

# CLIL-Based Music Lesson in Japan : A 4C Perspective on Classical Guitar History Instruction

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# CLIL-Based Music Lesson in Japan: A 4C Perspective on Classical Guitar History Instruction

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**Abstract** : This paper reports on a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)-based music lesson conducted at a private junior and senior high school in Tottori, Japan, featuring Finnish classical guitarist Rody van Gemert as a guest lecturer. The lesson, targeting second-year junior high and mixed junior-senior classes, integrated English and music to explore the historical and cultural significance of classical guitar. Using the restored 1882 instrument *La Perla* as a focal point, the class was designed according to the CLIL 4Cs framework (Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture), combining lectures, musical demonstrations, and performance activities. Questionnaire and open-ended responses showed that students gained a deeper understanding of guitar history and music appreciation, with many expressing positive attitudes toward intercultural learning. However, confidence in English comprehension was relatively low, suggesting limited linguistic outcomes. While the lesson demonstrated high educational value as an interdisciplinary cultural experience, the study highlights the need for stronger collaboration with language teachers and expanded opportunities for language-focused engagement in future implementations.

**Keywords** : Classical guitar, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Music

## 1. Introduction

This paper introduces a case study of a CLIL-based music exchange lesson conducted at a private junior and senior high school in Tottori Prefecture, Japan, featuring Finnish classical guitarist Rody van Gemert (hereafter, Rody). In this lesson, the guest guitarist brought one of the world's approximately 140 existing historical guitars and delivered a lecture that intertwined musical appreciation with the instrument's historical background. The term "music-CLIL" is used here because the lesson design was inspired by a previous elementary school CLIL practice reported in Abe et al. (in press). The purpose of this paper is to present the lesson design, share students' questionnaire and open-ended responses, and discuss

its educational value, with the hope of encouraging similar future implementations. Although there are limitations—such as the fact that the instructor was a guitarist rather than a language teacher, and that the lesson was conducted bilingually; Rody spoke in English and Kadowaki, a classical guitarist and one of the current authors translated it into Japanese — this report aims to share the case as a practical example of CLIL in music lessons.

The origin of this practice lies in the earlier study by Abe et al. (in press). In that project, Kadowaki delivered a lesson at a public elementary school. Kadowaki, who is active mainly in the San'in region and also teaches part-time at private secondary schools in Tottori, invited Rody

from Finland to his school for a guest lecture. To make the lesson more meaningful, the team drew upon the CLIL approach employed in Abe et al. (in press) as a pedagogical reference.

## 2. Previous Research Referenced

The present case was inspired by and builds upon a prior study (Abe et al., in press). In that earlier project, conducted from October to November 2022, Kadowaki delivered a lesson at a public elementary school. The lesson targeted fifth- and sixth-grade students and integrated music appreciation of classical guitar with English language learning, career education, and global understanding. As a result, students not only enjoyed the session but also began to see connections between their school learning and future career possibilities, while developing interest in studying abroad.

During post-lesson reflections, the teaching team recognized that emphasizing the four key components of CLIL—the 4Cs (Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture) (Izumi et al., 2012; Watanabe et al., 2011)—had contributed significantly to the quality of the lesson, even within a limited preparation period. Drawing from this experience, the team considered it beneficial to apply the same 4C framework when designing a new lesson that would invite a Finnish classical guitarist to a Japanese junior and senior high school. The 4C structure was also seen as a useful tool for clarifying the educational goals and activity intentions to the guest musician, who was not a professional language teacher.

## 3. Practice

### 3.1 Participants

This present lesson was implemented on June 13, 2025, as a single 50-minute session. It was conducted twice—once for a mixed class of third-year junior high school and first-year senior high school students, and once for second-year junior high school students who were taking an elective music course.

The lesson was co-taught by two classical

guitarists. The main instructor, Rody, is a Finnish classical guitarist with extensive international performance and teaching experience. Although he has performed several times in Japan, he does not speak Japanese. In Finland, he has taught classical guitar to children and directed youth guitar orchestras, demonstrating a strong background in music education.

