【Research Brief】

English for Creative Purposes: Implementing a CLIL Framework for Tertiary Creative Writing Courses in Japan

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become an increasingly popular approach to English language teaching at the undergraduate university level in Japan as a means of raising the proficiency of local students and attracting international ones to study together in a global, English-speaking Liberal Arts environment. Creative Writing (CW) courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate university levels have become increasingly popular in English-speaking countries over the first quarter of the 21st century. If there is an assumption that CW courses are only for the most fluent of speakers, perhaps a CLIL approach could provide space for speakers who are not as fluent. Additionally, CW could encourage students to explore and share their diverse backgrounds. Therefore, this paper proposes that Liberal Arts programs using CLIL should be encouraged to incorporate CW into their curricula to reflect global standards. The paper outlines CLIL definitions, evaluates benefits and drawbacks, discusses a possible CLIL/CW course, and concludes that CLIL/CW could make a positive combination.

Keywords: *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), English Language Teaching (ELT), Creative Writing (CW), Course design, Classroom practice*

Introduction

Creative Writing (CW) has been consistently called one of the most popular subjects among American undergraduate Liberal Arts students (Leahy, 2012). However, there are few CW courses in English language teaching (ELT), even those that have adopted the current trend for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This paper reports on the process of implementing a CLIL framework for a CW course in the Center for Foreign Language Education and Research at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, Japan. The paper begins by untangling the various definitions of CLIL before offering a critical evaluation of the benefits and drawbacks of CLIL. This leads to a discussion of the process of designing a one-semester undergraduate CLIL course in CW. The paper concludes that CLIL and CW are a potentially positive combination for global tertiary education in a post-millennium world.

Critical Evaluation: CLIL

Although Scrivener (2011) calls CLIL "one of the ugliest-ever ELT acronyms" (p. 327), he offers no explanation of why he finds it ugly. However, he does explain what CLIL is, and he is not the only one who feels compelled to do so. Much of the literature in CLIL's relatively short history begins with a section or chapter addressing "What is CLIL?" (e.g., Ball et al., 2015; Coyle et al., 2010; Ohmori, 2014). Rather than staking out a new theoretical ground, the purpose of many CLIL definitions is to clear up confusion. This repeated need to clarify CLIL perhaps came about because there are so many different manifestations or variations of CLIL. Any stable definition is further complicated by featuring a range of benefits and drawbacks, and this instability has been amplified by more recent calls to move *beyond* CLIL (Coyle & Meyer, 2021). As such, in this section, a broad definition of CLIL is presented. This is followed by a critical evaluation of the benefits and drawbacks of CLIL.

Definitions of CLIL

One of the most widely circulated definitions of CLIL calls it a "dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for learning and teaching of both content *and* language" (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 1). However, there is neither a commonly accepted definition of what constitutes an appropriate integration of content and language learning nor is there an agreement on the exact role of subject and language teachers. This confusion has led to CLIL being labelled an elusive concept and an "umbrella term, covering a dozen or more educational approaches" (Ball et al., 2015, p. 24).

CLIL originated in Europe in the 1990s as an approach to teaching content (e.g., primary or secondary school curriculum subjects such as science or math) through L2, which in many cases, but not exclusively, meant English. CLIL soon spread into tertiary education and around the globe, where it was embraced by language teachers as a form of English for specific purposes or task-based learning (Ball et al., 2015). However, Ball et al. (2015) also criticize the way CLIL has been imported into language lessons, where they say it has been "taught by language teachers, assessed as language teaching, and makes no formal contribution to the subject curriculum" (p. 1). This crossover between subject and language teachers is central to issues revolving around the definition of CLIL.

Attempts to streamline CLIL's definition and the issue of subject and language teachers have resulted in the distinction between "soft" and "hard" CLIL. Hard CLIL is close to full immersion. Subjects are taught by subject teachers in L2 for all contact hours for a year or more and possibly lead to public examinations in the subject. In hard CLIL, language teachers take on a consultative or supportive role where necessary. In contrast, soft CLIL is the form commonly seen in ELT settings such as Japan, where language teachers, who are not necessarily subject experts, import content into language lessons. The balance between language and content is based on nebulous factors including lesson stage, learner needs, and institutional requirements. These courses are typically less than a year, do not involve all contact hours, and have a lot of language teacher involvement (Ball et al., 2015).

Having briefly reviewed common CLIL definitions, the conclusion reached is that CLIL cannot be called a single approach or even a "uniform set of practices" (Ball et al., 2015, p.

