concerted effort through very thorough lesson planning to ensure this was kept to an absolute minimum.

Some lessons / units I created included:

- Art and craft lessons (Valentine's Day, Hanami)
- Year 8 Japanese History Unit – 3-week trial with one class
- After-school CLIL program – optional program with native-speaker guest teachers covering cultural topics such as pottery making, Japanese hairpiece making and Japanese cooking
- Festival lessons such as Tanabata.

My main learning out of each of these experiences was that if you raise the bar in terms of use of target language in the classroom, the students will rise and meet you there. The sense of accomplishment students reported at being able to successfully participate in Japanese-only lessons encouraged me to continue with the program and, ultimately, write a year-long course.

As stated earlier, the course was a Year 10 opt-in Media Studies program. I wrote the program in line with the ACARA Achievement Standards for Year 10 Japanese and Year 10 Media Arts and met both Achievement Standards within the normal allocated timeslot for Japanese. Having outcomes that are genuinely commensurate with the level of learning expected of students under the wider curriculum is important for CLIL; developing new understandings and skills in the content is no less important than in the language itself (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). Further, this was possible because CLIL is such an efficient method of teaching – students are learning language that is immediately relevant to the content being taught, as they need it. The chances students have to use language they have just learnt, in a meaningful context related to the content just learnt, contribute to a higher level of language retention.

The teacher and students were expected to speak as much Japanese as possible; after a few weeks of allowing the girls to speak to me in English, I eventually enforced a rule where I would 'ignore them' until they attempted to formulate their question or statement in Japanese. The girls saw the funny side, and enjoyed the challenge. From my perspective, it was important to place the focus on attempting to articulate in the target language, rather than

accuracy. This process led to higher confidence amongst the students, evidenced by their increased willingness to communicate with me and each other in Japanese as the year progressed.

Below is a summary of the topics and assessment covered over the year:

Term	Topic	Assessment	Language Focus
1	Japanese Cooking Shows	Plan, script, film and edit a segment for a Japanese cooking show Standard Listening Exam (based on Obento Supreme)	Stating location of objects, expressing time, linking adjectives using て form, negative adjectives
2	Anime	Director's commentary of a Studio Ghibli scene to be recorded as a special feature on a DVD (this was conducted as a conversation with the teacher) Standard Writing Exam (based on Obento Supreme)	て form verbs, seasons, weather
3 / 4	Advertising	Create a Japanese-style advertising campaign as a group and write an accompanying exegesis individually Standard Speaking Exam (based on Obento Supreme) Standard Grammar Exam (based on Obento Supreme)	Plain form, giving reasons (から), stating opinions (と思う)

Benefits and pitfalls

Benefits

CLIL has had a significant impact on the teaching and learning of Japanese at San Sisto. Firstly, I, as the teacher, experienced a large spike in motivation. Learning more about CLIL through practice and seeing the students succeed was professionally very invigorating. Becoming a CLIL teacher encouraged me to use much more of the target language in all of my Japanese classes, as I witnessed in each CLIL lesson how much more quickly students were acquiring language. When students are exposed to the language in a meaningful context and are required to use it immediately, they seem to develop their language skills at a much quicker rate. Attention during class time was always incredibly focussed, as the students' brains worked hard to keep up with the linguistic and conceptual challenges of Japanese Media Studies. The atmosphere in the class was one of togetherness, accomplishment and joy. There were many laughs as the students (and the teacher) did their best to communicate.

Retention rates into Year 11 for 2017 were the highest I had yet seen at San Sisto. Sixteen of the 20 CLIL students continued into Senior. They have so far managed the demands of Year 11 more easily than students in previous years; some have even approached me to gently request that I speak *more* Japanese in class.

Below are some comments from the students, reported in Term 4 of 2016. I was very moved by the impact this class had on a number of the students. These comments were obtained anonymously through Survey Monkey.

What skills did you acquire?

'Confidence in my speaking - When you use nothing but Japanese for a subject for a whole year, you get used to using it. It challenged me to think about how I can use what I know to get my point across, and this has no doubt improved my abilities to have conversations in Japanese.'

'Analysis. The exegesis we did helps with English classes as well because we have to do the same thing with analysing documentaries and texts, so having more practice in both subjects and languages is beneficial.'

What have you learnt about yourself? Have you changed or grown?

'By taking this course, my friendships with other students have strengthened and because of this I have become a better person.'

'I have attained better problem-solving skills and learnt that there is more than one or two ways to tackle problems. I have learnt to just dive straight into problems.'

'Honestly, I really feel I have grown as a person. I can connect with people over my love of Japanese and it has helped me form new friendships. My love and appreciation for the Japanese culture has also grown if that's even possible.'

It was heartening to read that students not only felt the course helped them improve their Japanese but that they saw applications outside the Japanese classroom for the skills they were acquiring. The levels of enjoyment they expressed highlighted to me the satisfaction and happiness students can experience in a supportive but academically rigorous environment.

Pitfalls

The main challenge I faced in developing and implementing this program was the time-consuming nature of planning for CLIL lessons and creating resources. I found I was needing to write highly detailed lesson plans for every lesson, to ensure that the language I was exposing the girls to was appropriate to their stage of learning.

Undeniably, it was challenging at times to keep up the students' confidence and motivation. Some students found the added challenge of CLIL exactly right; others at times questioned their abilities and their place in the class. It was rewarding, however, to offer these students encouragement and see them 'pick themselves up' and continue to flourish in the Japanese classroom.

Conclusion

After my 2016 presentation in Melbourne, I created and continue to moderate a Facebook page entitled 'Japanese CLIL Network'. As of January 2018, there were 124 members. Teachers regularly post their experiences, successes and questions relating to CLIL. It has been heartening to realise that there are many Japanese teachers around Australia interested in getting CLIL programs off the ground at their own schools, and this encourages me to continue my research and experiments into this teaching methodology.

References

De Kretser, A., & Spence-Brown, R. (2008). *The Current State of Japanese Language Education in Australian Schools*. Melbourne: Education Services Australia Ltd.

Useful CLIL Resources

Online Articles:

David Marsh – Using Languages to Learn and Learning to Use Languages

<http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/clilmatrix/pdf/1UK.pdf>

This article by David Marsh is not just useful for teachers, but can be used to help explain CLIL to parents too.

Case study in CLIL in Victorian schools – Russell Cross

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/languages/CLILtrialresearchrpt.pdf>

I read this several times as I began my CLIL journey. Very practical. Interviews with some of the teachers involved in these programs feature on the Language Learning Space.

Language Learning Space – Professional Development Resource – CLIL

<https://www.lls.edu.au/teacherspace/professionallearning/2186>

Spend some time watching the videos – really useful.

Simone Smala – University of Queensland - Introducing Content and Language

Integrated Learning <http://www.acsa.edu.au/pages/images/simone%20smala%20-%20introducing%20content%20and%20language.pdf>

Books:

CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning by Do Coyle, Phillip Good and David Marsh

I read this from cover to cover and am constantly going back to this resource. Couldn't have delivered my course without it.

CLIL Activities – A resource to subject and language teachers by Liz Dale and Rosie Tanner.

Very useful resource once you have a program / unit / lesson in mind and need help coming up with activities.