



# CLIL Curriculum Implementation in Higher Education: Constructing Processes of CLIL Teacher Identity

*Aplicación del plan de estudios AICLE en la enseñanza superior:  
procesos de construcción de la identidad del profesor de AICLE*

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**ABSTRACT.** This study responds to the curricular innovation trends in higher education (HE), which is gradually leaning toward content and language-integrated learning (CLIL) pedagogy. This study features CLIL curriculum implementation from the bottom-up perspective in HE institutions in the Japanese context by focusing on language lecturers' transformation into CLIL practitioners within a university language center. The qualitative study contemplates lecturers' ideological dispositions, attitudes, and concerns toward the transition to CLIL pedagogy along with the language center's overarching external and internal contextual factors and teaching and learning practices as a workgroup. It applies the teaching and learning regimes theory (TLR) to synthesize enhancement implications for the institutions undergoing similar curricular reforms in the form of increasing lecturers' ownership and feeling of belonging. The data collected through semi-structured interviews revealed congruence between the ideological underpinnings of the lecturers and the CLIL curricular objectives. TLR theory, which distinguishes the practices of the workgroup for comprehending the change mechanisms, is employed to emphasize the insufficiency of philosophical compatibility on the teachers' subjective level and the criticality of pragmatic enhancement initiatives to increase salience and profitability as a mandatory condition for maintaining the sustainability of the innovation. This study appeals to department administrators, teachers' educators, and future CLIL practitioners and contains valuable insights into the normalization of CLIL practices in multiple higher education contexts.

**Keywords:** CLIL curriculum implementation; social-practice theory; content-language integrated learning; teacher agency transformation.

**RESUMEN.** Este estudio responde a las tendencias de innovación curricular en la enseñanza superior (ES), que se inclina gradualmente hacia la pedagogía del aprendizaje integrado de contenidos y lenguas (AICLE). Este estudio presenta la implementación del plan de estudios AICLE desde una perspectiva ascendente en instituciones de ES en el contexto japonés, centrándose en la transformación de los profesores de idiomas en profesionales AICLE dentro de un centro de idiomas universitario. El estudio cualitativo contempla las disposiciones ideológicas, actitudes y preocupaciones de los profesores hacia la transición a la pedagogía AICLE, junto con los factores contextuales externos e internos del centro de idiomas y las prácticas de enseñanza y aprendizaje como grupo de trabajo. Aplica la teoría de los regímenes de enseñanza y aprendizaje (TLR) para sintetizar implicaciones de mejora para las instituciones que emprenden reformas curriculares similares en forma de aumento de la apropiación y el sentimiento de pertenencia de los profesores. Los datos recogidos mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas revelaron la congruencia entre los fundamentos ideológicos de los profesores y los objetivos curriculares del AICLE. La teoría TLR, que distingue las prácticas del grupo de trabajo para comprender los mecanismos de cambio, se emplea para subrayar la insuficiencia de la compatibilidad filosófica en el plano subjetivo de los profesores y la criticidad de las iniciativas pragmáticas de mejora para aumentar la saliencia y la rentabilidad como condición obligatoria para mantener la sostenibilidad de la innovación. Este estudio es de interés para administradores de departamentos, formadores de profesores y futuros profesionales del AICLE, y contiene valiosas reflexiones sobre la normalización de las prácticas de AICLE en múltiples contextos de educación superior.

**Palabras clave:** Aplicación del plan de estudios AICLE; teoría de la práctica social; aprendizaje integrado de contenidos y lenguas; transformación de la agencia del profesor.

## Introduction

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The impetus for this study is the core curriculum changes in a language center at a private university in Japan that reflect the globalization trends in governmental policy concerning the bilingual delivery modes (e.g., EMI, CLIL) of foreign language instruction that started to dominate the local higher education (HE) landscape in recent years. The current sources document the moderately increasing popularity of the approach in HE institutions in the recent decade with empirical evidence of significant improvement in the learners' language skills (e.g., Hashimoto & Glasgow, 2019). However, despite the escalating number of institutions implementing the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) curricula, the existing research on its implementational challenges in the Japanese HE context at the institutional level is insufficient. It overlooks the complexities of teacher ownership consideration within the process. Bradford (2020) attempted to raise awareness of policy implications by suggesting four categories for enhancement of implementation procedures in the universities that have adopted content-based curricula—linguistic, administrative, institutional, and cultural. The categories represented the standpoints of the student population, administrators, and Japanese professors. Despite being the active key figures in policy reception and enactment, the perspective of the non-Japanese language lecturers remained unclear, and their input was scarcely represented in the literature.

