I. Reconceptualizing the practice of a “sociology in English”

Class social life is a system with connected individuals and connected groups who participate and relate to each other in a number of ways. People are what make any system “happen,” and without their participation any system exists only as an idea with some physical reality attached. Nevertheless, a system affects how we think, feel, and behave as participants. People make systems happen, and systems lay out paths of least resistance to shape participation. Johnson (1997) says that most of what we accept as reality consists not of things as they “really are,” but of ideas that we develop about things as we think, feel, or believe they are, where “believing is seeing” (Johnson, 1997: 8).

The classroom is a real social context, and is, according to Andrewes (2005), more than the study of language or content “out there” in the “real world.” The classroom can be used for communication development and knowledge acquisition, where the main role of language, communication, and knowledge-building in social life is neither functional nor strategic, but affective. Classroom social life can be directed towards defining and molding relationships in a community. We always participate in something larger than ourselves (i.e. systems). As social life flows from this relationship, we need to consider that we are all involved, if only indirectly, in any social consequences that result, whether beneficial or not.

This writer is an English language sociology of education researcher-practitioner at a university in western Japan, Kwansei Gakuin (KGU). English language study in the Sociology Department where I work is confined to first and second year general education, and is viewed in the Department as peripheral to study in the specialty-area (native language Japanese) mainstream part of the curricular provision. English language is not a medium of sociological practice learning, but entrenched as a separate and separated subject-object of study. Students are expected to connect English language communication with sociological study on their own without any institutional assistance.

Nevertheless, “Sociology in English” is a buzzword in the Sociology Department, though it has more of a public relations’ role and responsibility than teaching or researching recognition or acceptance. The Department prides itself on being a “global sociology” higher education entity. Having a small percentage of the department’s curriculum provision and research in a language of wider use globally (English) would, therefore, have valid educational significance. I thus decided in my class teaching to make explicit connections between language-communication and social life learning where

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** Professor, School of Sociology, Kwansei Gakuin University
students actually experience in their study a “sociology in English” to explore the ongoing living nature of social life as it unfolds in the classroom.

Simply making a connection between sociology content and language learning by itself is not sufficient for students to better understand the nature of responsible and accountable social life. I believe sociology students can better understand “sociology in English” if they are actually involved in experiencing the nature of their own unfolding social life in their learning, rather than looking at social life as an “outside self” subject or object. “Sociology in English” should be conceived, and practiced, as a one-world ontology exploration of (1) our knowing about the social world, and (2) what we communicate and how we communicate with each other about social systems and our participation in them. A “sociology in English” is (1) social life in shared and connected participatory communication, and (2) shared and connected participatory communication in social life.

How life transpires inside class has potential to transform the quality of life that goes on outside class when study is focused on the life-world of the community as a whole, not on individualistic “what’s in it for me” concerns. Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is an approach which has gained currency among language educators who seek to connect language learning with content-knowledge acquisition and engagement. The teaching approach, outlined in part 4 of this paper, is also a response to what Johnson (1997), Sandelands (2003), Baumann (1989), King (2007), and Barnes (2000) feel is most urgent in sociological practice: re-directing it away from the study of social life as the life of interacting individuals, towards a more socially responsible study of the lived nature of cooperative social life itself.

II. The many benefits of language study beyond skills and knowledge

Many transferable life skills can effectively be developed through participation in language learning: presentation and negotiation skills, management of information, goal setting, and time management. These “soft” skills are widely recognized as being essential in the knowledge-based society where people are expected to be more adaptable and fluid in their transfer from one to another situation, whether from learning to work or engaging in leisure (Transferable Skills in Modern Languages Project, 2002–05). Language learning fosters broader values such as cultural awareness and tolerance or what is known as “cultural decentering” (White, 2003). Language learning stresses, or should be able to stress, a reflexive impact as it focuses on a critical reassessment of learners’ own culture and society, not merely a view outward to other cultures and societies (Byram and Fleming, 1998).