2). Most recently, Coyle and Meyer (2021) has helpfully redefined CLIL as "a constantly evolving approach to learning and teaching in our multilingual and multicultural classrooms" (p. 3). Perhaps, the flexibility implicit in being a broad umbrella is one of CLIL's greatest strengths. In other words, various versions can be readapted and redefined to suit local, cultural, and institutional conditions. However, as Scrivener (2011) warns "The hope is that achievement in both subject and language will be higher. The fear is that both will end up worse" (p. 327). Therefore, it is now appropriate to take a closer look at particular benefits and drawbacks of CLIL.

Benefits of CLIL

Coyle et al. (2010) group the goals of CLIL under the heading of 4Cs: Content, Cognition, Communication, Culture. This 4Cs framework also offers a succinct way of examining and understanding the benefits of CLIL.

Firstly and perhaps most importantly, content is the subject matter that is being taught through CLIL. Content is most important because students are supposedly learning about an actual subject in a semi-authentic manner. This could be particularly beneficial for motivating more advanced students who already have a good grasp of communicative English. It could also benefit language teachers who have grown demotivated with communicative language teaching or other functional syllabus types (Breen, 1987). Furthermore, language teachers could focus on subjects that they have studied and are personally interested in, and institutions could promote various syllabus options.

Perhaps the most complicated but unique of the 4Cs is cognition. This relates to the development of thinking skills based on the content studied. Coyle et al. (2010) base cognition on Anderson and Krathwohl's adaptation of Bloom's taxonomy of thinking processes. This is a general approach to teaching that encourages students to be independent thinkers and develop processing skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating alongside the development of factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge.

Although closely connected to content, the third C (communication) relates to language learning and implementation (Coyle et al., 2010). Communication is a reminder that CLIL lessons are not the same as subject lessons delivered to L1 students. For example, to encourage communication skills, CLIL teachers should modify content so that it is at a slightly higher level than students' current ability. This gives students a scaffold in which to develop their language skills while they learn about the subject without the possible intimidation of total immersion. Teachers then provide any necessary feedback and support for students to learn the content. Teachers are also expected to encourage peer interaction and productive practice that helps develop communicative competencies such as breakdown and repair strategies (de Graaff et al., 2007). However, subjects taught as CLIL should not be an oversimplified or translation-assisted replication of previous disciplines studied in L1 (Coyle & Meyer, 2021).

Finally, culture relates to developing intercultural understanding and global citizenship, which is particularly important in the context of CLIL as an increasingly global phenomenon. As Ball et al. (2015) note, in many ways, the idea of simply learning English or any language, unless for a hobby, as a goal in itself is rapidly vanishing as the 20th century recedes. This

is particularly true of English in a global setting, where English is no longer simply one of many possible languages to learn but a "core skill" (Ball et al., 2015, p. 26). Although this "post-millennial, utilitarian view of the English language" (Ball et al., 2015, p. 26) as a passport to global citizenship may sound attractive, it begs questions about how difficult it is to implement CLIL.

Drawbacks of CLIL

Though Coyle et al.'s (2010) version of CLIL has been praised as a framework or toolkit, criticism of CLIL revolves around the implementation process (Ball et al., 2015; Banegas, 2011). Furthermore, Scrivener's (2011) concern about the balance of learning in CLIL relates to how teachers integrate content and language. Another related problem in CLIL is assessment.

If language and content are meant to be integrated as the CLIL acronym declares, this integration should also occur at the level of teacher roles. CLIL cannot be implemented with the assumption that teaching in L2 to non-native speakers is the same as teaching in L1 to native speakers. It is not CLIL if there is no or little language development. There must be some language support and some form of integration (Ball et al., 2015). However, when a CLIL course is taught solely by a teacher with an ELT background, if not a subject or content expert, then it is simply ELT. Having said that, perhaps the dichotomy between subject and language teachers is false. One solution might be to view all teaching as related to content and language. Ball et al. (2015) point toward the emergence of a hybrid teacher: "If all language teachers begin to consider themselves content teachers, then instead of maintaining the divide between the language and subject worlds, we begin to build bridges between them" (p. 272).