Empirical research in international contexts implies the complexity of the issue based on the observations of the increased emotional burden of the language lecturers caused by CLIL curriculum enactment in the European context, which has been featured in Gkonou et al. (2020). In the Japanese context, the literature problematizes the future enactment of the CLIL curriculum by depicting the language teachers' concern for "a lot of time for material development and lesson preparations" (Ikeda et al., 2021). With this said, the nature of the work is rather descriptive and does not offer a theory-rooted view of institutional culture, practices, and dynamics that can justify the successful reception of the curriculum change or suggest otherwise. The current study expands the understanding of new policy through

the empirical example of CLIL curriculum reception and implementation through theoretical lenses and contributes to the development of the theory of change that is underrepresented in SPT (social-practice theory) by identifying patterns of workgroup dynamics and generating applicable enhancement strategies for mediating CLIL curriculum implementation in other contexts that benefit a wide range of stakeholders—teachers-educators, administrative staff, and lecturers with limited institutional CLIL experience.

The Japanese private university that served as a study setting started a new journey towards an internationalized educational environment after the Japanese government chose the institution to participate in the “Top Global University Project” (TGU) in 2014, a program designed to identify and support internationalization-oriented universities (TGU, 2014). As part of the globalization project, it launched an upscale English curriculum reform for undergraduate programs in 2024 with an extended variety of content courses delivered in English to meet the emergent needs of society, including CLIL and EMI-infused modules. This innovation foreseeded the development of knowledge and cognitive skills through a content-integrated program with English instruction integrated into the existing language-focused curriculum.

In addition to pedagogical initiatives, structural and administrative changes took place to accommodate the revised curriculum purports. The most relevant for this study is the establishment of the new language center in 2020. The center is a merger of two language departments and is in charge of the efficient delivery of mandatory and elective language courses to the student body of the university. In this study, it is defined as a workgroup, a regime, with sustainable practices generated over time and shared group values that influence the trajectory of innovation. As the objectives imply, the study highlights the mechanisms of bottom-up curriculum implementation in a center from a functional perspective. Trowler’s (2020) SPT-informed teaching and learning regimes theory (TLR) was employed to conceptualize the nature of pedagogical practices, assess the reception of the policy change, and propose enhancement initiatives for the sustainable implementation of the initiative in similar contexts.

The data was collected in one-on-one interviews with six center lecturers who were actively involved in the implementation and

enactment process and willing to share their standpoints on CLIL curriculum development at University X. In addition, the study utilizes official information from the university's website and the available literature on the lecturers' professional qualities and nuances of CLIL implementation in the Japanese context to clarify the dominant variants of the workgroup cultural practice. The targeted research questions were:

1. What are lecturers' academic professional backgrounds and ideological values in regard to CLIL curricular change?
2. What are external and internal contextual factors that framed the innovation proceedings and affected the course of implementation?
3. Using the notion of the TLR theory what were the most dominant moments for policy change in this study?
4. What valuable insights and limiting perspectives does TLR theory reveal about implementation considerations of the CLIL-based curriculum in the university language centers?

## Literature Review

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### Language teachers' perceptions of CLIL practices

It has been argued that CLIL curriculum can present an unexpected burden on language lecturers in HE institutions (Kim & Lee, 2020). Jendrych (2017) argues that the emergence of CLIL developments within EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) have posed challenges for language teachers in HE, requiring them to possess higher qualifications, such as discipline-specific knowledge and transferable academic skills. These increased demands can lead to difficulties, constraints, and negative attitudes among language teachers, who may perceive them as a threat to their professional status and identity (e.g., Jendrych, 2013; Dale et al., 2018). Furthermore, existing research on practitioners' perceptions has primarily focused on socio-psychological complexity such as teachers' motivation, commitment, and engagement levels (e.g., Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2017), rather than delving into their pedagogical understanding of the CLIL approach and ideological stance.