The study of and in modern languages can ideally lead to evolution of “intercultural being” or the understanding of the varied and multiple realities people are all part of (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004). Study participants can be sensitized to cultural difference which can reduce ethnocentric bias using creative activities conducted in the L1 and/or the L2. The education of genuinely open-minded, culturally-sensitive university graduates who have had experience(s) being strangers in a foreign language and culture, as well as a deeper understanding of their own language and culture, is of paramount importance (Bruen, 2005). On a global scale intercultural understanding between people and nations has not kept pace with scientific developments or advances. A case can be made for offering as many graduates as possible opportunities to learn another language. Global society needs critical and imaginative thinkers who understand that most arguments are multi-faceted, and who are open to others’ views and who realize the world is both complex and wonderful.
Ullmann (1982) advocated a broadened curriculum framework for second/foreign language study, arguing for a multi-dimensional approach away from a focus on the language syllabus. There is at Kwansei Gakuin University and in the School of Sociology an underlying assumption in language study and learning that the content of the language curriculum and that of the language syllabus are or must be the same, and that the aims are solely or primarily linguistic, confined to study about the language, or using language for no focused communication (about the world) purposes. Ullmann (1982) says that the large commitment of time and resources to language study necessitates its educational justification. At KGU-Sociology students are required to study second/foreign languages four ninety minute classes weekly in first year, and three 90 minute classes in second year. Among the many areas that language study could cover, Ullmann suggests, are literature and the social studies. The former area (literature) has for a long time been an alternative route for language study in Japan.

Throughout the world, particularly in Europe, the systemic-systematic integration of second/foreign language with that of academic content and knowledge (CLIL) is accelerating. Placed in a sociology department as an English language educator, it seems natural that what I teach and what students study should have integrated language and academic content/knowledge components. Research has supported the position that integrated language and content study is more successful in developing learners'language learning abilities. Among other known benefits of CLIL learning are: (1) introducing wider contexts of study, (2) preparation for other studies in a more globally-connected world society, and (3) increased student learning motivation using the language.

Andrewes (2005) believes that classroom social life, which focuses on language-communication development, and/or knowledge acquisition, does not usually exploit opportunities for participants to develop personal and social relationships to support and promote the social life learning process. CLIL focusing on responsibility to and for society, can help cement interpersonal relationships within and between groups of people. CLIL also builds intercultural knowledge, develops intercultural skills, and provides opportunities to study social life content through different perspectives. Research also shows that CLIL study frameworks diversify methods and forms of teaching practice, and enhance participants’ awareness of different ways of (1) understanding the world, (2) what and how we communicate about the world, and (3) our place in the world as connected individuals participating in social systems.

Littlejohn (2001) believes that it is an illusion to think class language study practices have little impact beyond the learning of language. As educators, language teachers are uniquely positioned in helping to shape the views that young people have of themselves in relation to learning in general, and their relationship to and participation in systems of oppressive authoritarianism and control. Language educators can shape how young people see and value themselves as active or passive agents. Language educators need to help students develop a questioning and skeptical attitude, and what they do depends on their own sets of values and priorities, and as Littlejohn argues, their political stance as well. As much as our practices in class emulate or should emulate individual and social responsibilities to society, we have an obligation, says Forbes (2005), to make a coherent and principled contribution to shape the future by being responsible for society.

III. A one-world ontology of knowing and communicating

Bollinger, Nainby, and Warren (2003) perceive a conceptual divide between contemporary com-
munication theory and critical educational practice. At present there exist, they argue, conceptually
two separate worlds, one the world we communicate with or the entire set of symbols, sounds, ges-
tures, pictures and other things we use to communicate. The second world is the world we talk about,
all of the various subjects that move us to talk to one another. Bollinger, Nainby, and Warren believe
teachers must work with students to rethink and interrogate how and why we constitute the world as
we do. In a one-world ontology the two stages become one where knowledge and reality can be un-
masked and recreated simultaneously.

Representational two-worlds ontology models, they maintain, fail to account for the complexity of
lived experiences of people in class, where the emphasis remains on systemic meanings rather than
minute immediate communicative acts. Building on Freire (1970) and Stewart (1995), Bollinger et. al
assert that human conditions are fully constituted in and through social interaction, and can be
changed by social interaction as well. Two-world assumptions can affect exploration with students of
the socially-constituted nature of, for example, exploitation and any pedagogical possibilities to create
the goal of transforming exploitative conditions. Communication, they maintain, forms the essence of
social life, unifying humans and the world in which people live; communication is not a mere tool-
instrumental means to achieving human world-shaping.

