

Tourism Management Education and Cultural Identity on Learning

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of cultural identity on learning. Interactive activities such as discussions, debates, short presentations, and critical thinking are conducted during classes to increase student talk time and contribute to information exchange and the acquisition of language and knowledge in the field of tourism management. This study seeks to understand, through qualitative research, all aspects of this situation. Therefore, short surveys were conducted, several groups were created, and students' behavior, interactions, and performance were observed in the classroom. The results of the survey are interesting because while several students were expecting a 90-minute lecture where they were going to sit and just listen, the normal learning expectation of those with a normal Japanese cultural identity, other students enjoyed the discussion within the groups and acknowledged that interactive learning added value to the content and language acquisition process because they could analyze the information studied during the lessons.

Keywords: Cultural identity, learner autonomy, interactive learning, tourism education.

INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes the importance of cultural identity on learning in the classroom and students feedback on learner autonomy, and interactive learning in the courses on International Tourism Management, Tourism Policy II and English Communication VII provided by the Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Studies, The University of Kitakyushu. The University is located in the City of Kitakyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan.

Students at the University have in the past expressed the importance of discussing with their classmates' tourism business cases, finding strategies to implement the marketing and promotion needs of the destinations studied and providing policy solutions based on sustainable development that are culturally, economically, environmentally, and socially compatible with the needs of the local community members and local cultures.

The general objective of this research is to demonstrate the importance of cultural identity on learning, leaning autonomy, and interactive learning during courses on Tourism Management Education to increase students' English communication fluency, accuracy, motivation, confidence, and knowledge. It is also desired to boost their cultural identity on learning, autonomy and learning in and outside the classroom, regarding the importance of tourism management and sustainable practices, policy and marketing and promotion strategies.

Students are able to discuss, analyze and apply critical thinking skills to tourism business cases in class but, in addition, are asked to present their recommendations and strategies to their classmates and debate their shared solutions.

The specific research objectives are to:

1. Determine how interactive learning activities such as discussions, debates, short presentations, and critical thinking during the classes improve learner autonomy.
2. Find out how students can contribute to information exchange and acquisition of language and knowledge in the field of tourism management.
3. Assess the ability of interactive learning to be the key in developing analytical, and critical thinking in Japanese students who are not used to this form of learning.

The participants in the study were Japanese and international university students, ($N=81$), between the ages of 18 and 25, and the results showed that students' favorite learning method was the discussions conducted in the classes because they mentioned that they had opportunities to practice interactive learning and share objective analysis, feedback and opinions with each member of the group, and this provided several perspectives, solutions and recommendations to the tourism business cases and social sciences readings studied in the courses, therefore, their cultural identity on learning was implemented because there is not much interaction in Japanese classrooms as most lessons are lecture style.

Students need to change their cultural identity on learning because they need to take the initiative in their own studies, plan their learning objectives and goals, choose learning materials, monitor their studies, and implement their own learning after self-assessment analysis and design a plan of action for objectives and goals that require improvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Building a Culture Identity on Learning

According to Altugan (2015), while researchers and education experts have studied the relationship between society and learning, conducting research in cultural identity into learning has been difficult. Cultural identity is developed in social interactions; therefore, socialization plays an important role, and is influenced by cultural values, ethnic, race, language, religion, environment, economy, and politics. Cultural identity on learning has a fundamental role in understanding students social and cultural experiences, students that share similar cultures build a social connection and trust in each other. Previous research on cultural identity has shown how important it is for the learning development of the students; teachers need to know the cultural identity of the students and design activities that will increase their motivation and success. Altugan (2015) also shows culture identity on learning is influenced by gender, social status, and the family's educational level. Research has demonstrated how perceptions about learning are socially constructed and need consideration of the cultural background of the students participating in the classrooms and studies.

Leadership and Learner Autonomy

According to Egitim (2021), in the Japanese learning context, most English communication courses are teacher-centered learning experiences based on English grammar explained in Japanese, which does not facilitate English language communication, interaction, and language

development among the students in the classroom. Leadership requires the ability to share knowledge, listen, and willingness to learn from others, and making the right decisions to motivate students when needed.