The second instructor, the paper's co-author, is a Japanese classical guitarist who studied in Finland. He assisted by translating and interpreting the main instructor's English explanations into Japanese as needed. Since neither instructor specialized in language education, the lesson was conducted primarily as a lecture and demonstration, without deliberate alignment to students' prior linguistic knowledge.

The first and second authors of this paper contributed to the planning of the lesson, analysis of results, and interpretation. The lesson took place at the school where the third author works as a part-time instructor, and official approval for implementation and research was obtained through the school's internal procedures.

### 3.2 Instructor Profile

The guest lecturer, Rody, developed an early interest in Baroque music after hearing Bach's *Lute Suites* in his early teens, which led him to begin studying classical guitar. He holds a doctoral degree in music and studied in Japan for a short period during his doctoral program. Rody has performed extensively in Europe, Japan, and other parts of the world, and currently teaches music and performance practice at the university level. In addition to his performance and teaching activities, he is also deeply engaged in the restoration of historical guitars, which became the central theme of this lesson. In addition, the second instructor was Takuto Kadowaki, the third author of this paper. After graduating from a university in Japan, he obtained a degree in guitar performance in Finland and currently serves as a part-time lecturer at the school where this lesson was conducted. His background allowed him to

demonstrate a deep understanding of both the instructional content and the students' learning needs, effectively bridging the cultural and educational aspects of the lesson.

### 3.3 Lesson Design Based on the 4Cs

As in the previous study (Abe et al., in press), this lesson was designed explicitly around the 4Cs framework of CLIL to ensure that students could learn about classical guitar through an integrated approach connecting music, history, and intercultural understanding (Table 1).

Table 1 How to Implement 4Cs in Practice

4Cs	Lesson Focus
<b>Content</b>	Deepen understanding of the history of classical guitar and its prominent performers.
<b>Communication</b>	Listen to the lecturer's explanations—supported by visual slides—about his intentions behind the guitar's restoration and performance practices.
<b>Cognition</b>	Develop awareness of the historical significance of a single instrument and how its background connects to musical performance and composition.
<b>Culture</b>	Foster appreciation for European classical culture by exploring how the history and tradition embodied in one guitar have been inherited and preserved across generations.

The main format of the lesson consisted of a lecture using slides and live classical guitar performances. Compared to the elementary school lesson described in Abe et al. (in press), this session was more advanced in both content and cognitive depth.

A key feature of this lesson was the inclusion of *La Perla*, a classical guitar crafted in 1882 by Antonio de Torres, the renowned Spanish luthier who established the prototype of the modern classical guitar. *La Perla* is one of the few surviving Torres guitars worldwide. Although it was unplayable for about 50 years due

to damage, it was restored in Finland between 2022 and 2023. The instrument holds significant historical value in the classical guitar tradition, with archival evidence revealing its past owners and the repertoire performed in their concerts.

The lecture traced these historical developments while allowing students to listen to performances that illustrated the instrument's cultural and musical legacy. Through this approach, the lesson was designed to enhance learning particularly in terms of Cognition (understanding of historical meaning) and Culture (awareness of artistic tradition).

At the end of the session, students performed together with the guest guitarist, promoting a deeper understanding of the music and instruments while also fostering interactive communication between the lecturer and the students.

### 3.4 Lesson Flow

The lesson proceeded as follows:

1. Introduction of the guest lecturer
2. **Lecture** — Presentation on the guitar's background and its restoration history
3. **Listening and appreciation** — Musical demonstrations by the lecturer
4. **Question and answer session**
5. **Joint performance with Rody and students**

Although "Listening" is listed as step 3, performances were interspersed throughout the lecture to complement the explanations and maintain engagement.

### 3.5 Lesson Overview

The lesson focused on the following three main topics:

1. Why Antonio de Torres is regarded as the most important guitar maker in classical music history.
2. The differences in tone and historical context between pre-Torres guitars and those designed by Torres.
3. The history of *La Perla*, the instrument featured in this session.

As reference material, the lecture included detailed explanations of Torres's contributions and the restoration history of the historic guitar.

Antonio de Torres (1817—1892), born in Almería, Spain, is known as the *father of the modern guitar*. His instruments established the standard design of the modern classical guitar, producing richer tone and longer sustain sounds compared with earlier models. Legendary guitarists such as Arcas, Tárrega, and Llobet were known to play his instruments.