A one-world ontology, where language and communication have immediate effects on teaching
and learning practice(s), can redirect CLIL toward a more exploratory, experiential, non-technical, and
non-epistemical, life valuing phronetic approach advocated by Flyvbjerg (2001). But more than an on-
tological vocabulary is necessary. Young adults in Japan come from pre-university schooling that has,
for the most part, been decided for them and where they have had little if any investment in decisions
taken on their curriculum. It is necessary to set up teaching and learning structures in class where stu-
dents have rights and obligations to voice, to question, to actively participate in shared understandings,
and to make educated guesses about things they do not know.

Social science support for CLIL centered on a socially responsible and accountable citizenship
development also comes from Bauman (1989: 179) who argues,

The existential modality of the social (unlike the societal) has been seldom held at the focus of sociological attention. There is no sociological consensus as to the meaning, experiential content and behavioural consequences of the primary condition of being with others’. The ways in which that condition can be made sociologically relevant are yet to be fully explored in sociological practice.

Barnes (2000) maintains that the relationship between the individual, society, and social structure
has not been addressed with proper regard for social interaction. Society is often conceived in purely
structural “otherness” terms, or in very individualistic terms. Too much attention is given to the sub-
jective and the objective at the expense of the intersubjective. Barnes argues that the central problems
of sociology are those of collective or social agency. “Responsibility” has not been a compelling cen-
tral element in the construction of any major social theory where,

understanding the everyday employment of this concept, with its double significance — psychologically it implies internal capacities, sociologically it implies liability and answerability — is also (my italics) the key to understanding of the role of ‘choice’, ‘agency’, and related concepts in
Sociological theory and practice, like that in other social sciences, is the scientific study of feelings and ideas in social behavior. Society, says King (2007), cannot be understood as interaction of independent individuals nor in terms of structural, economic, or biological determination. Human consciousness and understanding, he believes, are fundamental to all forms of social life, and people must orient themselves to shared meanings because their actions can be coordinated only insofar as all have a common understanding of what they are trying to achieve. Ongoing classroom communication and class social life as, and in, a one-world ontology can itself become an important content area locus of transformation.

Johnson (1997) argues that in a modern society that values individualism and is dominated by it, the idea that a society is just people may seem obvious. This is true of classroom society as well. Yet, this approach ignores the difference between people who participate in social life (e.g. class study), and the many varied relationships that connect participants to one another and to other groups and societies through their participation in a social life system such as schooling. People, says Johnson, often participate in systems without feeling or believing they are a part of them, and that they in fact make them happen. The “classroom” “social study” system is not simply comprised of an aggregate of individuals.

What sort of pedagogy can be generated in the process of class interaction? What kind of thinking, feeling, and behavior changes can be fostered by that engagement? Students in a one-world ontology of study and learning have opportunities to better understand the relationships between (their) communication and the material conditions of their (individual and social) lives, and how their lives are ongoing and sustained by the many choices they make every moment in class and whether they choose paths of least resistance or not. Students also have opportunities to see the social hegemony that is instituted in education and social life. Students can learn to experience in their here-and-now shared participation in communication the constraints the world has over them and the transformative possibilities they have over the world (Shor, 1996).

IV. Practicing a content and language integrated learning (CLIL)-university citizenship development social life learning

What “happens” in class social study life can change the way(s) in which a system functions and how people choose to participate. Likewise, the way(s) in which that participation happens, and how teachers treat students in class, can dampen or increase students’ sense of individual and social agency as they participate in a system. Teaching language has epistemical-knowledge-building and technical linguistic aim(s), and also more general educational objectives such as socialization, cognitive development, and emotional development. Understanding roles, rules, cultural behavior, and structured participation in social life in the classroom can help develop students as explorers of their ongoing participation in social life, and consequently develop their awareness and embrace of interdependence over independence and dependence.

To effectively integrate language, content, and social and civic responsibility learning we must create the atmosphere, procedures, norms, expectations, and demands in classrooms that we see and would like to see outside in the wider more macro systems of social life. Our teaching-learning envi-
vironment should reflect the values to which we hope the wider more macro society aspires, and we must make a conscious effort to create that valued improvement in our immediate class society. Students should be provided with venues for cooperative as opposed to competitive learning which can heighten their shared participation in schooling as they experience that system in class.

