

First-year junior high students learning *Rakugo* in soft-CLIL lessons: an application of Cognitive Discourse Functions

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1. The theoretical background of CLIL

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a language teaching approach that originated in European multilingual education. In CLIL lessons, students learn language through content learning. CLIL teachers teach a wide range of content with special attention to big ideas. Big ideas are the problems or key questions mined from the text (Ikeda, 2023). Students seek solutions or their own answers for the big ideas through CLIL lessons. In addition, big ideas allow teachers to determine how they approach the content. Through learning content in CLIL lessons, students are supposed to gain not only language skills but also a deeper understanding of the content.

The present research provides an example of soft-CLIL lessons, which focuses on the content not included in school subjects and focuses on language acquisition more than mastering the content.

2. Objectives

The present research focuses on the educational settings of Japan. The latest course of study (MEXT, 2017) is based on three objectives: Knowledge and skills, students' ability to think, make judgments, and express themselves, and motivation to learn and humanity. This research employs the framework based on the cognitive discourse function (CDF) by Dalon-Puffer (2013) to develop students' ability to think, make judgments, and express themselves.

The course of study indicates three steps for the thinking skills and expressiveness section. To meet the demands of the course of study, Cognitive Discourse Functions (CDF) are adopted as the means of analyzing cognitive activity in this research. Dalon-Puffer provided the seven types of cognitive discourse functions. CDF consists of seven functions that are not in hierarchical relationships. Each category has sub categories that express cognitive discourse in classroom activity.

This study applies CDF to categorize the activities and to organize meaningful soft-CLIL lessons

Table 1 List of CDF categories and their members (Dalon-Puffer, 2013)

Classify	Classify, compare, contrast, match, structure, categorize, subsume
Define	Define, identify, characterize
Describe	Describe, label, identify, name, specify
Evaluate	Evaluate, judge, argue, justify, take a stance, critique, recommend, comment, reflect, appreciate
Explain	Explain, reason, express cause/ effect, draw conclusions, deduce
Explore	Explore, hypothesize, speculate, predict, guess, estimate, simulate, take other perspectives
Report	Report, inform, recount, narrate, present, summarize, relate

that offer students new perspectives or deeper understandings of the content. The main objective of

this study is to try out the CDF for planning soft-CLIL lessons and implement and analyze the effect of such soft-CLIL lessons. The objectives of this research are:

- I. To apply the CDF to a Japanese setting of English education, especially soft-CLIL lessons which require cognitive activities.
- II. To investigate the effect of soft-CLIL lessons on the depth of students' content learning.

3. Plan

Framework

The framework has two domains: lesson flows and cognitive domains. Lesson flow consists of four procedures: understanding concepts and facts, forming the idea, developing the idea, and concluding and outputting. This procedure focuses on content learning. Therefore, students need to learn vocabulary and target grammar in grammar lessons. The first process, understanding concepts and facts, means that students understand the basic facts and concepts of the content. This process requires understanding the basic components of the contents to form their initial ideas. The second process requires students to form their initial idea about the topic. Teachers can monitor the effect of the content lesson by comparing this initial idea with students' final idea. This step is necessary for content learning in soft-CLIL because students can know their achievement of content learning through the change in their ideas. The objective of the third process is to develop their initial idea through the activities. The activities provide students with new perspectives on the idea or deepen their ideas. The fourth process has various approaches to demonstrate students' final ideas about the topic. Students output their ideas depending on the final task.

In cognitive domains, CDF are assigned depending on whether the function fits the aim of the process. As mentioned above, the first, third, and fourth processes are related to the demands of the course of the study. Therefore, some of the verbs are excluded even though the functions seem to fit the objectives of the process.

Teachers can use this framework in the planning of the lesson. They choose one verb from the table to plan activities. The verb can be paraphrased and used in the learning objectives. However, these verbs do not mean students' cognition, but more likely express just what students do in the activity.

Table 2 The framework based on CDF by Dalon-Puffer

	Classify	Define	Describe	Evaluate	Explain	Explore	Report
First process: Understanding the concepts and facts	All	All	All	(Take a stance) (Comment)	Express cause/effect	-	Summarize
Second process: Forming the ideas	-	-	Describe	-	Deduce	Explore Predict Guess Estimate	-
Third process: Developing the ideas	All	All	All	All	Express cause/effect	All	Relate
Fourth process: Concluding and outputting	-	-	Describe	-	Explain Reason Draw conclusion	-	All

* All means all of the verbs in the sub-category fit the process. ** Hyphen means that none of the verbs fit the process.

