

# Using CLIL to Teach about Vietnam at the University Level

Hitomi Sakamoto

(Toyo Gakuen University, Tokyo, Japan)

## 1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is to clarify the importance of teaching about Asia in EFL classes with the focus on Vietnam in particular. English is a global language not only for its native speakers but also for non-native speakers like some Asians. However, EFL teachers in Japan have been apt to deal with more European and American cultures in classes. In order to foster global citizens who respect every country equally, teachers should teach more about Asia in EFL classes.

In this paper, the syllabus of university-level CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) lessons used for teaching about Vietnam is to be illustrated. There are three reasons why the author dealt with the topic of Vietnam. The first is that the author teaches with an intern from Vietnam. She is a cultural informant and gives the students authentic information. Secondly, the year 2015 commemorates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, which provided an excellent opportunity to discuss this important topic with the students. Thirdly, the author believes in the significance of teaching about Asia in EFL classes and has been making efforts to incorporate peace education for Asians into her EFL classes for several years. It would help Japanese students who are likely to work with people from Asian countries using English in their future careers.

At the end of this paper, the students' reactions to these lessons are to be described. It shows that CLIL lessons on Vietnam enhanced their global awareness, deepened their learning and increased their willingness to communicate in English.

## 2. CLIL for Global Education

Asian globalization has become a growing force in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and

globalizing Asia needs English as a tool for communication within Asia and with the rest of the world. CLIL started and spread in Europe, but using CLIL to teach English is of growing necessity in the Asian context as well for global education.

According to Cates, global education is a new approach to language teaching. His definition is as follows:

Global education is a new approach to language teaching which aims at enabling students to effectively acquire and use a foreign language while empowering them with the knowledge, skills and commitment required by world citizens for the solution of global problems.

(Underlined by the author) (Cates, 2012) <sup>(1)</sup>

The author used CLIL to teach about Vietnam because it is the most appropriate method for EIU (Education for International Understanding) or global education. (Ikeda, 2013) <sup>(2)</sup>

For global education, students' thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and their good team-work with other people from different cultural backgrounds are essential. The four components of CLIL (Content, Communication, Cognition, Community/ Culture) are to contribute to raising those skills. Among the 4Cs, cognition is the most important. Students are supplied with scaffolding and are able to deepen their learning and thinking.

The author has been applying CLIL to other lessons dealing with various subject matters as well because it has been proved that CLIL motivates students and promotes their positive attitudes toward learning about global issues and presenting their opinions. Furthermore, in EFL classes, many students have anxiety to use English to express their opinions, but if they deepen their learning of the content by CLIL approach, they can overcome their language anxiety and increase their willingness to communicate. (Sakamoto, 2015)<sup>(3)</sup>

CLIL also contributes to raising the students' awareness of different cultures and the importance of collaboration and to developing their thinking skills such as critical thinking skills. (Yamano, 2013)<sup>(4)</sup>

In sum, CLIL is a student-centered approach to motivate their learning of content and their willingness to use the target language and to promote their collaborative learning and their intercultural awareness. Using CLIL in EFL classes could have students become aware of the importance of

English as a global language for them to express their messages as global citizens.

### 3. The Outline of CLIL Lessons on Vietnam

The author created a project-based learning syllabus using CLIL to teach about Vietnam. First, the Vietnamese intern made a presentation to introduce the country in general. Then, the students researched about various aspects of the country and took turns to make a presentation in English. The topics range from history, politics, economy, culture, education system, environment to the Vietnam War. Regarding the war, the students used a textbook of history for American students and learned the basic facts and watched a DVD of a movie entitled “Platoon”, which describes the war..

Each student’s presentation was supplemented with the intern’s comment and the teacher’s feedback. Thirdly, the students appreciated a beautiful story entitled *The Lotus Seed* written by Sherry Garland and illustrated by Tatsuro Kiuchi together and did some collaborative activities. It is a story about a Vietnamese woman who emigrated to the United States of America as a refugee. The lotus is the national flower of Vietnam, and it symbolizes the heart and spirit of the Vietnamese woman who loved her mother country.

The abstract of the story is as follows. The woman as a young girl took a lotus seed from the emperor’s garden when he lost the throne because she wanted something to remember him by. She put the seed in a special place in her house. When she felt sad or lonely, she always took it out and thought of the young emperor.

After she grew up and got married, she still kept the seed for good luck, long life, and many children. When her husband went off to war, she raised her children alone. One day bombs fell all around and soldiers came. She went and got the seed before anything else. Her family got on a crowded boat and set out on a stormy sea. She came to the United States and worked hard day and night for many years. Her children, her sisters and cousins lived together in one big house.

One day a little grandson found the seed and planted it in some mud secretly. The woman cried and cried when she found out the seed was gone. Then, one day in spring, she saw a beautiful lotus flower. She was very happy. When the flower turned into a pod, she gave each of her grandchildren a seed

to remember her by.

