

Developing CLIL Learners' Pragmatic Competence in Rural Taiwan

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Abstract

CLIL has become increasingly popular in the teaching of English in Asia. Many studies have documented the positive effects of CLIL on the different aspects of L2 learning. However, the impact of CLIL on rural EFL learners' pragmatic competence has received scanty attention. To fill in the research gaps, the aim of this study was twofold: to investigate the effect of explicit instruction on the CLIL learners' pragmatic competence in writing invitation emails, and to explore the learners' perception towards the learning of invitation emails in the CLIL lessons.

Participants were 30 eighth graders from two intact classes in a remote junior high school in rural Taiwan. This study was conducted in the bilingual home economics classes in one school year. Research instruments were a multiple-choice test (MCT), a written discourse completion task (WDCT), a metapragmatic judgment task (MJT), and a perception questionnaire. Before the instruction, participants took the MCTs, WDCTs, and MJTs as the pretests. After that, they received an 8-week training of explicit instruction on writing invitation emails through a genre-based approach, and took the MCTs, WDCTs, and MJTs as posttests. Then they received 20 CLIL lessons for two themes of cuisines. During these lessons, participants were asked to write emails for four times to invite their teachers to their classes to enjoy their hand-made cuisines and to comment on their infographics. After the CLIL classes, participants were asked to take the MCTs, WDCTs, and MJTs as delayed posttests and to fill in the perception questionnaire to show their reflection towards the curriculum. The scores of MCTs, WDCTs, and MJTs on the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest were quantitatively analyzed, and the email scripts in the WDCTs were qualitatively analyzed. In addition, the learners' reflection in the questionnaire were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed.

Results indicated that the explicit instruction of invitation emails had positive effects on developing the participants' email literacy (i.e., comprehension and production), downgrading their perceived writing difficulty, and promoting their writing confidence. In addition, the post-treatment, i.e., writing activities for authentic purposes in the CLIL lessons, could boost the participants' email production, minimize their perceived writing difficulty, and help maintain their email comprehension and writing confidence. On the other hand, the perception questionnaire demonstrated the participants' positive attitude towards this program. This study has shed light on the issue of developing bilingual learners' pragmatic competence in rural Taiwan.

Keywords: CLIL, email, pragmatic competence, invitation, rural bilingual education