Although some studies have attempted to identify methodological commonalities in CLIL settings (Czura & Papaja, 2013), they consistently highlight a significant gap: The lack of effective implementation guidelines across different contexts. This gap is likely linked to the absence of a widely accepted theoretical framework underpinning the teachers' positionality concerning the primary CLIL principles. Furthermore, the existing literature has signaled controversies in areas such as the use of L1 and translanguaging, the quality of content learning, insufficient teacher collaboration, and inadequate methodological training (e.g., San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2020). However, despite these discussions, there remains a notable scarcity of research focusing on teachers' views on classroom practices that define CLIL as a distinct pedagogical approach, particularly in terms of curriculum integration, teacher collaboration, and professional support (e.g., Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020). This study will address this gap by utilizing TLR theory to generate input on lecturers ideological underpinnings constructed within a workgroup.

### **Social Practice Theory**

The study adopts the theoretical framework of TLR to assess the variables that impact the reception of policy changes. Since TLR is rooted in SPT, it is essential to establish a basic understanding of its underpinnings. The focus of a practice-based approach is on "practices" rather than the agents themselves and the wide range of routines they are engaged in that can include meaning negotiation, identity development, and other activities (Nicolini, 2012). Agent's practices are unconsciously reproduced and transformed by the social structures that act as sources of power. Practices involve material dimensions such as an uneven struggle for control over resources, power, and discursive and knowledge practices (e.g., Giddens, 1984). Several SPT-drawn theoretical frameworks could be considered for this study. For instance, the "communities of practice" approach features the cultural like-mindedness of working groups (Wenger, 1998). However, the term "community" presumes the meaning of mutual ideological understanding and lack of conflict and therefore lessens the complexity of the case.

Trowler (2020) substantializes the explanatory power of TLR as a theory in adding the concept of practice sensibility that can be developed by the change agents and built on the combination of 11 moments with intangible proto-practice reservoirs that include educational ideologies, discourses, symbolic structures, and the convention of the change agents. They also “feed” some of the TLR moments. TLR is influenced by contextual factors such as power relations, material context, practice architectures, and all that can be found in the moments of the local TLR. The deployment of practice sensibility to diagnose the trajectory of curriculum policy change within a university language center in this study is unique and will result in implications for other such centers.

TLR theory holistically employs ethnographical methodological elements and investigates moments of working culture in workgroups overtime at the institutional level. This department level can be considered primary since academics engage over time with the task of delivering the curriculum in their immediate departments. Teaching and learning regimes are defined as “open, natural systems that are conditioned by structural forces in the wider context.” The moments in the regimes and the agents, workgroups, are intertwined. They apply meanings negotiated within the regimes that develop the new initiatives, assess, and interact with the reality in the context (Trowler, 2008). These features imply the existence of both consensus and contest. Thus, the constellation of the moments acknowledges the existing assumptions, conventions, and practices overlooks the process of innovation and the degree of its challenge and justifies its enhancement or detriment in the context and is reflected in teachers’ ideological perceptions of the innovation, in this case, CLIL curriculum implementation.

## Methods

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Basic methodological dispositions of change in SPT emphasize on in-depth contextual contingency and practice focus. Contextuality allows generalization and therefore a broader implication of the concepts

under alternative conditions. Its nature is important in HE research as it allows the researchers to observe and analyze the changes over a period of time. Finally, practice is emergent as it connects past events and future post-change perspectives to the recurrent social reality (Trowler, 2013). This study has taken Yin's (2014) definition of the case study and adopted the stance that the choice of the case study should be guided by the research questions. The research objectives of this study are to use the explanatory power of TLR theory and answer the "why" question associated with the contemporary change process in the HE institution. It offers a holistic view of the process to enable the investigation of various aspects in the complicated TLR system, examines their interrelation, and the change process in the given contextual environment. Indeed, the data revealed such challenges as temporary contract conditions, institutional architecture, and power play. While I adopted the view of participation in curriculum implementation procedures as determined by the lecturers' backstories and working history, the natural choice for this project is an in-depth, close-up case study (Creswell, 2017).

### **Participants and Sampling**

The study was held in a private Japanese university over a period of one academic term, or 6 months. English language lecturers involved in the implementation process of the CLIL curriculum are referred to as change agents. The process involved three male and three female non-Japanese language instructors who were hired prior to or in the initial year of official center operations and took part in curriculum planning and preparation of the new CLIL curriculum. The lecturers had limited or no prior experience as CLIL practitioners. Because the timing is crucial for fulfilling the continuity condition of the TLR moments that consist of mutually-shared workgroup practices over an extended period of time, the chosen participants had shared working history in the new center. The second criterion is gender since research suggests that it affects academic identities as men and women possess contrasting attitudes towards teaching and learning practices (Deem and Lucas, 2006). I took the position of a full-time lecturer in the center in April 2020 and was employed during the same period as

the interviewees; this study qualifies as insider research, which according to Brannick and Coghlan (2007) is “research by complete members of organizational systems and communities in and on their own organizations” (p. 59). Insider research is problematic regarding the application of the researcher’s subjective ideological lenses (King, 1994); however, at the same time, established rapport and existent mutual context with interviewees have more value since they allow reflection on the contextual factors and ideological values correlation and constructively analyze the data.

