

# **‘Soft’ Content and Language Integrated Learning: Promoting Deep Learning in the English as a Foreign Lan- guage Classroom in Japan**

***Jhana Graham***

*Graduate School of Education  
Sophia University*

**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to present a conceptual overview of how the ‘Soft’ version of the Content and Language Integrated Learning ('Soft' CLIL) approach may promote deep learning in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Japan. Deep learning suggests that the focus of education should extend beyond preparing students for assessments and examinations. Instead, it should seek to equip students with the skills required to engage meaningfully in learning and apply what they have learned. Based on over a decade of personal experience and observation, students often need help with writing and speaking their opinions in English. Furthermore, the MEXT Policy guidelines ask educators to prepare students to use the English language to think, judge, and express themselves. To conceptually assess this approach that may promote deep learning, this paper will: 1. summarize the CLIL approach and the roles of the 'Soft' CLIL approach in the language learning classroom, 2. provide a rationale for the use of the 'Soft' CLIL approach in promoting deep learning, 3. discuss issues related to the context and environment for research, and 4. present the implications for deliberate practice in the 'Soft' CLIL classroom.*

**Keywords:** ‘Soft’ CLIL, deliberate practice, deep learning

## **1. Research Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to present a conceptual overview of how the 'Soft' version of the Content and Language Integrated Learning ('Soft' CLIL) approach may promote deep learning in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Japan. In the report known as 'Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge in the 21st Century', the National Research Council in the United States defined deep learning as 'the process through which an individual becomes capable of taking what is learned in one situation and applying it to new situations<sup>1</sup>. The report also suggests that deep learning is activated through shared learning and in communities<sup>2</sup>. Key terms mentioned in the definition will guide the discussion throughout this paper. The terms are 'the process', 'the individual', 'the situation', and 'taking what has been learned and applying it to a new situation.

## **2. Research Background**

Before discussing how foreign language education may help students develop skills required for the 21st Century, it is essential to understand how EFL education in Japan has evolved over the centuries. This discussion will highlight approaches and factors that have influenced pedagogical design and learning objectives over some time.

Generally, the approach to EFL education in Japan is dual-focused. On the one hand, foreign language education prepares students for national university entrance examinations. On the other hand, it develops core competencies required to compete globally. The dual aims have been a direct result of the history of education in Japan, national policy guidelines, economic strategies, technological advancements, and the interconnectedness of global communities. Over the centuries, there has been a range of approaches. These include the audio-lingual teaching methodology, the grammar-translation approach, the Communicative Language Technique (CLT), and more inclusive approaches that seek to help students develop language learning skills and critical thinking skills.

Some of Japan's earliest developments in foreign language education were during the Meiji Era (1868 - 1912). There was a goal to acquire knowledge and teach about technological advancements and concepts of modernization<sup>3</sup>. Teachers from western countries relocated to Japan to teach science, medicine, and technology. Furthermore, in 1871, students from Japan started traveling to western countries to study technology, politics, and education. Additionally, the first governing body with responsibilities for education started, and English became the primary medium of instruction. To this end, English became a requirement for middle school students and was optional for elementary school students<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> National Research Council, pp. 5, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006, pp 265 - 267.

<sup>4</sup> Koike & Tanaka, 1995.

English education continued throughout the 13 years of the Taisho Era (1912 - 1926). The government invited H. E. Palmer to promote the audio-lingual teaching methodology<sup>5</sup>. The approach helped to develop listening and speaking skills by allowing students to hear and repeat words and phrases<sup>6</sup>. This approach is still being used in classrooms today and is critical for helping students develop core language learning skills and the confidence to use acquired vocabulary. With the development in technology, applications are now available on hand-held devices that promote this approach.

Additionally, the Internet has allowed for greater access to information. Consequently, students can listen to music, watch movies and even take online classes.

At the end of the Second World War during the Showa Era (1926 – 1989), US Occupation significantly influenced Japan's education system. Developments include introducing new testing systems, such as the Jitsuyou Eigo Kentei in 1963 and TOEIC in 1979. Additionally, there was an increase in the number of Japanese businesses that wanted to compete globally, and there were preparations for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics and the 1970 World International Exposition in Osaka<sup>7</sup>. To this end, the audio-lingual approach gained increased popularity. Furthermore, technological developments and more cross-cultural interaction led to a call for a pedagogical design that would emphasize using the Communicative Language Technique (CLT) in the classroom. Communicative techniques appeared in the policy guidelines in 1989<sup>8</sup>. Developments led to the launch of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program in 1987<sup>9</sup>.