The duality implied by separating content and language as if content is somehow separate from the language of the content is also pertinent when it comes to assessment. Courses that foreground linguistic objectives could be soft CLIL, whereas courses that foreground procedural and conceptual content objectives could be hard CLIL (Ball et al., 2015). Therefore, the main difficulty in implementing CLIL assessment is deciding where the course sits on this spectrum. Ball et al. (2015) argue that "the priority should always be the content, but as Coyle et al. (2010) suggest, the assessment can also consider language features if the teacher deems it appropriate" (p. 215). Having reviewed the benefits and difficulties of CLIL, it is now appropriate to discuss how CLIL could work with CW in Japan.

Discussion: English for Creative Purposes

English might be the language of globalization and internationalization; however, Japan is still relatively monocultural and monolingual despite several decades of ambivalent government attempts to alter the situation (Tada, 2016). Learning English in Japan has a long and sometimes controversial history, too complex to cover here; however, leading up to the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT) implemented guidelines for active learning

in Japanese schools (McMurray, 2018). MEXT also planned to increase English as a medium of instruction courses at Japanese universities. The ultimate goal is to raise the international standing of Japanese universities, transforming higher education in Japan into a global hub, where local students can study alongside international students. For example, "Hiroshima University is seeking to increase 'foreign language taught courses' to 50% across the university" (Rose & McKinley, 2018, p. 123), and although the university has not mentioned a date to reach this target, Waseda University is aiming for the same plateau for both undergraduate and graduate courses by 2032, which would be "up from 9% and 6% respectively in 2012" (Elwood, 2018, p. 37).

A result of MEXT's plans is the proliferation of courses based on so-called soft CLIL (i.e., language teacher facilitated subject lessons) at Japanese universities (Ikeda et al., 2021). This combination of increased MEXT plans to globalize the Japanese education sector and a rich literary culture could thus lead to innovative approaches such as CLIL and CW. This section discusses the creation of an undergraduate CLIL/CW course. The section is divided into four parts that follow the 4Cs framework for a CLIL syllabus.

Content (Course Design and Content)

Breen (1987) classically asks of any course, "what knowledge does it focus on?" He also asks what capabilities does it focus on and prioritize. The answer to the first question for a CLIL course would usually be that the knowledge is the content being imparted to the students, what they are expected to demonstrate knowledge of by the end of the course. For example, in a science or history course, students would learn about particular aspects of science or periods in history. However, in CW, as in other fine arts subjects, it could be argued that there is no specific content. This belief is perhaps related to the antiquated argument that CW cannot or should not be taught, particularly at the university level, because it is an exclusive art form, rather than a craft, that relies most on inborn talent (Kamata & Guenther, 2014).

However, teaching CW has a long history in academia, where it was once seen as an anomaly in literature departments but eventually gained its own space and is now seen as an essential part of the tertiary academic landscape (Cantrell, 2012). Furthermore, it is not only essential because of popularity or because students necessarily want to become published novelists, poets, or screenwriters. As Leahy (2012) says, although "most undergraduates will not go on to publish creative work, we should recognize that these language skills are transferable" (p. 75). This is an important point to consider from a soft CLIL/ELT perspective. A main difference with CW and other academic subjects is that the students bring much of the content. They may study different genres to learn how to appreciate or apply different styles and techniques, particular beats and themes, but what is most important is their own work. Furthermore, language learning is automatically integrated into the creation of that content. CW classes continuously integrate content and language into their curricula. In CW, it is assumed that everyone can improve their language use. There is always language development. Moreover, offering CW courses to L2 speakers could make a significant contribution to the field because new students could bring new perspectives to the use of global English.

The American Association of Writers and Writing Programs recommends that introductory undergraduate CW courses include "the reading and critical analysis of canonical and contemporary works of literature" as well as practice in "specific craft techniques" in the four most common genres: poetry, non-fiction, fiction, and drama/screenwriting and peer review with instructor moderation (Association of Writers and Writing Programs, n.d.). Therefore, CLIL/CW courses at Japanese universities could follow a similar format. As there are typically 14 weeks in a Japanese tertiary semester, the first lesson could be an introduction (and needs analysis), whereas the last lesson could be a round up or an additional workshop if required. The other 12 lessons could be divided into four modules: poetry, non-fiction, fiction, and screenwriting.

Each module would last three weeks (two seminars and a workshop). In the seminar lessons, students would describe, compare, examine, discuss, and/or rate different examples of particular genres, forms, styles, and techniques. Students would have homework reading from published literature that exemplifies that week's particular craft skill or genre. This would be followed by a workshop lesson, where students would share their own work and give and receive critical feedback. For example, two seminars on poetry could be divided into canonical and contemporary works. Shakespearean sonnets could be contrasted with the Western haiku, and students could choose to write their own versions following or breaking each genre's particular constraints. Similarly, alternative poetic forms, such as blank verse, narrative, and concrete poetry could be analyzed, evaluated, and composed.