Flyvbjerg (2001) has argued that instead of trying to emulate the natural sciences, the social sciences should be practiced as phronesis. Phronetic social science focuses on four value-rational questions: (1) Where are we going? (2) Who gains and who loses and by which mechanisms of power? (3) Is this development desirable? (4) What should we do about it? The CLIL-citizenship development study framework in my class instruction is based on phronesis as much as it is concerned with experiencing, in shared participation in social life, a sociological imagination. A CLIL-citizenship development is not an end goal in and of itself, but serves to teach class study participants the value of a cooperative and collaborative learning that engages with knowledge and communication of social life.

Building and nurturing sociologically imaginative civil society in the classroom begins with students and I together proposing and agreeing to discuss topics that affect our lives on a daily basis in class and outside class, and which can help us work towards a greater awareness and understanding of the connections embodied in Flyvbjerg’s (2001) four value-rational questions. A number of class study topics are suggested at the beginning of term, and I ask students’ permission to allow me to raise one topic in particular to jump-start our topical dialogue. The first topic we engage in is whether or not we will value study together individually and/or collectively/communally. With students’ consent, either by a vote of hands or secret ballot, we start our study with discussion on the merits of cooperative and/or competitive study, and what group study will be like, if we chose to form smaller groups. How many members will each group have, what needs to be done and who will do what needs to be done, for example?

This first topical discussion is held in English in public whole class talk that I lead, but after groups are formed, is conducted in groups in either English or Japanese as class members decide. After/if we have decided to conduct study collectively and cooperatively – I also take time to advocate the benefits of cooperative learning over competitive learning – we then work our way through other study issues that will help determine where we are and are going, who wins and who loses in where we are going, and what behavior we expect of ourselves in where we seem to be headed in our study.

Among the topics suggested by me or by students are:

1. What communication language(s) can we or should we continue to use and why?
2. What area(s) of social life, besides that in this classroom, would we like to study together as a large group?
3. Do we need to prepare for our study every week, and if so, how? Do we need to review previous study and if so, how?
4. How shall we evaluate teaching and learning? If we have “tests,” why and who makes them? How are they made and taken? What will “test” results be used for? What kind(s) of other evaluation(s) may be necessary and why?
5. In our study of social life, is, for example, history, geography, economics, and anthropology necessary? Why or why not?
6. Who makes decisions, how will they be made, and about what week-to-week?
7. Do we need to have social life study rules, and if so what rules, and who makes them and how?
Do we agree to keep to the rules we consensually make or not? If rules are “broken” what do we do? Are there “penalties?”

8. What are some “things” we (ought to) value in our study together? For example, do we value raising questions or not, and if so about what? Do we value listening attentively to another/others when they speak?

It usually takes anywhere from two to three class sessions to go through the above-mentioned topics, more time if other topics for discussion are proposed and agreed-on. At the beginning of term I also, with consent of students as individuals and/or as groups, ask if I may be allowed to tell social life stories, and/or play some songs (in English) that might give us other ideas about social life inside and outside class. Telling stories, according to Storrs (2009) is an excellent means of illustrating the connections between social, cultural, historical and political forces creating the systemic situations that we as participants in a social life system find ourselves a part of. Story-telling is well received by students as it draws attention to their private concerns or worries about work, schooling, or family, being conditioned and affected by larger systems of more socially cooperative participation.

The purpose of these start-of-term activities is for us to bond together as connected individuals and groups in our study, and to get some ideas about what aspects of social life in particular we wish to investigate more fully as the term goes on. In that regard, I advocate the benefits of studying one or two areas of social life for the rest of the term rather than jumping from one to another system area topic week-to-week. But this advocacy is not imposed on students. Everything that we discuss or do is reviewed and reflected upon in the shape of reflection notes, prepared first by myself as an imperfect model of what one can recall of a decision discussion, or activity.

After the first or second class meeting reflection notes are voluntarily prepared by students as group notes – if students have chosen to form groups – and/or by individual students where we compare our recall and understanding(s) of what we have done in our previous social life study. The class is further structured with time allotted to (1) whole-class and group greetings, announcements, and small talk, (2) submission of agreed upon voluntary homework, with sufficient copies to myself and other groups of students, (3) small group or whole class review of homework, and (4) negotiated discussion of new study and/or study already begun.