### **Data Collection**

This study utilized semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis of curriculum-related areas of the university’s official website for further contextuality, and an interview with an assistant professor in the manager position for triangulation and corroborating evidence and accuracy validation to add a vital angularity (Creswell, 2017). The semi-structured questions with the embedded notion of TLR moments feature lecturers’ current pedagogical practices and beliefs, professional history, the working environment at the center, readiness for pedagogical practices’ shift, and more. Prior to the interviews, I conducted a brief textual analysis of the contextual factors and possible implications of the CLIL-based curriculum on the practices based on the accessible official sources to share with the interviewees. It served as a ‘mundanity breaker’ (Trowler, 2020) to invigorate the exchange. Data collection was conducted at the end of the academic year prior to the faculty development launch event. Due to ethical considerations and the sensibility of the matter, the participants were provided a choice of on-site or Zoom interview.

### **Data Analysis**

This study applied the thematic analysis principles of Braun and Clarke (2022). The primary data analysis was coded in two steps. The first phase generated an overall impression and outlined the categories of expectations and concerns. The second phase of coding elucidated the practices of the workgroup through the identification of

the relevant TLR moments and assessed the substantiality of change: Strength of intra-departmental and collegial connections, congruency of the change with the lecturers' professional beliefs, and more. The outcomes built to the theoretical discussion on enhancement perspectives ground in practice sensibility.

## Ethics

This study was ethically approved by Educational Research at Lancaster University and the research ethics committee of University X in Japan. Both groups of participants received an information sheet and provided written consent for utilizing their responses for research purposes. All the data was anonymized, pseudonyms given to participants, and stored in a university-based One Drive folder that could only be accessed by the researcher. All the information that could cause identification of the participants or research site was removed.

## Findings

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### Interconnectivity of Individual Values and Attitude to Change

This section conceptualizes the answers to research question 1: What are lecturers' academic professional qualities and ideological values relevant in regards to curricular change in general and in the course of the new CLIL curriculum implementation in the center? Since TLR moments and practices are maintained by proto-practice reservoirs of individual values, concepts, priorities, and discourses (Trowler 2020), the key objective here is to stress the agentic dynamism of the regime by capturing the contents of proto-practice reservoirs of the CLIL lecturers' at the center. The urgency for the above is emphasized by Fullan (1991) in a study on the role of the teachers in policy implementation and by Trowler (1997) in the query that illuminates the agentic role of academics in understanding change in the HE context.

The interviewees were asked to describe their respective backgrounds, attitudes towards the teaching profession, professional qualities of a "good teacher," key elements of their teaching style, collegial

reciprocity, learners' needs, and degree of possible involvement in the institutional curriculum in the light of the upcoming CLIL-based program. The themes that emerged from the interviews were reminiscent of some of the core qualities of a professional educator framework by Mcardle and Courtts (2003)—strength, confidence, ballast, and balance— that is exemplified below and followed by commentary.

1. Strength is seen as the ability of the teacher to act autonomously, express assertivity in their practices, and take certain responsibility for their actions. All the lecturers in the study indicated a strong inclination towards autonomous practices particularly in the area of CLIL lesson planning and individual material choices. Despite partial misconceptions and fragmentary knowledge of existing conceptions of CLIL, the lecturers demonstrated feasible conviction, preparedness, and resourcefulness in light of the upcoming practice shifts.

CLIL can give me freedom to apply a lot of concepts I have learned from experience; I developed original classes, I am proud of it, with CLIL there will be trial and error, but I love satisfying challenge. (Participant 1)

I'm very content-based. I also know what my students need! They are Japanese, English is not their first language. I know they need vocabulary words to study before the lectures. They need exercises to practice listening, discussion questions for them to react. Isn't that what CLIL is? (Participant 3)

2. Confidence is referred to as the ability to act in the context of uncertainty and express comfort with responsibility. The majority of the participants expressed confidence and preparedness to take responsibility over courses as electives have always been a major concept of recurrent randomized hence unpredictable scheduling practices in the institution. Regarding the CLIL-infused curriculum, the lecturers did not voice concerns related to curriculum structure or language integration but rather in regards to scheduling decisions of the department that can be detrimental to lecturers' professional confidence.