Lesson plan

New Horizon 1, Unit 7 “Foreign Artists in Japan” is used in the present lesson. The unit begins with an explanation of two foreign artists, Euan Craig and Diane Kichijitu. In the latter part of the unit, students read the explanation of *rakugo*, and the unit ends with a conversation between two

characters about the *rakugo* show.

A Soft-CLIL approach is applied in 3 reading lessons and 2 lessons for extra activities. The framework is used in the planning of the lesson. At the beginning of planning, the big idea was considered with the content of the textbook. After consideration, the big idea was defined as identifying the attractiveness of *rakugo*. The question was “Why is *rakugo* popular?” which uses simple words so that first-year students can understand. In addition, the final task was considered. In this unit, students performed the *rakugo* in groups. As for the activities in each lesson, the textbook and framework were referred to for planning.

4. Result

Students’ initial idea of the factor of popularity of *rakugo*

As for the initial idea, three factors are focused on the popularity of the *rakugo*. The first factor is the *funniness* of the content. Students described the story as funny. The second factor generated by students was *rakugo* as Japanese culture. They knew that *Japanese culture* is popular among foreign people, and they speculated that *rakugo* is popular because everything about *rakugo* is new to foreign people. The third factor is the way of the *rakugo* performer’s speaking. In the students’ descriptions, *overreaction*, *tempo*, *facial expressions*, and the *way of acting* of two characters seem to be impressive for them.

Students’ final idea about the factor of popularity of *rakugo*

The table of the frequency shows that the score of the word “*funny*” is the largest among all of the words. The result means that students considered the funniness of the *rakugo* story as the key component of the popularity of *rakugo*. The second most frequent word is “*gesture*.” This means many students’ comments involved the description related to gestures. The fourth lesson that treated the effectiveness of gestures might affect this result. Many students described that the gesture is one of the components of comprehensibility and is one factor of the popularity.

Table 3 The frequent words in final ideas

word	frequency
面白い (funny)	48
ジェスチャー (gesture)	34
オチ (clever twist)	25
落語 (<i>rakugo</i>)	20
思う (suppose)	16
わかりやすい (comprehensible)	14

*The terms are translated by the present researcher.

5. Discussion

The present study aims to apply the CDF to a soft-CLIL setting of English education in Japan. Soft-CLIL lessons which require cognitive activities. The second aim is to investigate the effect of soft-CLIL lessons based on the framework on the depth of students' content learning in lessons. In terms of the first aim, CDF is applied for the one dimension of the framework. The application of CDF seemed to result in motivating students. The other dimension guides the flow of the soft-CLIL lesson. Using this framework, seemed to lead to students’ positive attitudes to the lessons. From the analysis of the final idea, lesson 3, in which students engaged in cognitive activity, was impressive

for students. This result implies that cognitive activities at an appropriate level is meaningful for students. These results indicate that the lessons that involve cognitive activity in CDF help the students learn the content. Therefore, soft-CLIL lessons are an effective way of approach to language learning in the Japanese context.

Moreover, the use of the framework assists teachers in planning effective lessons easily. Using the framework enables teachers to plan consistent lessons for the final goal of the unit. With four processes and CDF, teachers are able to plan language lessons that involve cognitive activities in the proper context. Therefore, students are able to have prospects for the whole lesson and engage in learning more positively. However, this example of the framework use did not involve creative output such as presentation, making a speech, and so on. In a higher context of soft-CLIL, more creative learning outcomes are expected. Thus, more verification of the usefulness of the framework is necessary for improving the present framework.

6. Conclusion

The present study aims to connect CDF with the demands of the course of study. The framework involves two dimensions, and one dimension adopts CDF to provide the verb useful for planning cognitive activity. The other dimension shows the flow of the lessons. The use of this framework enables teachers to organize meaningful lessons that involve a more consistent approach for students learning through the units. The framework meets the three cognitive demands of the course of the study. Moreover, the use of this framework allows students to engage in deeper learning of the content to students. Through four processes, students learn the content and think about the problem more deeply. As the analysis shows, the lesson based on the framework seemed to affect students' final ideas. This result shows that the students seemed to engage in the lessons and to think deeper than just reading and understanding the textbook. However, more practices are needed to verify the usefulness of the framework.

7. Reference

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