

# **Integrating Global Citizenship Education and Language Learning**

## **Based on the Approach of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**

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### **Abstract**

#### **Background**

The Japanese government and the economy sectors have emphasized the necessity of developing “global human resources” for over a decade. In this regard, experts in the field of foreign languages have been synchronizing them, claiming that English proficiency is one of the indispensable skills that global human resources are required to obtain. However, considering that serious global issues have been impeding the sustainable development of the world, schoolteachers must not encourage children to be global businesspeople who are unconcerned about serious issues that irresponsible industrial activities may cause. The author firmly believes that experts in English language teaching should contribute to fostering students’ global citizenship, enabling the latter to recognize global issues as their own problems, address them actively, help achieve sustainable development of the global society, and develop their English language skills.

#### **Development of CLIL**

The development and dissemination of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Japan and worldwide seem to be supported by the success of immersion programs in Canada and the dissemination of Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT). CLIL has shown rapid advancement in some countries in the European Union (EU), which seeks an innovative educational approach to its integration based on plurilingualism/pluriculturalism. Numerous studies have been conducted to clarify the effectiveness of CLIL in developing

language proficiency and content knowledge, and most of these studies have demonstrated positive results in both areas. However, it can be argued that CLIL remains understudied.

### **A practical study**

The primary purpose of this study is to clarify whether students in Japan can both improve their English language proficiency and strengthen their global citizenship at the same time by applying the approach of content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

Specifically, this study addresses the following three research questions (RQ): (1) Are the CLIL-based English courses dealing with global issues effective in improving the English proficiency of Japanese university students?, (2) Are the CLIL-based English courses dealing with global issues effective in enhancing Japanese university students' global citizenship?, and (3) How do the CLIL-based English courses dealing with global issues affect Japanese university students' thoughts and feelings? How does it encourage their cognitive development?

The author implemented a practical study in which two CLIL courses were provided for university students aged 19–21 between 2020 and 2022. Data on English proficiency, global citizenship, and students' thoughts and feelings were collected through CASEC, students' reflection comments, Ishimori's global citizenship scale, and a semi-structured focus group interview. One of the two CLIL courses dealt with poverty, hunger, marine resources, and responsible consumption and production, whereas the other course covered topics such as global warming, plastic waste, renewable and non-renewable energy resources, and water-related issues such as securing drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation.

### **Results**

Regarding RQ1, the statistical analysis of CASEC scores did not demonstrate any positive impact of the CLIL practices on the test scores. This may imply, first, that the design of both courses was inadequate to improve students' English proficiency. While the students

participated in reading comprehension, writing action plans, and learning vocabulary related to the topics given in the classes, they might lack sufficient opportunities to learn and apply the language, such as focusing on form, discussion (using English), and making face-to-face presentations. Furthermore, the English skills they acquire in those courses may not be reflected in the test scores. The CASEC tests predominantly focus on basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) rather than cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), and even if the students had improvements in terms of CALP, it would not be reflected in the CASEC test scores. In addition, the number of participants who took the CASEC tests fluctuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in insufficient data to assess the impact of CLIL practices. On the other hand, the analysis of the type-token ratio suggests that the CLIL practice may have contributed to raising the students' vocabulary size, although the statistics did not show the overall significance of the change. This may have resulted from the fact that the students needed to learn many words and phrases that fall into CALP rather than BICS, and thus the improvement of the students' vocabulary may not have resulted in better CASEC scores.

The analysis of the global citizenship survey showed positive results in terms of RQ2. It is suggested that the CLIL course provided in this study worked positively in fostering the students' knowledge and understanding of global issues. Regarding skills development, the results suggest that some scaffolding may be necessary to help students feel relevant to the issues that are too big or happening in too far places for them to feel so. The changes in the students' attitudes and values were relatively small compared with the other two categories. This suggests a need to enhance students' self-efficacy by giving them tasks that are "within their capabilities" and encouraging them to experience success in completing the tasks. The overall positive results of this statistical analysis are supported by the students' reflection

comments, which express their attitudes toward global issues as their own problems and their willingness to take action.

Regarding RQ3, the four students' feedback in the semi-structured focus group interview gave some interesting suggestions: (1) the choice of contents seems to attract students a lot, which may result in motivating students in higher education to learn the target language (English) even if they are not confident in it, (2) CLIL classes may improve students' cognitive skills more than by using only their mother tongue, (3) the difficulty in vocabulary learning in the course they attended may show the lack of focus on CALP in English learning/teaching in Japanese school, (4) appropriate scaffolding such as providing word lists helps students improve their language skills, and (5) CLIL practices dealing with global issues can not only change students' attitudes toward them but also lead to behavioral changes, and thus contribute to foster the students' global citizenship.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the CLIL practices given by the author led to positive results in fostering global citizenship, whereas the improvements in students' English proficiency were not clearly indicated. However, the analysis of the type-token ratio of the students' comments showed the possibility of developing CALP vocabulary, and the students themselves felt their own improvements in language learning and global citizenship. It is hoped that further research will be implemented to realize improved CLIL programs that encourage students to enhance their global citizenship and English proficiency together so that they will be able to contribute to the world's sustainable development.