Before I interviewed for this job, I had no idea about what CLIL is. It's actually what I'm already doing, except that it actually has a name. (Participant 2)

In terms of content, I would like to know what I am talking about, something I majored at would be the best. I want to be given that choice by the scheduling committee. (Participant 4)

3. Ballast is defined as the stability of ideas and ideology. Absence of ballast can lead to instability of the practice. Schiro (2013), in his study on curricular ideologies in American schools, outlined four categories in curriculum ideologies studies that mirror HE context: 1) Scholar academic ideology - discipline development in curricular objectives; 2) Social social efficiency ideology—emphasis on students' employability as curriculum foundation; 3) Learner-centered ideology -prioritizes students' need and growth; 4) Social reconstructionism - promoting of social justice through curricular objectives. During the interviews, the ideological outlook became transparent in the discussion on good teaching practices and the attitude of the lecturers to CLIL-based elective curriculum. All the participants demonstrated a strong tendency toward the learner-centered or progressivist ideology in their current curricular practices and while discussing future CLIL-based planning.

If you're teaching content, especially with electives, you have to kind of assess, or like, have a reading on what students like? What are their interests? (Participant 4)

4. Balance refers to the ability to make perceptive judgments, be open to ideas and suggestions from others, as well as the ability to know when to make changes and assimilate new ideas. The responses to the assimilation of the new ideas are a pivotal category for this study as can be interpreted as an ability to cope and respond to change. In HE studies on how academics respond to change, Trowler (1997) categorized four strategies: Sinking, coping, reconstructing, and swimming. Participants' intentions conformed to either passive swimming or a more active hybrid between coping and swimming change attitudes. The interviewees with indications of the strong value of maturity demonstrated a hybrid attitude by offering contributions to the general discussion on the place of CLIL in the English curriculum regardless of prior classroom experience with CLIL or official responsibility in the committee work and manifested a higher degree of balance.

In this section, I provided an elaborate response to the first research question regarding the nature of pro-practice reservoirs—individual ideologies—for the agentic component of the workgroup practices. In the next part, I will respond to the second question: What are external and internal contextual factors in the overall university system that frame the innovation proceedings and can be influential in the course of implementation? I will also substantiate the contextual background of the innovation.

### **Contextual Factors: Internal and External Factors Influencing CLIL Curriculum Implementation**

Contextual contingency is determined as a prerequisite to a sustainable innovation design (Knight & Trowler, 2000). Meso-level of the departments is not immune to the macro-contextual factors at the university level and above; therefore, while approaching the implementation of a resource-consuming CLIL curriculum (e.g., Gkonou et al., 2020; Ikeda et al., 2021; San Isidro, 2024) it is urgent to harness the notion of the HE education climate in Japan and general Japanese labor standards, along with power relations in the institution.

#### **External Factors**

As mentioned in the introduction, at first glance, the external factors appear advantageous for the course of the innovation. The Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) incentivized the internalization efforts through extensive funding initiatives that revived the center budget. It was conditioned by mandatory policy changes extending the representation of foreign academics, international students, and courses in English-taught curricula such as CLIL (Brotherhood et al., 2020). However, the ad-hoc changes were substantiated just on paper, as the institutional initiatives did not lead to an improvement in lecturers' status and motivation to engage in the new practice.

The unresolved issue that can be considered critical and has a direct effect on the enactment of the current innovation is the low level of competitiveness of foreign lecturers for tenured positions in Japanese universities. Suh (2005) refers to this practice as *kokoro no kabe* (barriers of the heart) that prevent international faculty from being recognized

as legitimate candidates for tenure promotion. Another macro factor to consider is the changes in Japanese labor law in 2013 that validated the promotion of fixed-contract workers to permanent positions by limiting the contract term to a maximum of five to ten years. The institutions are obligated to grant a tenured position to the employees after this period. The reform resulted in the institution designing a new short-term contracting system that would limit the contract terms to a period of just under 10 years and force the lecturers to constantly seek out new employment opportunities (Green, 2019).

The lecturers' self-awareness of low compatibility on the Japanese HE labor market and increased emotional burden were vocalized in the semi-interviews and will be considered in the discussion on profitability later in the paper.