Additionally, English tests started in senior high school entrance examinations<sup>10</sup>. Such changes resulted in the widespread use of the method emphasizing reading and translating from Japanese to English (yakudoku method). With developments in teacher education and access to best practices, there have been changes in how the approaches are interpreted and used in the pedagogical design. Textbooks and other resources have also used the methods in their design. Consequently, students experience various learning approaches. Moreover, younger students and teachers were born during an age where technology is not considered foreign and where such developments in learning approaches are also significant for motivation and student engagement.

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<sup>5</sup> Hosoki, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Imura, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Tahira, 2012, pp 4.

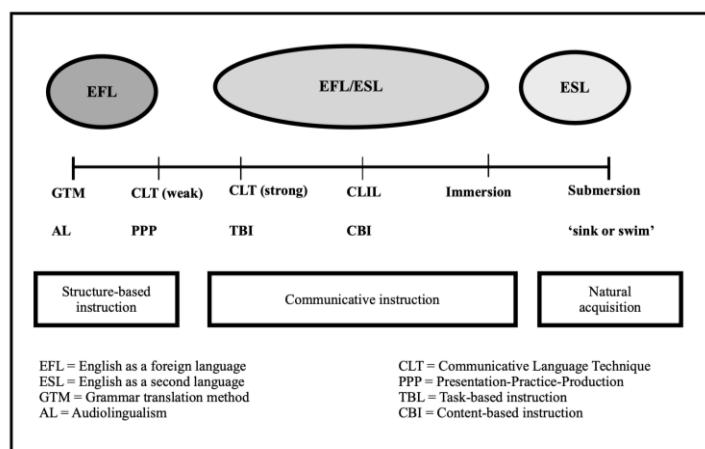
<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp 5.

<sup>9</sup> The Council of Local Authorities for International Relation (CLAIR), 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Butler & Iino, 2005.

As a result of rapid technological advances during the Heisei Era (1989 – 2019), practical English usage became even more popular. Studying English for examinations also gained popularity<sup>11,12</sup>. There was an increase in the number of people who traveled abroad and in the number of people from other countries who started to visit, work, and live in Japan. Additionally, the Internet and technological developments have become increasingly accessible. In order to prepare for greater cross-cultural exposure and global competitiveness, more emphasis should be on communication, globalization, cultural diversity, and international understanding. Additionally, the government created an "Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities"<sup>13,14,15</sup>.

Before the Reiwa Era (2019 - present), there were increasing calls for pedagogy that would prepare students to use English to think, judge, and express themselves. The following continuum illustrates the changes in EFL teaching approaches. It maps the approaches mentioned in this discussion and highlights the roles that such approaches can play in helping to promote both grammar and lexis in language learning, along with facilitating the development of cognitive skills.



**Figure 1. A Continuum of English Language Teaching Methodologies.**

<sup>11</sup> Fujimoto-Adamson, Globalization, op. cit., pp. 277 - 278.

<sup>12</sup> Tahira, op. cit., pp. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Glasgow & Paller, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Tahira, op. cit., pp. 4.

To the extreme left of the continuum, some approaches focus on grammar and fundamental understanding that can occur under structure-based instruction. Further along the continuum, there are more communicative approaches. They present an opportunity for students to memorize, describe, or explain a phenomenon in English. However, they do not directly promote the development of English language skills that help students to analyze, evaluate, create, or communicate critically in a globalized context. One approach for helping students to develop Higher-Order thinking skills is immersion-based education. While there are more opportunities for exposure to immersion in EFL education in Japan, there are also several drawbacks. There are factors such as the lack of financial resources, instability and safety concerns, and the recent pandemic. As a result, there should be localized pedagogical approaches that mirror immersion.

One of the main characteristics of immersion education is the use of content and language as the mediums of instruction<sup>16</sup>. CLIL and Content-based Instruction (CBI) are two content-oriented approaches on the continuum. They are at the same point on the continuum next to the immersion approach. Ikeda<sup>17</sup> suggests similarities include (1) the use of the content, (2) the use of language, and (3) the learning theory in which they are both grounded. According to Coyle et al.<sup>18</sup>, the factor that differentiates the two is the degree to which they approach the relationship between content and language. Coyle et al.<sup>19</sup> suggest that task-based instruction, such as CBI, focuses on the relationship between language and content based on specific grammar or language objectives. On the other hand, the CLIL approach focuses on an integrated relationship between language and content in the learning process<sup>20</sup>. CLIL has a distinct advantage. This advantage places the use of the CLIL approach closer to the practice of immersion in language acquisition. Consequently, this approach promotes foreign language learning skills needed to prepare for the 21st Century situations where nations are increasingly interdependent.