My students, who will be English teachers for young learners, made this story into a paper puppet show in collaboration. It was the end-product of the project. They summarized the story using simple English, decided how many characters they were going to create, and practiced the paper puppet play. In October, they are going to visit an elementary school near the campus and show the play with the intern from Vietnam. It will become an unforgettable story of Vietnam for my students. The following is the CLIL lesson syllabus of this project-based learning about Vietnam.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Class	2 <sup>nd</sup> Class	3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	4 <sup>th</sup> Class
Content	Students learn about Vietnam from the Intern.	Students make presentations on various aspects of Vietnam.	Students read <i>The Lotus Seed</i> and prepare for the paper puppet show.	Students practice the paper puppet show for teaching young learners.
Communication	Vocabulary to introduce Vietnam	Vocabulary to explain various aspects of Vietnam	Vocabulary learned in the story entitled <i>The Lotus Seed</i>	Vocabulary used in the paper puppet show
Cognition	Think of questions to ask the intern during and after her presentation	Analyze the various aspects of Vietnam and think about them	Think how to summarize the story	Think of the characters' feelings in each scene of the story
Culture/ Community	Try to understand the Vietnamese culture	Try to understand the Vietnamese culture	Work on the paper puppet show in collaboration	Work on the paper puppet show in collaboration

Table 1: 4Cs of CLIL lesson syllabus of learning about Vietnam

The following is the CLIL lesson plan on the story entitled *The Lotus*

*Seed*. The teaching materials the author used were the picture book of *The Lotus Seed*, small picture card sets to illustrate the story, handouts of the story, and worksheets for students to think of the characters' feelings in each scene. For global education, it is essential to put oneself into another person's shoe and imagine other people's feelings put in a different situation. Students' empathy and imagination must be cultivated. Using a story and role-playing are most effective for this educational purpose.

Content	Communication (The teacher)	Communication (Students)	Cognition	Culture / Community
Greeting	Hello, everyone! How are you?	Hello, Professor S! I'm ~.	Understand- ing Applying	Class  Solo
Intro- duction	Show the cover picture of the picture book and ask: "What's this?" "What's this story about?" "Tell me anything you can think of."	A lotus flower! Is it a Vietnamese story?"	Imagining	Solo
Activity 1	Use some pages of the picture book and introduce new words: "throne / bombs / pod"	throne / bombs / pod	Understand -ing	Class
Activity 2	Read the story aloud: "Now, let's listen to the story."		Understand -ing	Class
Activity 3	Give a small picture card set to each group and have students put the cards in the right order of the story: "Please put the cards in the right order in collaboration remembering the	Is this card the first? What's next? Then, a war	Remember- ing	Group

	story.”	happened.		
Activity 4	Read the story aloud again and have students confirm the right order.	Wow, we are right!	Understanding	Group
Activity 5	Have students choose the best picture they like and say why they like it in English in each group.	I like this scene best because she was very happy to find the lotus in bloom.	Expressing one’s own idea	Group
Activity 6	Students fill in their worksheets. They summarize the story and think of each character’s feelings in each scene.	“The grandma must have been terribly sad when she found out that the seed was gone.”	Expressing one’s own ideas	Solo
Activity 7	They write a scenario of the paper puppet theater and create the puppets.		Creating	Class
Activity 8	They practice the play and rehearse it.			
Activity 9	They write their comments and share them with their classmates.	“I was most impressed with their strong longing for their mother country even after they started a new life in the U.S.A.”	Expressing one’s own ideas Understanding of the classmates’ feelings	Solo Class

Table 2: The 4Cs of the CLIL lesson on *The Lotus Seed*

#### **4. The Students' Comments after the Project**

One of the students attended a seminar on the Vietnam War and wrote a comment as follows:

...The person who gave us his lecture works as a poet in the U.S now, but before becoming a poet, he was a member of U.S Marine Corps in Vietnam. He gave us a really meaningful lecture on the Vietnam War, which explained what was the Vietnam War, for what purpose he became a soldier and so on, with his poetry carrying his own reflections on that war and really important messages for us. The most important message he would like to tell us was that the war had been wrong. I feel the seminar is really helpful and meaningful for people around the world, especially for Japanese young people, who don't know wars. The attendance of this lecturer gave me an opportunity to reflect on miserable wars.

Regarding the project of reading the Vietnamese story and making it into a paper puppet show, one student commented as follows:

...At first, it was hard for me to understand the feeling of a refugee who left Vietnam and went to America. However, as we were engaged in creating a paper puppet show, I came to feel sympathy for the Vietnamese woman who kept the lotus seed to remember her mother country by. If all the countries in the world become peaceful, there would be no refugees and everyone could stay in his or her mother country. We should think about what we can do to make the world a better place.

#### **5. Conclusion**

CLIL enables students to be more engaged in their learning. Content and communication are meaningful, and the collaborative learning motivates the students. They most enjoy the part of the lesson which requires their thinking skills. This method suits educational purposes of global education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is the author's hope that more teachers deal with Vietnam and other Asian countries using CLIL in EFL classes.

## Notes

- (1) Cates, K. (2012). *Global Issues in Language Education Newsletter #83*. p.24.
- (2) Ikeda, M. (2013). *The English Teachers' Magazine* Vo. 62. p.16. Taishukan.
- (3) Sakamoto, H. (2015). "Fukushima-Turkey Project Using CLIL to Enhance WTC"  
Presented at the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of JES.
- (4) Yamano, Y. (2013). "Exploring the Use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Foreign Language Activities" in *JES Journal* Vol. 13.pp.31-34.

## References

- Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Garland, S. (1993). *The Lotus Seed*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Yashima, T. (2010). *Motivation and Affect in Foreign Language Communication*. Kansai University.