### **Internal Factors**

On the internal level, the factors that could determine the future of innovation and impact its sustainability are the power relations in the institution and its organizational practice architectures (Kemmis and Mahon, 2017). According to the university website, the English courses are embedded in the mandatory university-wide curriculum and designed following the guidelines of the Center for General Curriculum Development (CGCD) which is acting as an umbrella for the language center (UX). The curricular decisions respond to the demands of the CGCD, which monitors the precise enactment of the curricular government-initiated requirements to secure the budget for the EFL courses that are not funded by the institution or any other research grants available to other disciplines.

The University X yearbook 2021 (UX 2021) identifies the following curricular goals for the new curriculum 2024 as follows: 1. Encouraging students to study abroad and accepting more international students, especially students with a higher level of English ability. 2. Objectives of CLIL courses: Acquisition of English vocabulary and expressions related to their area of specialization and acquisition of skills that will serve as a foundation for studying specialized undergraduate courses in English. The lecturers expressed concern that the accessibility of the CLIL courses to the broad student population is questionable due to the high language ability requirements for most

of the choices and their under-researched suitability to the student population's needs in the institution.

Internal and external factors provide a general contextual frame for the following discussion on the receptivity of the change and enhancement in terms of congruence, salience, and profitability. The contextual factors are interconnected and influential for the coexistence of the TLR moments. In the next section, I will answer the third research question: Using the notion of the TLR, what were the most common moments for policy change in this study? I will also conceptualize the practices in the center by identifying and exemplifying the dominant moments that are affected by the launch of a CLIL curriculum.

### TLR Moments in Play

Depicting the operational mechanisms of the moments is “the first step to unraveling the forces shaping the accomplishment of their practices and, potentially, enhancing processes and outcomes” (Trowler, 2022). The moments are separated here for analytical purposes. They are interrelated and interconnected and will be addressed holistically in the discussion. Below I exemplify some of the relevant themes inspired by the moments that were dominant in the interview questions and deployed in data analysis. The data revealed five such moments that were explicitly represented throughout the interviews.

**Table 1. Core TLR Moments in the Center**

Moments and Definitions	Evidence from the Interviews
<p><b>Implicit Theories of Teaching and Learning</b> Constructivist position as opposed to a teacher-centered transmissive position.</p>	<p>The participants indicated a strong tendency to lean towards the constructivist learner-centered teaching approach. The majority has already adopted a content-based approach in their current practices and largely emphasized the urgency of activating the existent knowledge and skills and catering to students' needs that resonate with the core features of CLIL pedagogy (Ikeda et. al 2021).</p> <p>I give them a lot of time to process their thoughts and also work in groups. I adjust to Japanese context; they need the language aspect here. (Participant 4)</p>

<b>Moments and Definitions</b>	<b>Evidence from the Interviews</b>
<p><b>Conventions of Appropriateness</b> Unconscious formation and expression of appropriate cultural behavior awareness that determines recurrent workgroup practices.</p>	<p>The participants mentioned the inappropriateness of the nuances of the new content-based learning system for administrative workgroup practices in terms of customized scheduling and lecturers' professional backgrounds. CLIL was referred to as a pedagogical practice enactable by experienced language teachers due to time-consuming lesson planning that requires a high level of content proficiency.</p> <p>If they want to do CLIL you need to go faculty by faculty or divide the lecturers in the center and assign to different majors in advance. (Participant 2)</p> <p>I hope I would not be assigned to teach CLIL class. It will take all of my time. (Participant 1)</p> <p>Hope I will be assigned to a subject I know. It would be embarrassing otherwise. (Participant 3)</p>
<p><b>Power Relations</b> For example, the establishment of the center serves as a power source for the decision-making agents and enhances the processes of monopolization and centralization of pedagogical choices: Textbook selection, curricular objectives, and classroom activities.</p>	<p>The power distribution in the department was described as uneven, with a strong indication of top-down decision-making procedures limited to the center representatives.</p> <p>I feel I am doing so much for this school and my efforts are not recognized: The evaluation criteria is not clear, and if I need a reference I do not even know who could I ask. In fact, this change really doesn't matter, it happens in the system all the time, I think I am already immune to it. (Participant 2)</p>
<p><b>Backstories in Process</b> Significance of prior practices in the formation of new ones.</p>	<p>Considering the recent merge, the "power of stories, perceptions, and emotions about the past" can be expected to significantly affect the present. The lack of the old department's personalized communication practices and culture of collegiality and socialization echo the present difficulties to form a sense of belonging.</p> <p>It feels sad we don't have proper farewell parties anymore here. I just kind of feel more distant. I also never talk to the full-time staff. There's no opportunity. (Participant 4)</p>