Nations are increasingly interconnected, and problems faced in localized regions have proven to have a global effect. Therefore, it is essential to equip students with tools that help them communicate, share ideas, exchange opinions, and contribute to problem-solving. Such goals have had a significant impact on the approach to pedagogy worldwide. Global Stakeholders have been making an effort to understand the future of education. The development of 21st Century Skills has received much attention. The National Research Council in the United States suggests that the competencies that are important for achieving the 21st Century Skills may be categorized as follows: 1. cognitive (concerning thinking skills), 2. intra-personal (related to self-

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<sup>16</sup> Ball, Kelly, and Clegg, 2015, pp 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ikeda, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Coyle, Hood, and Marsh, 2010, pp 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

management), and 3. inter-personal (concerning how one relates to and shares information with others)<sup>21</sup>. There is a greater need for pedagogical mechanisms which aim to achieve deep learning. Deep learning suggests that the focus of education should extend beyond preparing students for assessments and examinations. Instead, it should seek to equip students with the skills required to 1. engage meaningfully in the learning process and 2. apply what they have learned in the classroom to new situations.

One crucial question is, 'What is the rationale for using the 'Soft' CLIL approach in promoting deep learning among senior high school EFL students in Japan?' In order to answer this question, it is critical to understand the CLIL approach and the roles of the 'Soft' CLIL approach in the language learning classroom.

### **3. 'Soft CLIL in the Foreign Language Classroom**

'Soft' CLIL is one of the two versions of CLIL. CLIL is a comprehensive learning approach introduced in Europe in the 1990s, with the aim of teaching and learning subjects in a second language<sup>22,23</sup>. The approach combines various educational practices to help students learn a subject's content or develop language learning skills<sup>24,25</sup>. The 'Hard' version of CLIL focuses predominantly on the content objectives, while the 'Soft' CLIL classroom focuses on broader linguistic objectives<sup>26,27</sup>. Furthermore, instruction time is usually a fraction of the hours available for the given subject over some time<sup>28,29,30</sup>. Given the nature of the 'Soft' CLIL approach, the following seeks to explain its use in promoting deep learning among senior high school EFL students in Japan.

### **4. Rationale for Promoting Deep Learning through 'Soft' CLIL**

First, the 'Soft' CLIL teacher is allowed to design a lesson based on objectives that he/she believes students need to improve on or skills that the students need to acquire<sup>31,32</sup>. Additionally, the 'Soft' CLIL teacher can use extended periods to teach and evaluate the skills during the school year. On the other hand, regular subject hours are primarily devoted to preparing students for internal and external examinations and completing assigned materials from textbooks, which usually focus on grammar-

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<sup>21</sup> National Research Council, no date, pp. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ball et al., op. cit., pp. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Coyle et al., op. cit., pp. 4 - 5.

<sup>24</sup> Ball et al., op. cit., pp. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Coyle et al., op. cit., pp. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ball et al., op. cit., pp. 5 - 6.

<sup>27</sup> Coyle et al., op. cit., pp. 10 - 11.

<sup>28</sup> Ball et al., op. cit., pp. 17.

<sup>29</sup> Coyle & Meyer, 2021, pp 9 - 11.

<sup>30</sup> Coyle et al., op. cit., pp. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Ball et al., op. cit., pp. 26 - 27.

<sup>32</sup> Coyle et al., op. cit., pp. 14.

based instruction<sup>33,34,35</sup>. In the Japanese EFL classroom, 'Soft' CLIL lessons may be taught during team teaching hours. Such lessons allow students to study English in English with a Native Teacher of English as a Foreign Language and a Japanese Teacher of English as a Foreign Language. One or both teachers may determine the academic goals of those lessons. The teachers are also responsible for deciding the terms of the evaluation.