Egitim (2022) argues the importance of leadership approaches and how these need to be reflected in classrooms because this influences the teacher's way of learning and the learner's way of studying. Also, the students in the classes may become educators in the future, and they will become a reflection of their learning experiences during their course instruction.

Egitim (2022) also notes that teachers need to be mindful of their leadership strategies in the classroom and bring their leadership identity into building a consistent and committed learning environment. Teachers gain this mindfulness by observing other teachers and adapting their classroom management into their own classes. Leadership skills are constantly evolving and adapt to the autonomous learning process of the students because they choose their own study paths.

Dam (2018) analyzed the importance of participation of students as co-researchers because they can then become protagonists of their own autonomous learning and understand the correlation that exists when a student is researching their learning process contributes to improving their language and communication fluency and accuracy.

According to Blidi (2017) the concept of learner autonomy appeared in the 1970s as a strategy for practice and research created by a group of scholars (Benson 2001; Gremmo & Riley 1995; Little 1991). Benson (2006) shows that this concept and practice has been widely discussed in international conferences and publications in Asia, Europe, Australia, and Latin America.

One of the first scholars to mention the concept of autonomy was Holec (1981) who describes it as students' responsibility for their own learning. Students need to take responsibility for their own learning because the teacher will not always be there to guide them. Autonomous learners are those students that oversee their own learning, plan goals and objective to continue to grow. They are independent, like freedom, search for self-fulfillment, and take charge of defining their autonomous experience.

In this discussion, Holec (1981) emphasizes the characteristics of autonomous learners, for example, learning organization skills, and selecting content, improvement, and evaluation. Students must take the initiative, develop flexibility, and creativity to achieve their learning goals while thinking critically and analytically in the content and target language studied in the classroom and at home.

Students' interactions should create value in their learning process through exchanging opinions and thoughts and finding solutions to social problems. They should read, study, analyze information and continue to produce knowledge and share it with their classmates. These interactions boost their motivation and engagement level and contribute to enhancing their social, critical, and analytical skills. (Blidi, 2017).

Blidi (2017) studied Japanese education and showed that if students are taught the importance of autonomous learning, they will focus their learning skills, effort, and capabilities on self-directive learning, and they will also develop self-motivation, readiness, and willingness to become autonomous learners. Therefore, it is vital for students to build a cultural identity on learning based on values of individuality and independence while interacting in a collective environment.

In this regard, Wenden (1998) provides a list that shows what students need to develop in autonomous learning skills:

- (a) Define learning strategies that provide guidance on the learning methods that will be used during the courses;
- (b) Complete learning tasks and express the need for accomplishment in autonomous learning;
- (c) Develop an ability to feel the gaps in the knowledge discussed and suggestions on how to bridge the gap with knowledge, solutions and recommendations in content and target language acquisition;
- (d) Find new learning approaches and perspectives to create innovative ways to learn current information and knowledge;
- (e) Achieve grammar and speaking fluency to gain English communication proficiency.
- (f) See the language acquisition should be based on diverse patterns to enrich autonomous learning;
- (g) Have the ability to formulate and analyze hypotheses and facilitate the research process through their verification; and
- (h) Be open-minded towards ambiguity because words and sentences can sometimes express other meanings or can be interpreted or perceived with a different perspective.

These aspects are required in creating learning autonomy, meanwhile, they are not isolated, students also require an initial background and take into consideration that their needs, motivation, leaning strategies and language acquisition methods for their continued efforts to gain English communication skills and practice are the key to achieving fluency and accuracy in their communication strategies.

Crabbe (2007) mentioned the importance of students' readiness, willingness and understanding of the learning tasks because these will build an identification with the learning material and contribute to boosting their motivation and improvement of their autonomy. This is a progressive method that requires initial guidance, supervision in the classroom and orientation on their learning, follow-up on assignments completed at home, self-assessment on their progress, implementation, and continuous development of their autonomous learning skills.

Little (1991) defined the psychology of learning as an important indicator of learner autonomy. It is a field that considers students' independence to learn, their ability to choose the relevant vocabulary and grammar in their English language studies that they would like to learn in the content-based learning courses and/or in TOEIC preparation, and the critical skills needed in the preparation of their essays, final projects, and graduation thesis. The psychology of learners is instrumental to the development of their learning autonomy because it will determine the

organization of their own studies and help them grow as autonomous students. Learners can thus determine the educational focus, the pace, and learning strategies required for their daily improvement and autonomous consistency.

