

Chapter 9

Improving the L2 Interactional and Critical Thinking Skills of University Students Using the CLIL Approach in the 21st Century

Sakae Onoda
Juntendo University, Japan

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, and effects of the CLIL (content and language-integrated learning) approach with a primary focus on the use of group projects on the development of English interactional skills (especially oral fluency), self-efficacy, and critical thinking skills in undergraduate English majors in Japan. The chapter first reviews L2 literature on the use and features of the CLIL approach and then focuses on the use of group projects and their potential effects on three important dimensions of language learning: linguistic, affective, and social. The literature review covers the author's own investigations of the effects of group projects substantiated by students' feedback and statistical data collected as part of his extensive teaching experience in universities. Finally, a number of practical suggestions for implementing group projects are presented along with procedures and worksheets so that interested readers can adopt these in their own teaching context.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2831-0.ch009

BACKGROUND

Inherent Problems Underlying English Learning in Japan

It is often reported that with advanced English language skills being emphasized in the face of an increasingly globalizing society, teaching EFL learners in secondary schools in Japan is challenging for a number of inherent reasons: 1) students lack strong motivation or need to learn English because they do not clearly perceive any intrinsic learning goals beyond studying English to get good scores in high school or university entrance examinations or for studying abroad (Onoda, 2014); 2) they have limited exposure to or opportunities for using spoken English outside the classroom (Nation, 2013) unless they take speaking and listening lessons online or in language schools; 3) they do not study English extensively because English is learned generally as a compulsory school subject and the number of classroom learning hours is limited (Vázquez, Molina, & López, 2014); 4) practicing teachers have not developed advanced interactional skills of their own, which makes it difficult to facilitate communication-based teaching; and 5) students usually study in large classes (30-40 on average), which makes it difficult for teachers to implement rich classroom interactions in English (Onoda, 2014; Onoda & Miyashita, 2018; Yamazaki, 2006; Sato, 2012).

As a result, Japanese learners of English have not developed advanced English proficiency, especially in terms of interactional skills, including not only fluent and accurate language use but also the critical thinking skills critical to interaction in authentic language use contexts, both of which might instigate and maintain their further autonomous language learning (Borg, 2013; Onoda, 2019a). Moreover, English language teaching in Japanese universities does not appear to help these students improve their English language skills, mainly for the following reasons:

1. **Professional Limitations:** English classes are taught by teachers whose majors often vary (for example, from second language acquisition to international relations) and who may lack adequate knowledge of teaching techniques or teaching experience;
2. **Curricular Limitations:** English language teaching is constrained, in most cases with three or four different English subjects offered each week and a lack of balance between meaning-focused input and output, language-focused learning, and fluency development (Nation, 2013; see below for details). This reflects the reality that in university, majors (e.g., economics in the Faculty of Economics) are placed at the core of the curriculum with English classes relegated to the periphery or designed mainly to help students understand their

23 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/improving-the-l2-interactive-and-critical-thinking-skills-of-university-students-using-the-clil-approach-in-the-21st-century/271477

Related Content

Human vs. AI: An Assessment of the Translation Quality Between Translators and Machine Translation

Hanji Liand Haiqing Chen (2019). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-12).

www.irma-international.org/article/human-vs-ai/222826

Conclusion and Directions for Further Research

(2022). *Cutting-Edge Language and Literacy Tools for Students on the Autism Spectrum* (pp. 286-293).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/conclusion-and-directions-for-further-research/308049

Book Review: Understanding Metaphor Through Corpora: A Case Study of Metaphors in Nineteenth Century Writing

Yanwei Wang (2021). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 51-56).

www.irma-international.org/article/book-review/281673

Sidney Shapiro's Translatorial Agency: A Diachronic Perspective

Honghua Liu (2019). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-11).

www.irma-international.org/article/sidney-shapiros-translatorial-agency/222827

Witness or Interpreter?: Converting a Litigant Into a Court Interpreter in a Self-Interpreted Testimony Presentation

Akungah O'Nyangeri, John Habweand Zaja Omboga (2022). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-20).

www.irma-international.org/article/witness-or-interpreter/314790