Second, when designing 'Soft' CLIL lessons, the teachers can choose the instructional content<sup>36,37</sup>. As a result, teachers are likely to consider academically rigorous content that is inspiring for students. Additionally, students may be able to use a variety of mediums to learn about a topic, and multiple approaches may allow students to practice and produce language in the learning environment. Teachers may include the use of technology and other innovative learning systems. While teachers are encouraged to be creative in the CLIL classroom, there is concern about 1. the time required to design instructional material and 2. the authenticity and academic nature of the selected content. Therefore, it is essential to source content and materials from reputable sources that meet the curricula objectives<sup>38,39</sup>. Moreover, it is the responsibility of educators to ensure that materials meet quality standards. For pedagogy design, such standards are in local, regional, national, and even international educational standard guidelines.

Third, even though we have considered the freedom to decide 1. how to utilize the available class times and 2. the types of instructional materials, there is another critical reason why the 'Soft' CLIL approach was selected. It is because the 'Soft' CLIL approach uses language as a vehicle to learn content<sup>40,41</sup>. Consequently, students can develop their linguistic abilities while learning through various content-oriented materials. They will also be able to use language extensively during the learning process. Moreover, the 'Soft' CLIL classroom allows students to engage in language learning in a shared environment resembling community interaction. Therefore, the lessons allow students to engage through language. To this end, the CLIL approach prioritizes the 4 Cs framework- Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture<sup>42</sup>. Through the 4Cs framework, students are engaged in an active learning environment that promotes the development of higher-order thinking skills through application, analysis,

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<sup>33</sup> Fujimoto-Adamson, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Glasgow, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Tahira, op. cit., pp. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ball et al., 2015, op. cit., pp. 26 - 27.

<sup>37</sup> Coyle et al., 2010, op. cit., pp. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Ikeda, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Ball et al., 2015, op. cit., pp. 105.

<sup>40</sup> Ball et al., op. cit., pp. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Coyle et al., op. cit., pp. 40.

<sup>42</sup> Coyle et al., op. cit., pp. 41 - 42.

synthesis, and evaluation<sup>43,44,45</sup>. Furthermore, through quality practice, students may be better able to utilize their long-term memory in the 'Soft' CLIL classroom, thereby allowing them to apply what they study in the classroom to other situations<sup>46</sup>. This type of thorough practice within the classroom may further promote deep learning.

The paper is a part of the ongoing post-graduate research thesis that assesses the impact of the CLIL approach on students' cognitive abilities. Cognition is seen as extremely important to the language learning environment because it uses activities that help students to develop and utilize thinking and application skills<sup>47</sup>. It may also prove helpful when students are required to produce the language in a real-world context or during examinations. The CLIL approach may help students to 1. prepare for national center examinations in Japan and 2. apply what they learn in the classroom to more practical contexts beyond the classroom.

The paper will provide a theoretical overview of how the 'Soft' CLIL approach may help promote deep learning among my students. Based on over a decade of personal experience and observation in Japan's EFL classroom, students often need help with writing and speaking their opinions in English. This language skill is essential for their senior high school careers and may also be helpful in university and adulthood. Furthermore, MEXT Policy guidelines ask educators to prepare students to use the English language to think, judge, and express themselves. The skill of expressing one's opinion must be taught in the language-learning classroom primarily because this skill varies based on culture<sup>48</sup>. Kaplan suggested that culture influences our communicative styles in his research. He suggests that EFL students in the Japanese classroom may express themselves cyclically.

His findings suggested that the typical native speaker may express his opinions linearly and directly. Consequently, people in different regions use different methods to express their opinions. For example, the English language uses a more logical order that states opinions, expands on opinions through reasons and explanations, and closes the thought in a straightforward manner, such as by restating the opinion. Teaching this skill requires the expertise and the time to correct students' work and provide feedback. However, based on the current demands on Japanese Teachers of English, they may need help to teach such skills in depth and check students' writing extensively.

Another vital point to note is that it is unlikely that a single Japanese teacher of English will teach all the students in a particular year group. On the other hand, in the professional learning environment, there is only one Native Teacher of English as a

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<sup>43</sup> Ball et al., op. cit., pp. 55.

<sup>44</sup> Coyle et al., op. cit., pp. 29 - 30.

<sup>45</sup> Ikeda, 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Coyle & Meyer, op. cit., pp. 9 - 11.

<sup>47</sup> Graham, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Kaplan, 1966.