Blidi (2017) discusses how Little (1991) focuses on the “form of autonomy” concept that refers to the behavior of learners, their age, levels, needs, interests, goals, and objectives. This is important if the students will be putting into practice the theory learned as content learners. Students are responsible for starting their own learning instead of waiting for the teacher to initiate this process for them because the teacher will not always be there to guide their learning, therefore, they are required to become independent learners from the beginning of their courses and develop this learning process by themselves either in the classroom or at home.

Other scholars like Nunan (1999, 2000, 2003) refer to the levels of autonomy that students have during their learning process, therefore, this degree of autonomy needs to increase as they progress in their studies. Little (1991) mentioned the importance of the shapes of autonomy that can take place where students consider their learning needs based on age, interest, and self-assessment and leaning improvement according to their objectives and goals.

According to Blidi (2017) autonomous learning is an important process for success, because it needs to be developed gradually; at first, students are reluctant to accept change if there is not a good reason for it. Therefore, students need to have clear objectives and goals to justify their autonomous learning and have a study plan to motivate them to interact with the content of the course, learning materials, and the target language with practice either in class or at home. They must follow educational strategies to achieve the results expected during the courses and programs.

Littlewood (1999) suggests autonomous learning is not relevant outside of western societies because it has individualistic patterns of behavior. However, if it is combined with interactive learning, and the use of technology in the classroom and at home, it can be helpful even for students exhibiting traditional collectivistic cultural behavior, and it will contribute to them achieving their learning objectives and goals. For example, teaching Japanese university students, who have studied tourism business cases and prepare the discussion questions at home, shows that they are able to discuss questions with their colleagues and contribute to the knowledge exchange, find solutions together to the problems and boost the autonomous learning motivation in the next class of case discussions.

On the other hand, Jones (1995) discusses how learner autonomy is linked to the cultural context of western countries, and it cannot be related to any other cultural context. However, Blidi (2017) contradicts this perspective by showing that learner autonomy can be adapted in any cultural context and students require practice to be able to develop their capacity and consistency to gain independence while acquiring autonomous learning skills. It can be a sensitive process to develop autonomous learning in their setting according to the cultural background of the country. Therefore, teaching Japanese students western cultural identity values is the key to acknowledge other perspectives on learning, interactions, and knowledge sharing in the classroom.

Blidi (2017) also discusses how readiness can be interpreted as learning autonomy in some contexts. Any educational methodology that is different from teacher-centered learning is emphasizing learning autonomy. Therefore, several methodologies should be adapted to keep the students motivated and eager to learn independently. Learning autonomy is a consistent process; students should plan activities that will be guiding them through the process of becoming independent and proficient at it.

CLIL

The 4Cs Framework of CLIL also known as the four elements of CLIL: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture, (Coyle et al., 2010; Coyle, 2011) are important for learning theory and practice, content, and the English language. Students learning new vocabulary increases when they are reading theoretical content and putting the target language into practice and developing theory while finding innovative outcomes to the problems discussed in the classroom.

Coyle et al. (2010) mentions how Content and language Integrate Learning (CLIL) learning-based classrooms offer authenticity (Chaya & Inpin 2020). Authenticity in learning has a significant role because it will help students to stay motivated, creative, and constantly search for innovative ways to provide solutions to the cases presented in the classroom. Finally, according to Harrop (2012), CLIL is a popular educational methodology which promotes language acquisition, student motivation and boosts intercultural understanding. Furthermore, it is applicable to a variety of teaching strategies.

Crabbe (2007) discusses how course curriculum and syllabus can provide a variety of learning alternatives catered for students' learning goals. In the Japanese context, most students expect a teacher-led environment, therefore, at the beginning it can be a challenge for students to learn a group dynamic where they will discuss, debate, analyze and positively criticize the course material in the classroom. Therefore, CLIL is an important learning methodology to contribute to their learning autonomy and because students learn the content and language communication at the same time and can be able to communicate effectively in several intercultural contexts following the norms, rules, and cultural protocol of the country or countries under study.

