

Not a language course (!): teaching global leadership skills through a foreign language in a flipped, blended, and ubiquitous learning environment

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Abstract. This paper reports on the evidence learning found from a flipped, blended, ubiquitous learning Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) course teaching global leadership skills using a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to Japanese undergraduates through English. The purposes of the current study are to see if (1) there was any evidence of learning found in the students' oral outputs, and (2) there were any changes in student perceptions about the course and their Target Language (TL) fluency over a 10-week period. The data were collected through two interview sessions conducted in Weeks 4 and 14. A similar set of questions were asked in both interviews to gauge student understanding of the course content, perceptual changes, and oral output skills. Three-semester worth of interview data were transcribed and sorted into four categories; (1) *transfer of words*, (2) *transfer of phrases*, (3) *transfer of concepts*, and (4) *application of concepts*. The results indicated that the students' perceptions of the course shifted from an English as a foreign language course to a leadership course, and they produced more course relevant answers.

Keywords: CLIL, leadership education, student perception, MOOC.

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1. Introduction

This paper reports on Foreign Language (FL) development in Japanese undergraduates enrolled in a global leadership course created to meet the Japanese government's initiatives for cultivating young global leaders. The study was conducted at a mid-sized private university near Tokyo, which set up a new course to suffice the government's strategic plan (MEXT, 2012) for the tertiary education sector. The curriculum team, however, faced a challenge of needing to improve students' English skills without teaching the language itself. This was because there was a discrepancy in the perceived required skill sets for global leaders between the government and the university.

In order to make the TL learning invisible, a CLIL approach was employed as CLIL views learning of the TL should occur from *using* the TL, and unlike the traditional language education, fluency in the TL is regarded as more important than accuracy (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). Also, materials from a MOOC course from FutureLearn (<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/cultural-intelligence>) were used as the course content to provide authenticity and expose students to global-standard knowledge. The selected MOOC videos and articles were reorganised by using a mobile app, Handbook, to adjust the content level to suit the students' L2 levels – mainly Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels B1, ranging from A2 to B2.

Handbook was used as the hub for accessing the course materials for self-study, which enabled flipped and ubiquitous learning. In the physical classroom, students had discussion and presentation tasks related to the flipped materials, with the help of Teaching Assistants (TAs) who were exchange students from the US. This complex environment was constructed to support student understanding of the materials, create opportunities to produce intelligible output in English, and provide a quasi-multicultural environment to exercise leadership skills learned in the course (see Tanaka-Ellis & Sekiguchi, 2019 for more details).

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to see if there was any evidence of learning in their oral output, and (2) to find out if there were any changes in their perceptions towards the course and their fluency in the TL over the course of ten weeks. For the first part of the investigation, two interviews, ten weeks apart (Weeks 4 and 14), were conducted asking them to describe the key concepts from the course. For the second part of the investigation, the first and the second interviews were compared to see if their answers regarding student perceptions of the course and their oral fluency had changed.

2. Method

In this paper, the audio- and video-recorded interviews of the students enrolled in the 2016 ($n=29$) and 2017 ($n=31$) courses were used due to the completeness of the data set. A total of 114 students participated in the study, however, only the data sets with both interviews were used ($n=95$).

For the student perception analysis, the 2018 data ($n=35$) were added because the data were available for that part. The interview sessions in Week 4 and 14 were conducted as one of the weekly in-class activities. The TAs acted as interviewers as the students were used to talking to them in their group discussions³:

- What is your name?
- Tell us why you decided to take this course.*
- What do you want to learn in this course?*/ What did you learn in this course?***
- What is your understanding of cultural intelligence?
- What is your understanding of global leadership? Who is a global leader? Name one person and give some reasons.
- Previously we discussed what was in our core and flex. Having taken part in the past four weeks, is there anything you would add or change to your core and flex?***

Each interview lasted for two minutes and when students could not answer for ten seconds, the TAs were instructed to move on to the next question. The data were sorted into the following categories of learning evidence; (1) *transfer of words*, (2) *transfer of phrases*, (3) *transfer of concepts*, and (4) *application of concepts*.