Before Torres, 19th-century guitars varied widely in shape and construction across Europe, particularly in France and Germany. After his innovations, Torres's design became the foundation for modern classical guitars worldwide. His work emerged during a musical era transitioning from Classicism to Romanticism, represented by composers such as Chopin and Schumann. The enhanced tonal richness and resonance of his guitars met the expressive needs of Romantic music.

A comparison between earlier guitars and Torres's models shows that his guitars were significantly larger, providing greater volume. Moreover, the placement of the bridge—closer to the sound hole—enabled a deeper, more resonant tone. The lecturer illustrated this acoustical principle by comparing it to “the difference between striking the center and the edge of a drum.”

The featured guitar, *La Perla*, was commissioned by Francisco Tárrega in 1882 for his student Pedro Aguilera. Tárrega, known as the *father of modern guitar music* and composer of *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*, had the instrument built by Torres himself. Aguilera performed widely with *La Perla*, and after his death, it remained in his family's possession. However, the guitar suffered severe damage in the 1970s, and a failed repair attempt in the 1990s left it unplayable for nearly 50 years. In 2022, Rody and luthier Uwe Florath undertook a meticulous year-long restoration in Finland, returning the instrument to full performance condition.

Throughout the lecture, students listened to pieces connected to Torres and his era, including

works by Federico Mompou, Francisco Tárrega, and the recently rediscovered Spanish Serenade (2019), believed to have been written for Aguilera.

At the conclusion of the session, students performed alongside the lecturer.

- The junior-senior mixed class presented *Let It Be* by The Beatles, with first-year high school students forming a guitar ensemble and junior high school students singing in English.
- The second-year junior high school students group performed *Minimal Guitars* by Dutch composer Leendert van Woudenberg, a contemporary ensemble piece.

### 3.6 Analysis Method

Following Abe et al. (in press), the lesson was analyzed using a questionnaire and students' open-ended responses. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, and since the purpose of this paper is primarily descriptive, results were aggregated across all participants (junior high second- and third-year, and senior high first-year students).

The questionnaire items were as follows:

1. Did you understand the history of Torres's guitar *La Perla*?
2. Did you deepen your understanding of classical guitar?
3. Did you realize that the guitar can be performed both as a solo and ensemble instrument?
4. Did you recognize that the guitar can cover a wide range of genres, from pop to classical music?
5. Do you think this performance will help you in your future musical challenges?
6. Did you feel that musical expression can lead to understanding of history and other cultures?
7. Did this lesson make you want to learn more about music, history, art, or English?
8. Did you understand the English spoken by Mr. Rody?

9. Did you notice any English expressions you had learned in your English classes?
10. Would you like to participate in this kind of lesson again in the future?

The questions were asked in Japanese, and translated in English for this paper.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Questionnaire Results

In this paper, only the aggregated graph of the questionnaire results is presented. In most items, responses rated 4 (strongly agree; dark green) and 3 (agree; yellow) accounted for a large proportion, indicating generally positive reactions from students.

However, responses related to English comprehension showed lower confidence levels. Students appeared less certain about their understanding of Rody’s English explanations or connections to their regular English lessons. This may be partly due to the music-exchange nature of the event and the interpretation support provided by the second author, which may have reduced direct linguistic engagement.

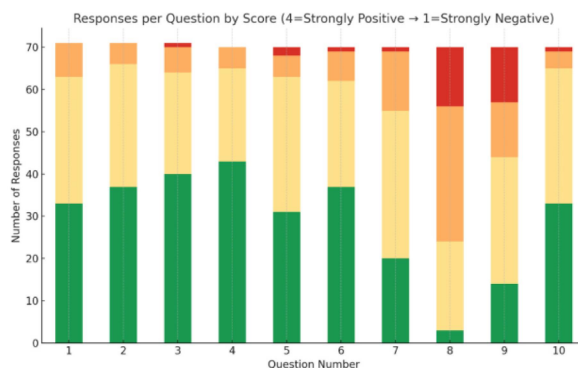


Figure 1 Result of the Questionnaire

Further analyses, including grade-level comparisons and correlations with open-ended responses, are planned for future studies to gain deeper insights into students’ perceptions and learning outcomes.

