

“What Educational Interventions and Environments Foster Children’s Multi-Perspective Integration?: A Two-Year Examination Through Japanese Language Lessons in Japanese Elementary Schools”

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This study examined how children’s multi-perspective integration can be fostered through educational interventions and classroom environments by analyzing two years of Japanese language lessons conducted in elementary schools in Japan. In recent years, the importance of the ability to understand different viewpoints and integrate them to construct new solutions has been increasingly emphasized in discussions of 21st-century competencies and education for a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) society. In the field of argumentation research, “my-side bias” (Perkins, 1985), the tendency to focus only on information supporting one’s own position, has been widely discussed, highlighting the difficulty learners face in integrating diverse perspectives. In addition, Nussbaum (2008) argued that integrating arguments and counterarguments contributes to deeper thinking and higher-quality discussion. Based on these discussions, some studies have proposed “multi-perspective integration” as a higher-order competency involving the ability to consider multiple viewpoints and ultimately identify a “third way” that transcends conflicting positions (Uesaka et al., 2016). However, most previous studies have focused on secondary education, and little research has explicitly examined multi-perspective integration itself as a target of instruction at the elementary school level. In Japanese elementary language education, classroom discussion activities often emphasize procedural aspects such as facilitation and turn-taking, while the cognitive process of integrating multiple perspectives to generate new solutions has received limited attention.

Therefore, this study compared two years of practice in the fourth-grade Japanese language unit “How to Make Decisions as a Class” conducted in public elementary schools in Osaka, Japan, in order to examine the educational conditions that promote multi-perspective integration. Both classes consisted of approximately 30 fourth-grade students. Although this unit is based on a textbook widely used in Japanese elementary schools, its original instructional goal is not multi-perspective integration, but rather learning the procedures and processes of discussion. In this study, the first and second authors collaboratively redesigned and expanded the

instructional goals of the textbook to foster multi-perspective integration, while the first author implemented the lessons in the classroom.

In both years, students engaged in authentic discussion activities centered on planning an entertainment event for second-grade students. They were asked to coordinate multiple opinions and reach consensus through classroom discussion. Pre- and post-assessment tasks designed to measure multi-perspective integration were administered to analyze changes in students' abilities. The results showed statistically significant improvements in multi-perspective integration in both years. However, differences between the two implementations were also observed. In the second year, some students already demonstrated relatively high levels of multi-perspective integration before the intervention. In addition, classroom discourse analysis suggested that deeper levels of integration emerged more spontaneously in students' discussions during the second year compared to the first year. Therefore, this study explored the factors that may have contributed to these differences.

As discussed in Uesaka, Kajimoto, and Oba (accepted), students initially tended to engage in discussions aimed at supporting their own ideas while criticizing others' opinions. However, when the teacher encouraged students to shift their mindset from deciding "which idea is better" to considering "how a new idea could be created," students gradually began to demonstrate multi-perspective integration. Furthermore, the comparison across the two years suggested several additional important factors.

First, everyday classroom relationships and discussion culture appeared to provide an important foundation for multi-perspective integration. In the second-year class, many students actively expressed their own opinions and frequently experienced conflicts of viewpoints in daily classroom life. In addition, the class continuously engaged in a student-led activity called "Everyone Leaders," in which students identified classroom problems themselves and discussed ways to improve classroom life and learning. These experiences may have contributed to the development of constructive dialogue and leadership. In fact, students who played central roles in this activity were also frequently observed leading classroom discussions during the lessons.

Second, the assessment task was changed from a text-based format to a video-based format in the second year. This change may have helped students understand

conflict situations more concretely and increased their motivation to overcome disagreements.

Third, the teacher's experience from the first year may also have been influential. Through the first implementation, the teacher developed a clearer image of the desired forms of student discussion and became better able to intervene effectively, including choosing appropriate timing and prompts during classroom interaction.

These findings suggest that fostering multi-perspective integration requires not only decisive teacher interventions during classroom discussion, but also the cultivation of a classroom culture in which students regularly exchange opinions constructively, the design of activities that allow students to perceive conflicts as personally meaningful, and continuous teacher support based on a clear vision of ideal forms of collaborative dialogue among children.