

LESS IS MORE: CASE OF TEACHING JAPANESE CULTURE THROUGH PERFORMANCE-BASED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Learning skills and work habits in our students are essential focus in almost fields of learning in the 21st century. It is expected that teachers will work with students to help them understand and develop the learning skills and work habits. To ensure how Thai learners of Japanese culture enable to use their knowledge and apply skills to perform product in realistic situation, Performance-based learning was immersed as a part of Japanese culture class of the second year students majoring in Japanese at SSRU. To manage a semester long project, two stages of group activities were assigned: in and outside the classroom. At the final presentation, Japanese cultural fair was held by students beyond the class for a day. Three groups of participants: 41 students, 102 student audiences and 7 teacher audiences involved in evaluating by using open end questionnaire. The result revealed that students were engaged in “how to”, developed creative thinking, and performed their knowledge.

Keywords: Learning skills, work habits, Japanese culture, Performance-Based-Learning

INTRODUCTION

As technology has changed, traditional teaching methods have been challenged, and it allows students to be more independent in the classroom. They can discover solutions to problems both independently and collaboratively. To achieve the goals, students have to be developed learning skills and work habits; essential indicators for future success in school, at home, and in life in general. The nature of teaching and learning is becoming more collaborative. In other words, teachers will work together with students to develop the criteria used to assess these goals. Teachers can promote long-lasting learning, build critical thinking to students. In addition, cultural instruction has been asked to more fully incorporate into the curriculum. Culture is defined as a fundamental part of the second language learning [1]. Study any foreign language today, students have to gain knowledge and understand of the cultures that use that language.

Though the issue of incorporate more cultural activities into the classroom has recognized by teachers of various fields, it is rather difficult to present students a representative picture of the target culture. However, it is a crucial matter to give students cultural knowledge; especially for students who have never been to the target culture country. Different approaches of cultural teaching are introduced to incorporate into the classroom.[2] suggested to enhance traditional methods with digital technology for teaching culture. The digital resources allow teachers to create new techniques and develop strategies that are conducive for learning the L2 cultural concepts. Virtual Reality (VR) allows students to physically experience the culture, and can offer the feeling of fun and reality to explore the culture environment in ways that are impossible through the use of other media [3]. The Internet-based culture project can bring insider's views of other cultures into the classroom.[4] conducted the Internet-based culture portfolios project with learners of German language courses and found that the Internet-based culture project promoted learner's acquisition of new cultures from an emic perspective.

Performance-based learning can also incorporate into the curriculum and can be modified for students at different grade and ability levels. The project work can be completed by students individually, in small groups, or as a class. Performance projects involves multi-skill activities which focus on a theme of interest

rather than specific tasks, and it can promote work habits to students [5]. [6] described that the projects can take shape as food fair, fashion shows or theatrical performances, and can be carried out intensively over a short period of time or extend over a few weeks.

In Japanese history class, a project-based learning (PBL) was applied to each group of third-year students [7]. Two in-depth presentations: one for their classmates, and one for a general audience online were assigned. The result showed that it gave students creativity and excitement, and students began attending to the "how to" knowledge

Considering teaching context: class size, class hours, student's cultural background, and curriculum, Performance-based learning was incorporated as a part of Japanese culture class at SSRU. All students completed an elementary Japanese therefore they come with a foundation of Japanese grammar and vocabulary but most of them need more developing their fluency. A small number of students have experienced in participating a short term student exchange program in Japan, or taking a trip to Japan. However, a majority have never visited Japan or a foreign country. Japanese culture is something they may have seen on TV or various kinds of social media.

METHODOLOGY

Performance-based learning was incorporated as a part of Japanese culture class conducted semester-long to ensure how Thai learners of Japanese culture enable to use their knowledge and apply skills in realistic situation. The process of the project was divided into two stages: individual research report and group presentation. On the first stage, forty one students were divided into ten groups composed of 3 to 4 people. Each group member was assigned to do a historical research on Japanese culture through media from Japan and their own country, library and Internet resources. During the data collection process, groups began to develop ideas for their group presentation/individual research report, and main topic of their project. All topics must be first approved by the author no later than the end of week seven of the class. Two weeks later, they had to present their project in class by using power point for fifteen minutes. A representative student from each group, was allowed to discuss if the project is well prepared, and gave some useful ideas. Students were informed about basic points, which will be evaluated. They had two weeks to improve their project planning, and prepared for their final presentation on Japanese Culture Fair.

The second stage was focused on student's cultural performance of their group topic to students and teachers other than the author. Sixty-first year students, forty one-third year students, forty two-fourth year students of Japanese Program of SSRU were participated as audiences. Seven teachers of Japanese language: four from SSRU and three from other universities were asked to be participated audiences.