Foreign Language for the group of students under observation. As such, there is a unique advantage for the students and this research. The teachers can design a learning plan based on the 'Soft' CLIL approach through collaboration. The lessons' goals will be to teach and evaluate for deep learning related to the skills of using the English language to 1. clearly and logically share opinions, 2. listen to the opinions shared by others, and 3. provide a clear and logical refutation.

## 5. 'Soft' CLIL in Practice

Following is a discussion about how teachers can facilitate deep learning in the professional learning environment through 'Soft' CLIL. The key terms previously identified from the definition of deep learning will guide the discussion in the following section. A discussion will follow on the potential implications of using deliberate practice under this pedagogical framework. The key terms are:

- The Individual
- The Situation
- The Process
- Applying learning to new contexts

## 6. The Individual

The research will observe first-year senior high school students in one of Japan's private high schools. There are six classes: 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E and 1F. On average, each class consists of 42 students, with a larger number of girls in each grade. Students study in two groups for English lessons based on their grades in each class. Each class has a group 'A' and 'B'. Approximately 50% of the students from each class are in group 'A'—students who performed best in the previous test, based on the class and stream averages. Group B in each class consists of students who have performed below average, based on the evaluation system. Students use MEXT-approved textbooks and study English for 6 class periods each week. They study Communication English for 3 class periods, English Expressions for 2 class periods, and team-taught English lessons for 1 class period per week. Each class period takes 50 minutes—students study to prepare for national center examinations, which will allow them to enter university. In principle, instructions and evaluation follow the Course of Study Guidelines that MEXT publishes. Consequently, teachers teach students to develop key language learning skills, i.e., speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Additionally, lessons seek to teach students to develop the skillsets to think, judge, and express themselves in English.

The goals of the 'Soft' CLIL lesson in this situation are to have students:

1. Use the triangle debate method to learn content-oriented topics through reading and listening.
2. Think in depth about their opinions, and express their thoughts through writing and speaking.
3. Listen to the opinions shared by their classmates and offer a refutation during the debate process.

## 7. The Situation

The learning situation will utilize the triangle debate method for one class period per week over three semesters. The goal is to create opportunities for students to write, speak, listen, think, judge, and express themselves through the English language, by exchanging ideas in a shared and active learning environment.

In order to ensure that the instruction and evaluation processes are fair and the research process is ethical, the following schedule is ideal. The framework of this schedule will ensure that there is a treatment group as well as a control group. Most importantly, it ensures that both groups of students can benefit from the 'Soft' CLIL approach. An evaluation will assess learning outcomes using a pre-test and a post-test. Following is an example of the schedule:

**Table 1. Schedule for 'Soft' CLIL Lessons.**

	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3
Group A	Triangle Debate	Triangle Debate	Writing and Presentation Project
Group B	Introductory Writing and Speaking Activities	Triangle Debate	Writing and Presentation Project
Evaluation	Group A: Triangle Debate Group B: Speaking	Triangle Debate	Writing and Presentation Test

The decision to introduce triangle debate to Group A in semester one and Group B in semester 2 is fair, and not only to ensure a treatment and control group in the study. Instead, this decision is because some students in Group B experience fundamental difficulties. As such, the students require more assistance in all 6 class periods starting their senior high school careers. Difficulties include the inability to form letters; for example, some students write 'bog' instead of 'dog'. Another reason is that some students need to gain the vocabulary required to speak and express their opinions, even about elementary topics.

Furthermore, in some cases, the student's Academic Language Proficiency Skills may need to be improved to listen, read or produce English in a manner that will allow them to think, judge, and express themselves in English. Therefore, it is best to do basic exercises with such students during semester one. The first semester also allows the teachers to build a rapport with students through English lessons. Teachers can build a motivational campaign to encourage students to develop a respectable appreciation for studying English as a Foreign Language.

In the third semester, students will receive a topic that they will be able to understand. They will write a speech to share their opinions on the given topic. Teachers will assess how well students understand and apply what they have learned during the 'Soft' CLIL lessons. Students will be evaluated based on their ability to think, judge, and express their opinions. They will also be evaluated based on their abilities to express their opinions clearly and logically.

## 8. The Process

Teachers will teach a simple system. Students will use the structural format to write and communicate their opinions. The system is the OREO Method: 'O' refers to opinion, 'R' refers to reason, 'E' refers to example/explanation/evidence, and 'O' refers to the restated opinion. For example, if students were to use the OREO Method to write about the following topic: 'which do you like better, cats or dogs?' The structural format of the answer would resemble the following:

'I like dogs better than cats. It is because dogs are smart. For example, dogs often help blind people. So, I like dogs better than cats.'