This conceptual and practiced CLIL framework aims for students not only to participate in the planning and practice of the curriculum, but to take control of their study and learning, McKinney (2007) observes that it is necessary for study participants to be much more attentive not only to what they study (knowledge), or the skills they utilize to enhance knowledge learning. They need, McKinney argues, to hone in on how they study and how they value what and how they study through shared dialogue. My attention remains fixed on students as individuals and groups, but the learning focus, however, is on shared communal learning, and in particular, how we can use the intersection of our shared language and communication and social life knowledge-building to drive and nurture a civil society in class from one week to the next.

V. Concluding thoughts

One definition of global citizenship states that if young people need to be empowered as citizens then they need to learn in an environment that actually recognizes them as citizens, and which treats
and respects them as citizens. In such an environment it is critical that participants are provided opportunities to practice and develop skills and dispositions which enhance their citizenship responsibilities (Time for Rights, Unicef and Save the Children, 2002). The many decisions taken in class study, choices that are or are not made about, for example, what and how to study, or whether smaller groups and study rules need be formed and how, can and ought to be better understood by connected system participants. Students need to be more fully aware of who they are, not only as individuals or groups, but more importantly as socially connected individuals and groups, how the world and its social life systems affect them, and also how they can have control over how the world affects them through their active participation in systems.

An integrated CLIL and citizenship approach gives promise of sociological educational practice fulfilling its principal task as argued by Barnes (2000), Baumann (1989), Johnson (1997), and King (2007), and is vital to social science as,

1. It brings into the constitutive life of class study lived and experienced issues of, for example, power, territory/dominance, roles, statuses, values, responsibilities to and for society, structure(s), and culture that exist and are real for students and teachers outside school and class life,

2. It re-affirms the importance of groups, and how people form groups and live in groups. Furthermore, it re-focuses a connection with micro-sociological practice (the interactions between connected individuals in groups, and between groups) with a more macro-view of social life.

Systems do not change unless relationships change, especially where and when people choose or do not choose to take paths of least resistance. “Schooling” is as much about what people do as it is about associations we may have with the idea of “schooling” as a social system. What happens in the system (i.e. schooling and the classroom) depends on the situation the participants are in, and also how they choose to participate. People participate in social systems which have cultures containing words and ideas people can use to interpret what they experience and come to know. Humans, argues Johnson, use culture to create or recreate the world(s) they live in.

Class study culture primarily consists of symbols, especially words, contained in a language or languages, and various kinds of ideas about everything from our relations with one another to the meaning of our and others’ lives. Schooling as a social life system is an ongoing process being a work always in progress. Integrated CLIL-citizenship learning can help students see schooling as micro interaction of connected individuals and connected groups and as macro social systems in which they are part. As schooling unfolds, it emerges from how we choose from moment to moment what we are going to make of it. Language-communication development and on-going classroom social life are not subsidiary to knowledge about the world outside the classroom. Student understandings of social life and society are not distinct from how they experience their own immediate “society” as it unfolds.

The interdisciplinary language, education, and social science teaching and study approach put forth in this paper has been well received by students. In end-term surveys of how they view their study and learning, a large majority of students continually report that they do in fact have some better ideas of what “society” and “culture” are, how “structures” relate to “culture” and how people are part of systems. Students also say that of all that they have learned in their study, individual and social responsibility to and for their class study is most beneficial for them. Future practiced research of the employment of a CLIL citizenship learning should now aim to investigate more deeply how parti-
pants view this learning process and the learning outcomes of their study.

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References
Conceiving and Practicing Global Citizenship and Civic Responsibility Higher Learning through a Sociology in English Curriculum Study

ABSTRACT

Class social life is a system with connected individuals and groups who participate and relate to one another in a number of ways. People are what make any system “happen,” and without their participation any system only exists as an idea with some physical reality attached. People make systems happen, and systems lay out paths of least resistance to shape participation. The foreign language classroom can be used for communication development and knowledge acquisition where the main goal is neither functional nor strategic, but rather affective. Student understandings of social life and society and sociology are not distinct from how they experience their own immediate study society as it unfolds.

Key Words: Global citizenship, civic responsibility, sociology in English study