### 4.2 Students’ Open-Ended Responses

Students were invited to freely write their reflections at the bottom of the questionnaire. A total of 71 responses were collected. Of these, 30

referred to the content (e.g., guitar history, performance, or music), while 7 specifically mentioned English.

Below are representative excerpts from both categories:

“Rody’s guitar sounded warmer and more joyful than when I play. Depending on the piece, it also had a mysterious atmosphere like a moonlit night, and sometimes reminded me of the sound of rain. I was amazed that such a wide variety of tones could come from a single instrument.”

自分で引くギターよりもロディ先生の音色の方が温かく楽しい音に聞こえました。しかし曲によっては月の出る音夜のような不思議な雰囲気聞こえた。雨の音のような感じに変わっていくことが面白かったです。同じ楽器であそこまで幅の広い種類の音が出せることに驚きました。(原文ママ)

This comment demonstrates students’ engagement with musical expression, reflecting the lecturer’s intended focus on appreciating the guitar’s tone and artistic depth.

“I’m happy to know that we’ll continue to enjoy playing guitar and creating music that brings smiles and excitement to our lessons. Since starting Minimal Yurihama Guitars, I really want to reach Part 3 soon.”

これからの授業においてギターなどにたくさんふれるので楽しんでやって笑顔があふれる聞きごたえのあるかたちでこれからは授業できると聞いてとてもうれしかったです。Minimal Yurihama guitarsを作りはじめてから今ではかなりパート3までいきたいです。(原文ママ)

Many comments related to English expressed increased motivation for language learning — for example, a desire to improve comprehension or a renewed awareness of the importance of English.

These findings suggest that, to enhance the language-learning aspect of CLIL, future lessons may benefit from closer collaboration with

English teachers — for example, by integrating linguistic activities aligned with students' prior learning and creating opportunities for more intentional use of English during the session.

## 5. Discussion

The primary achievement of this practice lies in the fact that the intentions of the performing guitarists were successfully conveyed to the students within the context of a music exchange. Quantitative findings showed particularly positive responses to the item concerning students' understanding of guitar history, and nearly half of the open-ended comments referred to the instrument's historical background or the performers' expressive techniques. These results suggest that students were deeply engaged with the content and cultural aspects of the lesson.

On the other hand, while students were able to grasp the general meaning of the lecturer's English explanations, the questionnaire results indicated that few students felt confident about their comprehension. Although more detailed analysis is planned, this issue—ensuring that learners feel they have understood important takeaways—mirrors a similar challenge identified in Abe et al. (in press).

To help students develop a stronger sense of understanding in CLIL-based instruction, several improvements are suggested:

- Teachers should consider students' prior linguistic knowledge when planning English input.
- Appropriate use of translanguaging—strategically alternating between English and Japa-

nese — can support comprehension while maintaining exposure to authentic language.

- Collaboration with language teachers would further enhance the integration of linguistic and content learning, making the experience more balanced across the 4Cs of CLIL.

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# フィンランドのクラシックギタリストによる日本の中高生に対する ギターの歴史に関する英語での CLIL 型授業実践報告

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## 要 旨

本稿は、鳥取県の私立中高において、フィンランドのクラシックギタリスト・ロディ氏を招いて実施した音楽 CLIL 型授業の事例を報告するものである。授業は中学 2 年生および中学 3 年・高校 1 年の混合クラスを対象に、クラシックギターの歴史的意義や文化的背景を英語と音楽を通して学ぶ構成で実施された。特に 1882 年製「ラ・ペルラ」の修繕史を題材に、音楽鑑賞と講義を組み合わせ、CLIL の 4C (Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture) の観点から設計された。アンケートと自由記述の結果、多くの生徒がギターや音楽史への理解を深め、文化的学びに肯定的な反応を示した。一方で、英語理解への自信は低く、言語面の成果は限定的であった。音楽家による授業として高い教育的価値を示す一方、英語教育との連携や言語活動の拡充が今後の課題として指摘されている。

キーワード：クラシックギター，内容言語統合学習 (CLIL)，音楽教育