By following a standard CW trajectory and eventually submitting a portfolio of selected work, the students would demonstrate that "tasks (and activities) in CLIL should not be seen in isolation, but as part of a larger sequence" (Ball et al., 2015, p. 207). Finally, students would also be expected to participate in workshops and communicate with each other about the process, and it is in the interlinked areas of content and communication that potential language issues would be addressed.

Communication (Needs Analysis)

Institutional requirements would ideally cap the number of students on such a course at a maximum of 20, each with an IELTS score of at least 6.5 (B2/C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference [CEFR]), which is an average minimum level for entering an English-speaking university program or studying abroad, and it is the recommended minimum for doing CLIL (Ball et al., 2015). As such a course would be voluntary, it could also be expected that applicants were interested in English literature and CW. Additionally, enthusiasm is as important as experience. However, ideally, in a CW course, students would submit a brief written introduction and portfolio of previous work as part of the application process to serve as a needs analysis. Because student lists are perhaps only available shortly before the semester begins, the first lesson, as mentioned, could itself function as a form of needs analysis.

In regular lessons, although communication needs would be addressed as required, the sequencing of the four modules also points to particular areas of language use that may reveal the need for support strategies. For instance, the poetry module would focus on vocabulary, lexical range, and accuracy. Students would be encouraged to explore etymology and word

choice and areas such as figurative language. The second module, non-fiction, would focus on sentence-level grammatical structures and building paragraphs. This would also relate to the use of past and perfect tenses for reporting on memorable experiences. The fiction module would extend the focus on paragraph structures and include punctuation. This extension would include developing cohesion and coherence through the use of discourse markers and the conventions of formatting dialog. The focus on dialog in the fiction module would be further explored in the final module, screenwriting, which also requires particular formatting. Screenwriting would focus on the use of present tenses because the conventions of a screenplay require it to be read like the report of a film unfolding in real time.

Finally, an essential aspect of the workshop component would be student interaction. This aspect of the course would help students practice and develop communicative competencies such as breakdown and repair strategies (De Graaff et al., 2007). Furthermore, when sharing written work and engaging in peer feedback, Kamata and Guenther (2014) agree, in the context of L2 CW tertiary programs in Japan, students should feel relaxed and supported. Having a positive atmosphere would encourage students to experiment and take risks with their writing, some of which may be very personal. Therefore, students could be encouraged to remain neutral. Rather than identifying what they liked or did not like about a piece, from a traditionally critical perspective, a more equitable, rhizomatic approach could see students noting what resonated with them (Vanderslice, 2012). Students could also develop metacognitive skills to discuss and explain their own work as well as responding to examples of literature in different genres and to each other's work. This communicative process circles back to the second C: cognition.

Cognition (Materials Development)

As mentioned previously, though a complicated area, cognition has been labeled the most important of the 4Cs in CLIL for Japanese students because it can encourage their development as critical and independent thinkers (MacGregor, 2016).

Creativity itself is an important aspect of cognition based on Anderson and Krathwohl's adaptation of Bloom's taxonomy of thinking processes (Coyle et al., 2010). Although Bloom's taxonomy is often mentioned in CLIL papers, little attention is given to creativity. However, CW courses, by the nature of their process and student-centered orientation, encourage creativity in the reading and writing process. They also encourage critical and independent thinking in the workshop process, where students are initially exposed to published materials before developing and sharing their own work.

Consequently, the most important materials developed in a CW course are the ones the students develop themselves. As mentioned above, materials that exemplify canonical and contemporary literature could be shared with students, but as the syllabus would be partly negotiated, these materials might change depending on initial needs analysis. However, these materials would not be held up as untouchable, superior to potential student output. Initial exposure to published work would not only give students different models to try on for size and discover their textual preferences but also allow students to practice responding to creative work before responding to each other's. This response would be "not in the traditional literary sense but with an eye towards interrogating technique" (Vanderslice, 2012,

p. 117). Students would not always be expected to judge the work but to comment on what resonates with them or which aspects of craft are noticeable and how those effects are achieved. Materials would also allow new CW students the chance to practice the metalanguage required to actively participate in the workshop setting without the risk of having to expose their own work first.