Moments and Definitions	Evidence from the Interviews
<p><b>Recurrent Practices</b>            Practices that entail the way workgroup routines are formed habitually, and unconsciously in a specific practice context. Examples of pedagogical and administrative practices that are challenged in the workgroup culture of the center include communication with colleagues, management of the center, and lecture preparation practices.</p>	<p>The entrenched nature of the recurrent lecturers' practices in the department is consistently teaching-focused. There was an apparent indication of satisfaction with the current format of the lesson planning procedures, which allowed a high degree of autonomy. However, some of the participants expressed a need for transformation of the scheduling procedures that could interfere with the successful course of implementation by assigning content courses that were misaligned with lecturers' expertise. The prevailing concern was for the organizational aspect rather than the pedagogical of the implementation.</p> <p>I can make my own materials and doing kind of what I want with the course, although the department is trying to standardize; with the CLIL electives, we still have a little bit more freedom here. (Participant 5)</p> <p>There's no such thing as one teaching style here. Every teacher teaches differently.</p> <p>I think, having a set of goals helps. Here the system is like and do whatever you want to get them there. It is more idea". (Participant 4)</p>

Source: Adopted from Trowler (2022).

### Limitations

In general, case studies (e.g., Yin, 2014) suffer from limitations in the areas of objectivity, generalizability, validity, and reliability. One of the solutions is to avoid assessing qualitative research with quantitative criteria and alleviate the issues above by embracing the subjectivity of the insider and interviewees. An alternative strategy is to offer additional philosophical value for the outcomes by involving theory in the causal explanation of the processes (change process in the center) and identifying ambiguous substances that could not be explained and retaining them for future research (King, 1994). In this study, due to the short time frame, availability of the participants, and scope of the project, a higher degree of generalizability, or a

broader range of practice analysis from a cultural angle could not be offered. However, even in this limited format, it helps to establish a precedent for expanding the TLR theory implications to policy change in the HE landscape in Japan and other HE contexts.

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## Discussion and Implications

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### Assessing the Challenge of Becoming a CLIL Practitioner

In this section, my intention is to address research question 4: What positive insights and challenging perspectives does TLR theory reveal about implementation considerations of the CLIL-based curriculum in the university's language centers? The response extrapolates the notion of the dominant TLR moments to achieve the key objectives of assessing the reception of policy change and proposing enhancement initiatives by raising awareness to the degree of challenge that CLIL curriculum development presents to the lecturers in the context of the center. From a social practice perspective, the degree of challenge can be accentuated from three key standpoints: Saliency, which refers to significance in relation to values, congruence, which constitutes alignment with current practices; and profitability, which is understanding of what is beneficial for the particular regime and the working culture of the center. This is an essential step to the full realization of the explanatory power of TLR theory—developing practice sensibility (Trowler, 2020).

### Congruence

In terms of change compatibility, the learner-oriented nature of the CLIL curriculum as conceptualized by the lecturers is congruent at first glance with the ideological underpinnings and recurrent teaching practices in the center that prioritize student-centered learning, teacher autonomy, and the utilization of original materials and teaching techniques. However, with the overall impressions being receptive, the participants' voices revealed a potential challenge to the existent conventions of appropriateness associated with the implementation of the innovation, such as a demand for high levels of content expertise from

language teachers, random distribution of teaching assignments and lack of additional lesson preparation time. For instance, the lecturers expressed a high level of emotional tension concerning the appropriateness of the existing practices of randomized scheduling procedures for the teaching assignments and CLIL curriculum. They voiced the need for a shift to liberal consultative management procedures such as the distribution of teaching assignments based on the lecturers' field of expertise, that would support the lecturers' competence in the content classroom and enhance their enthusiasm (Fraser, 2011). In addition, it became evident that CLIL-infused instruction has a strong image of being time-consuming and is referred to as incompatible with the current teaching assignment structure due to the enhanced variety of subjects per semester the teachers are required to facilitate pre-CLIL implementation.