The 2017 data set was used for testing interrater reliability for coding. The results of Cohen's kappa indicate (Transfer:.93; Perception:.85) a strong agreement between the two raters.

3. Questions with * indicates Interview 1 only, ** indicates Interview 2 only, no asterisk indicates asked in both interviews.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Evidence of learning as transferred linguistic keywords and concepts

Table 1 below presents the transfer of words, phrases, concepts, and application of concepts found in Interview 2.

Table 1. Transfer and application of keywords and concepts

	2016	2017
1) Transfer of words	42	35
2) Transfer of phrases	3	0
3) Transfer of concepts	47	39
4) Application of concepts	42	46

As shown in the Table 1, the students were able to use the key concepts and applied the concepts by giving examples. As in the examples below, the students showed a better grasp of the key issues in Interview 2 compared to Interview 1.

Transfer of words (Q3): (Rumiko⁴: A2)

- Interview 1: The way to communicate with other people.
- Interview 2: I learned many important things, especially the biggest thing is *core* and *flex*, yeah.

Transfer of phrases (Q3): (Ikue: B1)

- Interview 1: I want to learn like things I haven't learned before.
- Interview 2: First of all, I learned about core to flex and flex to core.

Transfer of concepts (Q4): (Hotaru: A2)

- Interview 1: Cultural intelligence is to cooperate with ah, other culture's people or other background people, so we should cooperate with, how difference ah, from our own culture to other cultural people.

4. All first names are pseudonyms.

- Interview 2: I think cultural intelligence is to, *it's the ability to understand other cultural or other people.*

Application of concepts (Q5): (Mirai: B1)

- Interview 1: I think global person is maybe he or she has cultural intelligence like she can understand people and lead them.
- Interview 2: I think global leader is a person who is required to, required to think, think and understand other side of people. *Like, for example, Koike Yuriko who is a leader of Tokyo. She is the first leader who is woman and she has other, she has, ah, different point of view.*

3.2. Changes in student perceptions of the course and the TL fluency

Table 2 shows the change in perceiving the course after ten weeks. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of students who mentioned English related skills when they talked about academic skills.

Table 2. Change in perception of the course

	2016		2017		2018	
	Int. 1	Int. 2	Int. 1	Int. 2	Int. 1	Int. 2
Academic skills (English related skills)	26 (18)	3 (1)	30 (22)	3 (1)	27 (24)	3 (1)
Course content related	10	27	24	29	22	32
Others	9	1	9	1	8	0

Note: When one student had mixed opinions (e.g. academic skills and content related), one count for each category was added.

In Week 4, a large number of students viewed the course as an English course, however, their perceptions had changed to a leadership course ten weeks later. In terms of their English fluency, there was no notable difference between the two interviews (Table 3).

Table 3. Words produced in two minutes

	Interview 1			Interview 2		
	Maximum	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Minimum	Average
2016	197* (B1)	36 (B1)	106	189* (B1)	59 (A2)	107
2017	156 (B1)	40 (B1)	99	198 (B1)	45 (B1)	105

*The same student

The language proficiency did not seem to play a part in their performance or fluency. Despite the fluency results, other results and speech samples suggest that the students produced utterances more relevant to the course in Week 14.

4. Conclusion

From the results, the students' mindset shifted from perceiving the course as an English to a global leadership course. Although the fluency did not seem to improve between the first and second interviews, their answers to the interview questions were more succinct and were more relevant to the course content. The complex learning environment with CLIL seemed to be effective in delivering the authentic content through a FL and supported their content comprehension and the TL use. To examine the full effects of this learning environment and CLIL, complexity, fluency, and accuracy may be looked at in the future.

5. Acknowledgements

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