Students will be taught the method in steps appropriate to their English proficiency levels. During the learning process, students will have several opportunities to share their opinions on various topics. Activities will be done individually, in pairs, or groups.

Once students become familiar with the OREO Method, they will learn the triangle debate format. A triangle debate consists of three members; the affirmative, the negative, and the judge. The affirmative side will support the moot, the opposing side will argue against the moot, and the judge will be responsible for leading the debate and choosing a winner. Before starting the debate, the teachers will decide on an appropriate content-oriented topic and select the necessary learning resources. The topics may include issues in their daily lives or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the first class period, students will learn about the topic and discuss their ideas with their classmates using Japanese and English. The students will then use an OREO Method worksheet to write both an affirmative and a negative opinion about the chosen topic. The Native Teacher of English as a Foreign Language will check the students' writings and return the worksheets to the students during the following class period. During the second class period, students will review an example sheet the teachers have prepared. The example sheet will show a 'good example' and a 'bad example' for writing their opinions on the given topic. This sheet will be given in the second class to allow students to think independently when they first decide on their opinions. Finally, students will review the corrected worksheet, rewrite their opinions in an essay format in their notebooks, and prepare for the triangle debate.

Each round of a triangle debate usually takes between 10 and 15 minutes. So students can play all three roles in the debate during one class period. Following the debates,

the teachers will have students write their opinions again on a new worksheet and record their opinions from memory on their iPads. Each Student has his/her iPad, so students will complete this as a homework assignment. Students will submit their work via the approved online learning platform. The teachers will use evaluation criteria to check how well students could demonstrate their understanding of the OREO Method. The teacher will provide students feedback based on the areas that seem most difficult for them.

Based on the most common challenges identified, the teachers will create a video file for students to engage in deliberate practice independently.

## **9. Applying to New Situations**

A post-test will evaluate students during the third semester. The students will be asked to write and present their opinions on an assigned topic. A rubric will be used to evaluate how well students can use the OREO Method to express their opinions.

## **10. Implications for Practice**

There are various implications for using practice during this 'Soft' CLIL lesson. 'Soft' CLIL and the triangle debate system are common in Japan's English as a Foreign Language classroom. What is unique to the classroom and the available body of research is the deliberate practice in 'Soft' CLIL. Deliberate practice is the work of the world-leading expert on research concerning expertise, Anders Ericsson. It is measured and intentional practice under the supervision of an expert coach who provides feedback and strategies for improving the most challenging areas over an extended period<sup>49,50</sup>. Throughout this research, I have become interested in how students learn. Neurological and psychological interventions may influence student learning and contribute to deep learning. I first encountered the term deliberate practice while reading the book GRIT<sup>51</sup>. Duckworth provided an argument about the deliberate practice that immediately inspired my passion for understanding as much as possible about the approach that leaders use globally in areas such as the arts, sports, and memory development.

However, having multiple opportunities to practice is only one of the goals of deliberate practice. It is merely a means through which students can engage in the quality practice. Through deliberate practice in our 'Soft' CLIL lessons, students will be able to

1. improve the skill of sharing their opinions,
2. develop the quality of expressing their thoughts through a foreign language, and
3. develop their academic linguistic abilities.

Students will have opportunities to practice writing and speaking about their opinions. Additionally, they will have chances to listen to their classmates' opinions.

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<sup>49</sup> Ericsson & Pool, 2016, pp 98 - 100.

<sup>50</sup> Fogarty, Kerns, and Pete, 2018, pp 18.

<sup>51</sup> Duckworth, 2016.

Through extensive reading, I have realized that there needs to be more research on using deliberate practice in CLIL to evaluate its impact on learning. There are, however, calls for another cognitive approach called the Transfer-Appropriate Processing (TAP) theory. According to research<sup>52</sup>, 'people are generally faster or more efficient in performing a task on a stimulus when there has been a previous experience in performing the same task on the same stimulus.' They further state that the TAP theory 'focuses on particular episodic events - that is, the interaction of particular mental acts with particular stimulus situations.' In addition, it emphasizes memory, based on the ability to apply knowledge to a similar stimulus<sup>53</sup>. However, deep learning further requires students to recall what they have learned in one particular situation and apply it to similar situations. It aims to prepare students to apply what they have learned in new situations—applying to new situations requires short-term and long-term memory.

