

The Effect of Realizing Emotional Synchrony with Teachers or Peers on Children's Linguistic Proficiency: The Case Study of Uji Elementary School

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Abstract : This paper reports on a joint research project in which a researcher in applied linguistics and elementary school teachers in Japan explored new ways to realize emotional synchrony in a classroom in childhood education. The primary purpose of this project was to develop a cross-curriculum of the first language (L1) and second language (L2) based on the concept of plurilingualism. This concept is common in Europe, and can-do statements are used in forming the standard of linguistic proficiency in any language; these are attributed to the action-oriented approach in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). CEFR has a basic tenet of language education: improving communicative competence. Can-do statements are classified into five categories based on the tenet: reading, writing, listening, speaking/ interaction, and speaking/ speech. The first approach of this research was to specify the linguistic proficiency of the children, who are still developing their L1. Elementary school teachers brainstormed and specified the linguistic proficiency of the children as the competency needed to synchronize with others – teachers or peers – physically and mentally. The teachers formed original can-do statements in language proficiency on the basis of the idea that emotional synchrony leads to understanding others in communication. The research objectives are to determine the effect of language education based on the newly developed curriculum and can-do statements. The participants of the experiment were 72 third-graders in Uji Elementary School, Japan. For the experiment, 17 items were developed from the can-do statements formed by the teachers and divided into the same five categories as those of CEFR. A can-do checklist consisting of the items was created. The experiment consisted of three steps: first, the students evaluated themselves using the can-do checklist at the beginning of the school year. Second, one year of instruction was given to the students in Japanese and English classes (six periods a week). Third, the students evaluated themselves using the same can-do checklist at the end of the school year. The results of statistical analysis showed an enhancement of linguistic proficiency of the students. The average results of the post-check exceeded that of the pre-check in 12 out of the 17 items. Moreover, significant differences were shown in four items, three of which belonged to the same category: speaking/ interaction. It is concluded that children can get to understand others's minds through physical and emotional synchrony. In particular, emotional synchrony is what teachers should aim at in childhood education.

Keywords : elementary school education, emotional synchrony, language proficiency, sympathy with others

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