In producing their own materials, students would potentially engage with English in a more creative manner than they have ever experienced in an ELT setting, "putting together pieces to construct something new or recognizing components of a new structure, e.g. generating, planning, producing" (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 66). In addition to the ability to improve creativity, students would develop ways to analyze and evaluate their own work. They would explain their work, reflect on it, share and supportively critique each other's. This is important because the "development of students as critics and reflective writers usually goes hand in hand with their development as creative writers" (Vanderslice, 2012, p. 116). As has been shown, CW has the potential to make a lasting impact on the cognitive development of students.

Finally, CW courses contribute to self-knowledge and self-expression because students think and write about themselves and their experiences. "Students can learn about the craft of writing, as well as how to think critically, skills that will prove useful to students even outside of English classes" (Kamata & Guenther, 2014, p. 527). It is outside of the classroom that students may eventually contribute to a wider society. With the students' permission, their creative materials could be gathered into a journal for publication. Such a publication could serve to encourage students and add to the broader development of L2 CW culture.

Culture (Assessment and Evaluation)

An aspirational objective of CW courses could include helping students with the "difficult task of writing works that might profoundly affect readers and enrich the culture" (O'Connor, 2012, p. 164). However, this goal is, with rare exceptions, virtually impossible to achieve during a full postgraduate degree, let alone a single undergraduate semester. It is also very difficult to gauge the impact on individual readers and the wider culture in years to come.

One recurring criticism of CW in general has been that it is impossible to grade or rank creativity. For as long as it has been part of academia, CW lecturers and teachers have grappled with the seemingly contradictory impulses of encouraging artistic freedom and submitting marks (Leahy, 2012). Cantrell (2012) points out that assessment in CW is often seen as an arbitrary judgment based on tastes and individual notions of objectivity. O'Connor (2012) agrees that assessing use of basic grammar, structure, and plot are relatively straightforward, but other aspects of literature such as vision or originality are too connected to taste.

Therefore, particularly at the undergraduate level, it is recommended that assessment should focus on elements of craft, attendance, participation, resilience, and effort and not necessarily on IELTS/TOEFL/CEFR equivalencies. The later process areas are considered more important than the final product. For example, in marking poetry, areas of craft to consider include demonstrating knowledge of different poetic forms used in the course and

the ability to "self-edit and build a poem through successive drafts" (Symmons Roberts, 2012, p. 152). Regarding fiction, in their previous Japan L2 CW trial, Kamata and Guenther (2014) also recommend focusing on craft aspects such as consistency of viewpoint, clarity of setting, three-dimensional characters, and purposeful dialog as well as some grammar and spelling.

Literature is the perfect place to share, explore, and exchange different cultural viewpoints. CW encourages students to share their experiences in written English as a form of cultural exchange. As English continues to be the global language, or lingua franca, it can also be a means through which people from different cultures can share the stories of their culture and heritage. Therefore, exposing students to literature, reading, and writing and discussing their perspectives is an objective that fits firmly within the CLIL framework and MEXT plans. If students are inspired to continue writing creatively in English and choose to pursue publishing or further studies in the future, that would be magnificent. However, on a practical level, those considerations fall outside the assessment remit. Having said that, institutional requirements stipulate that students receive a grade, and the university culture expects grades.

The assessment for elective lecture courses, regardless of content or subject, might be broken down into participation (30%), coursework (40%), and final paper (30%). For a CW course, participation could be subdivided into attendance and active participation during individual feedback sessions, whereas in lectures and workshops, the coursework could be divided into four short pieces (10% each) submitted at the end of each module: poetry, non-fiction, fiction, and screenwriting. The final paper (30%) would include a portfolio of an extended piece or combination of pieces alongside a short reflection that discusses considerations of the different techniques explored and responses to feedback given. The reflection would also include a self-assessment component that could be used for grading in consultation and negotiation with the teacher. For example, students could justify their own grades based on how far they believe they have achieved what they set out to accomplish. Additionally, a course evaluation from the students could be used for research purposes and to improve the course.

In offering this course to Japanese and other international L1 or L2 undergraduate students, it is hoped that a contribution can be made to the field of CLIL and CW.

Conclusion

This paper reported on initial research into implementing a CLIL framework for undergraduate CW courses at Japanese universities. Future research could compare L1 and L2 CW courses and survey student opinions. The current paper explored CLIL definitions and offered a critical evaluation of the benefits and difficulties of CLIL. There was then a detailed discussion of the process of designing an undergraduate CLIL course in CW. In this post-millennium world, universities implementing plans to globalize Japan's tertiary culture could surely benefit from offering students courses that encourage English for creative purposes.

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