Research on deliberate practice across various fields has noted the impact of myelin and mental representations, which have an impact on short-term and long-term memory<sup>54,55,56</sup>. Neurological research conducted by Coyle<sup>57</sup> shows the relationship between practice or repetition and the physical changes that occur in the brain. As practice or repetition increases, so does the amount of myelin<sup>58</sup>. In the field of cognitive psychology and expertise, there is research on the impact of mental representations on memory. It suggests that meaning influences memory<sup>59</sup>. Based on these findings, deliberate practice in this 'Soft' CLIL classroom may promote deep learning. The more students practice, the more changes they may experience in their physical brains that contribute to memory development.

Additionally, as students develop knowledge and make meaning of what they are learning, they may be better able to apply it to future situations. Both situations suggest that deliberate practice promotes deep learning, allowing students to remember and apply knowledge in future situations. However, deliberate practice requires more than hours of repetition.

First, it demands that students know what and how they will be evaluated<sup>60</sup>. To this end, students should understand the evaluation criteria and have excellent and bad

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<sup>52</sup> Franks, Bilbrey, Lien, and McNamara, p. 1140, 2000.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Coyle, 2009, pp 40.

<sup>55</sup> Ericsson & Pool, op. cit., pp. 66.

<sup>56</sup> Fogarty et al., op. cit., pp. 6 - 7.

<sup>57</sup> Coyle, op. cit., pp. 40.

<sup>58</sup> Coyle, op. cit., pp. 40.

<sup>59</sup> Ericsson & Pool, op. cit., pp. 55 - 57.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp 99.

examples of the work they will produce. Second, students must commit time and energy to practice the right thing<sup>61</sup>. Third, students should practice under the guidance of a knowledgeable 'coach'; in this situation, the teachers will be the coaches<sup>62</sup>.

The teachers should have extensive knowledge about the skill. Furthermore, the teacher should be able to guide the students and help them to develop the required skillset. Consequently, the teacher should be aware of the strategies to help students. Additionally, the teacher should understand the evaluation process to ensure that evaluations are fair and consistent. Of significant importance, the teacher should also be aware of less than-acceptable practices that students may engage in when they are choosing to settle for 'good enough' rather than reaching to improve.

## 11. Conclusion

Scientists have used several cognitive theories to suggest the conditions under which learning occurs. In addition to the Transfer-appropriate Processing theory (TAP), there are the (1) Socio-cultural theory, (2) Cognitive-interactionist SLA, and (3) Multi-feature hypothesis and connection. The Socio-cultural theory suggests that learning occurs through learner participation in social interaction. On the other hand, the Cognitive-interactionist SLA also considers the role of interaction in the learning process. However, it emphasizes the effects of interaction based on its potential effect on the learners' mental process. The Multi-feature hypothesis and connectionism consider how the depth of processing while students are involved in task-based activities influences learning.

Deliberate practice uniquely considers the social environment, mental representations, depth of processing, and quantity of the tasks that will lead to learning. Unlike the TAP and aforementioned cognitive theories, which measure success based on particular stimuli, the deliberate practice theory focuses on how learners can transfer knowledge to new situations. Consequently, using the deliberate practice theory in the CLIL classroom promotes foreign language learning skills needed to prepare students for the 21st Century situations where nations are increasingly interdependent. Additionally, it helps to prepare students for unpredictable situations, where they may use a learned skill to negotiate, express themselves or understand meaning.

The idea of deliberate practice is for more than just experts. It is also for people who want to improve just a little. Therefore, it applies to the 'Soft' CLIL classroom. However, teachers must carefully consider what students are learning and practicing. Students can practice the correct or incorrect thing. The teacher is responsible for understanding what students are practicing and ensuring they reach out to improve their skills. To that end, all stakeholders should remain cognizant of the assessment rubric and how to use that information to get the best student results. Of crucial importance is that the 'most challenging' learning points require many practice hours. Therefore,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp 98 - 99.

teachers should be creative and proactive in creating resources to help students deliberately practice the most challenging learning points.

Based on the data that supports the deliberate practice and the empirical studies that have documented its success, the deliberate practice may help promote deep learning in our 'Soft' CLIL classroom. Deliberate practice emphasizes using mental representations to learn and apply even under new situations.

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