

The Effect of Cross-Curriculum of L1 and L2 on Elementary School Students' Linguistic Proficiency: To Sympathize with Others

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Abstract : This paper reports on a project to integrate Japanese (as a first language) and English (as a second language) education. This study focuses on the mutual effects of the two languages on the linguistic proficiency of elementary school students. The research team consisted of elementary school teachers and researchers at a university. The participants of the experiment were students between 3rd and 6th grades at an elementary school. The research process consisted of seven steps: 1) specifying linguistic proficiency; 2) developing the cross-curriculum of L1 and L2; 3) forming can-do statements; 4) creating a self-evaluation questionnaire; 5) executing the self-evaluation questionnaire at the beginning of the school year; 6) instructing L1 and L2 based on the curriculum; and 7) executing the self-evaluation questionnaire at the beginning of the next school year. In Step 1, the members of the research team brainstormed ways to specify elementary school students' linguistic proficiency that can be observed in various scenes. It was revealed that the teachers evaluate their students' linguistic proficiency on the basis of the students' utterances, but also informed by their non-verbal communication abilities. This led to the idea that competency for understanding others' minds through the use of physical movement or bodily senses in communication in L1 – to sympathize with others – can be transferred to that same competency in communication in L2. Based on the specification of linguistic proficiency that L1 and L2 have in common, a cross-curriculum of L1 and L2 was developed in Step 2. In Step 3, can-do statements based on the curriculum were also formed, building off of the action-oriented approach from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) used in Europe. A self-evaluation questionnaire consisting of the main can-do statements was given to the students between 3rd grade and 6th grade at the beginning of the school year (Step 4 and Step 5), and all teachers gave L1 and L2 instruction based on the curriculum to the students for one year (Step 6). The same questionnaire was given to the students at the beginning of the next school year (Step 7). The results of statistical analysis proved the enhancement of the students' linguistic proficiency. This verified the validity of developing the cross-curriculum of L1 and L2 and adapting it in elementary school. It was concluded that elementary school students do not distinguish between L1 and L2, and that they just try to understand others' minds through physical movement or senses in any language.

Keywords : cross curriculum of L1 and L2, elementary school education, language proficiency, sympathy with others

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