

Teaching Method for a Classroom of Students at Different Language Proficiency Levels: Content and Language Integrated Learning in a Japanese Culture Classroom

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Abstract : As a language learning methodology, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become increasingly prevalent in Japan. Most CLIL classroom practice and its research are conducted in EFL fields. However, much less research has been done in the Japanese language learning setting. Therefore, there are still many issues to work out using CLIL in the Japanese language teaching (JLT) setting. It is expected that more research will be conducted on both authentically and academically. Under such circumstances, this is one of the few classroom-based CLIL researches experiments in JLT and aims to find an effective course design for a class with students at different proficiency levels. The class was called 'Japanese culture A'. This class was offered as one of the elective classes for International exchange students at a Japanese university. The Japanese proficiency level of the class was above the Japanese Language Proficiency Test Level N3. Since the CLIL approach places importance on 'authenticity', the class was designed with materials and activities; such as books, magazines, a film and TV show and a field trip to Kyoto. On the field trip, students experienced making traditional Japanese desserts, by receiving guidance directly from a Japanese artisan. Through the course, designated task sheets were used so the teacher could get feedback from each student to grasp what the class proficiency gap was. After reading an article on Japanese culture, students were asked to write down the words they did not understand and what they thought they needed to learn. It helped both students and teachers to set learning goals and work together for it. Using questionnaires and interviews with students, this research examined whether the attempt was effective or not. Essays they wrote in class were also analyzed. The results from the students were positive. They were motivated by learning authentic, natural Japanese, and they thrived setting their own personal goals. Some students were motivated to learn Japanese by studying the language and others were motivated by studying the cultural context. Most of them said they learned better this way; by setting their own Japanese language and culture goals. These results will provide teachers with new insight towards designing class materials and activities that support students in a multilevel CLIL class.

Keywords : authenticity, CLIL, Japanese language and culture, multilevel class

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