Open-ended question was handed to all three groups of participants to give an evaluation about the performances. The responses can be compared to information that is already known to the author.

Pre-Performance

In order for the cultural performance to go well, place and the set of necessary equipment were reserved in advanced for two weeks. Open air hall of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences was offered for Japanese Culture Fair. The fair not only bring students and teachers together, to entertain and inform, but also educate and inspire. Each group managed all these things, challenging perceptions and providing their performances via a wide variety of mediums.

Fair Day

Japanese Culture Fair was held for a day on the week thirteen of the class. Ten groups of students exhibited Japanese culture which represented their unique vision, and building an audience around what they knew. The audiences can see, hear, play with, eat and drink, and also discuss for more information.

RESULTS

Forty one second-year students of Japanese culture class at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand, participated in the study as the presenters. They delivered ten Japanese cultural products: origami (paper folding), furoshiki (wrapping cloth), yukata (a light summer kimono), bento (a Japanese-style packed lunch), karee raisu (curry rice), onigiri (Japanese rice ball), okonomiyaki (Japanese pizza), raamen (Japanese meat or fish soup containing noodles), tonkatsu (deep-fried pork cutlet) and mochi (Japanese rice cake), some have shown in Figure1-Figure4.

A hundred and forty three students of Japanese learner in the same Program, and seven teachers of Japanese were participated as participant audiences. An open-ended question “what is the most valuable gain you have obtained from this project?” was revealed by three groups of participants.

From student's perspective: had fun; shared responsibility for task completion, knew how to acquire information, knew how to self-control and manage time, knew the process of doing, developed creative thinking and problem-solving, shared ideas and listened to other opinions, involved in planning and co-ordination and understood Japanese culture.

From student audience's perspective: had fun, knew how to display the cultural products, knew more Japanese culture, knew how to prepare work, tasted Japanese foods, and practiced Japanese arts.

From teacher audiences: knew work process control and solution, knew how to hold Japanese culture festival, knew how students involved in planning and co-ordination, knew how students implemented their knowledge to real world. These revealed that not only students engaged to “know how” but also to the audiences.

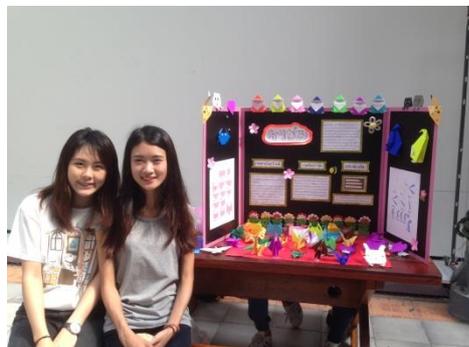
Figure 1
The display of onigiri (Japanese rice ball).



Figure 2
The display of okonomiyaki (Japanese pizza).



Figure 3
The display of origami (paper folding).



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Performance-based learning constitutes a benefit way to deliver lesson as a part of cultural class. Units of study do not have interrupted because authentic tasks are rooted in a course syllabus. Performance-based learning can allow students to physical experience the culture in the similar way of Virtual Reality, digital technology and Internet-based culture project which were proposed by the previous researchers. Students can acquire those experiences in the first stage of Performance-based learning: to do historical research via various kinds of mediums. More than fun and knowledge acquisition, students involved in the process of doing. They knew how to acquire information, knew how to manage time for work completion, knew the process of doing, worked with others and produce products. These revealed that students engaged in work habits as describing by Berman [8].

The current study, Performance-based learning was incorporate to the class at different ability levels, in small groups and students involved multi-skill activities from the first stage to the product end. The expected performance in work habits were revealed in the similar way as the previous researchers discussed. Three groups of participants gave the essential information of the Performance-based learning that it can promote student's study skills and work habits. For students, they knew what they need to learn during their researches. They involved applying knowledge to real life situations that are meaningful to them. They can manage and go through the process to the end of the products. They presented what they knew in different and their performances impacted some audiences in particular way. As stating, the project took a semester long to complete, students may face problems as working through the project therefore teacher plays an important role as a coach but not to spoil students.

Through Performance-based learning, not only students enjoyed the benefits of participating in this project but also to student audiences and teacher audiences. Both audience groups are also engaged in “know how” Student audiences knew how to display the cultural products but teacher audiences knew work process control and solution. From this starting point, they can modify their experiences to other learning activities.

However, the recent Project-based learning was mostly presented to teachers and students of Japanese program, the result rather revealed the positive side of the project. For the future project, it should more general open.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University for invaluable help throughout this research.

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