### **Saliency**

With the focus of TLR moments on the workgroup, it is still essential to take the lecturers' individual agentic side into consideration to illustrate the saliency of the practice. It adds philosophical and physiological substances referred to earlier as proto-practice reservoirs (Trowler 2020). Within the social practice approach, the participants' innate ability to enact and construct social reality and exert ownership over pedagogical choices, in contrast to a rational-purposive approach that tends to define practitioners in HE as those who just follow through with the institutional changes (Lisewski, 2018). Based on the professional core qualities of the lecturers demonstrated earlier (Mcardle & Courtts, 2003), the sample of participants can be defined as a homogeneous group of dedicated professionals with progressive ideology. Therefore, although the saliency of the innovation on the surface appears to be challenged by the external limitations on national and institutional levels, such as labor law and inequity of tenure assignments, power distribution, and decision-making practices in the center, the participants expressed an unexpected level of interest in the implementation. This finding has no better explanation than the ideological flow from professional proto-practice reservoirs of the participants into the recurrent teaching practices of the whole workgroup.

## Profitability

On the center leadership level, the profitability of the innovation for the workgroup practices is easy to advocate in terms of budget support in the form of government funding and the expansion of the student population on account of international students attracted by a variety of CLIL courses delivered in English (Hashimoto & Glasgow, 2019). However, on the bottom level, it appeared to be a challenge. In addition, Levine (1980) associates profitability with security, prestige, peer approval, growth, efficiency, or an improvement in the quality of life. The minority of the participants associated the innovation with the contextual factors of increasing professional prestige by gaining experience as CLIL specialists and compatibility in the Japanese HE job market, which is steadily shifting towards CLIL-based instruction (Ikeda et.al, 2021). With that said, most of the participants were reluctant to admit the profitability of the new curriculum due to the potential challenge imposed on their teaching well-being, as revealed by the conventions of the appropriateness of the CLIL curriculum in the current teaching situation.

## Practice Sensibility

As challenging as the setting may appear, the pessimistic notes should not be interpreted as a sign of initiative failure. Practice sensibility, which I see as the core valuable purchase of the TLR theory in regard to the diagnosis of the CLIL curriculum change trajectory, offers positive insights that will lead to sustainable and effective outcomes. Practice sensibility emphasizes the emergency of awareness of the interconnectivity of the role of future CLIL lecturers' identities, their image of professional self and the context featured by TLR moments (Trowler, 2020). In this study, the notion of practice sensibility zooms in on the challenges of limited compatibility and profitability that are compensated by overarching salience rooted in ideological proto-practice reservoirs of the lecturers' identities in play. The following suggestions can address the gap and enhance the success of the change trajectory and can benefit academic managers and educational advisers in university language departments, teachers' educators and experienced CLIL lecturers in charge of CLIL curriculum expansion in new institutions.

The first suggestion is the administration of effective and consistent professional development sessions. The rationale of the above is to relieve lecturers' anxiety and alleviate the sense of incompatibility of the CLIL curriculum with recurrent practices. The sessions should offer practical resources, such as productive lesson planning strategies, lists of resources and materials for each course, and videos of CLIL-based lessons conducted in a similar context previously. The second suggestion is to strengthen collegial ties between the lecturers and center management. The above can be employed by constructing an effective communication network and conducting in-person and online social events with the mandatory attendance of the center management. Finally, on the institutional level, revision of the scheduling procedures of the CLIL-based courses to respond to instructors' preferences to maximize the quality of the instruction. The pragmatic suggestions above allow for a positive diagnosis of the trajectory of the policy change and can be replicated with amendments within other university language centers in the pre-change phase.

## Conclusions

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This study vocalizes the bottom-up perspective of non-Japanese lecturers from HE institutions in Japan and the pre-implementation stages of content-based (EMI and CLIL) curricular conceptions. It offers a diagnostic outlook on the trajectory of implementation and identifies enhancement opportunities through the lenses of the SP-based theory of teaching and learning regimes. The study showcases the value of the theory in monitoring and navigating policy changes in the form of the pre-transformation of university language lecturers into CLIL practitioners by using the notion of TLR moments to highlight the compatibility of the innovation within the context and lead to enhancement initiatives. Its findings substantiate a strong call for practice sensibility in the context of the HE workgroups implementing a CLIL curriculum. The outcomes are particularly beneficial for the change agents, who are advised to navigate the course of the innovation by contemplating its compatibility with current practices and constructing the

transition in a gradual manner with an awareness of practice sensibility. A new management style can increase the sense of ownership at the enactment level and bring about the cautious domestication of change in the context (Trowler, 2020). The deployment of the practice sensibility concept to diagnose the trajectory of curriculum policy change within a university language center is unique and will have implications for other such centers.

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