Leader pedagogy will enhance learner autonomy in the classroom and motivate students to find their real interest in the subject studied (Blidi, 2017; Dam, 2018; Egitim, 2022) Researchers who leadership identity and learner autonomy, and observed it closely from different perspectives, have developed a strategy of supporting the theory with practical and interactive activities where students are able to interact with classmates and friends and build diverse perspectives on the cultural identity of learning.

Leadership and Education Policy

According to Grissom & Condon (2021); and Pont et al., (2008) educational leadership and management have been studied from many different directions. It is also important to compare different countries' educational leadership and management systems because such comparisons will shed light on the present situation of educational management across the Globe and locally in the Japanese context. For example, Adelman & Lemos (2021) discuss the

Latin American and Caribbean context and explain how better public management of education can improve the student learning experience. Taking into account individual effort and contributions of managers and leaders in the system, educational programs, and management at all levels of an educational organization is key to the improvement of student education.

Education management in Japan is not far away from this reality, and because the students' learning abilities and experiences will improve if education management strategies are followed and improved, student feedback will also contribute to educational management. According to the OECD (2018), "Japanese students have among the best performance in scientific, mathematics and reading literacy in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)" (pp. 15). This is partly because educational policies in Japan have been well defined in policy terms under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Sciences and Technology (MEXT). The present study analyzes and discusses how Japanese high school students have been among the global high performers since the implementation of the OECD Programme for International Students Assessments (PISA).

One the key success for Japanese education is the constant revision of performance in the Japanese education system. For example, a Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (2013-17) has been implemented to increase the growth and productivity of the education system; its purpose is that students have the best knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to learn and become international citizens in the 21st century.

Education Policy in Japan has adopted several strategies (OECD 2018). For example: promoting innovative strategies to modernize the National Curriculum Reform by designing classes in which students have proactive, interactive and proactive learning experiences; improving teaching skills and participation in the educational system; and supporting the relationships and partnerships between communities and their schools to develop school management. Also, providing financial support to students in need and providing tertiary and adult education by facilitating educational programs where adults can study and continue to develop their skills through lifelong learning are important additional points.

Schools have the challenge of preparing students to become global citizens, introducing them to international connections and diverse worldviews, values, and cultures while interacting with people from different cultures and learning other languages.

Japan has been successful in creating an education system that is based on lifelong learning because students saw their teachers become lifelong learners, and they have become an inspiration. Also, it is the result of organizing and managing all the steps in the education process, from design of the curriculum, teacher preparation, training and education, and financial support in all levels of the organization. Vision, key strategies, and commitment to the system are essential for the success of the education management process.

One of the biggest challenges for education policy implementation in schools is their management culture because slow adaptation and implementation of policies in these organizations will slow down the improvements in the education system and the schools. Therefore, it is necessary to speed up the implementation of policy and modernize the

educational system in schools by using those leaders in the organizations who are responsible for the implementation of these policies and development of the curricula that will be taught and shared in the classrooms. Nowadays, students need to focus not only on academic knowledge but also on how to plan and achieve their goals, develop human relationships in the learning and working environment, control their emotions, achieve consistency in their work, and self- development. They should seek to value learning and value sharing, develop an understanding of international perspectives and collaborate across-cultures, ethics and leadership. However, most emphasis is placed on Japanese entrance examinations where students have to focus on memorization and preparation for their texts instead of focusing on skills that they will require in their future professional careers such as critical thinking, analytical ability, and discussion skills.

Teachers are responsible for creating a stimulating learning environment where the students will acquire academic knowledge, building a social and emotional bond with their classmates, and for facilitating and developing a relaxing and friendly learning environment where they can explore the theory-reach and practice in the classroom. The acquisition of these skills is key because they will require them for their future professional careers. For the large number of society members who are not meeting the demand for new education styles, knowledge, and skills, this situation is going to compromise in increasing the quality of life in their communities. Therefore, it is important to continue to provide education and knowledge that will allow residents to acquire new knowledge and keep up to date with the technological innovations of our society.

According to the OECD (2018) Japan faces significant demographic challenges due to its ageing and declining population, and these challenges are shaping the industrial and employment sectors. Despite Japan's high education standards many problems remain. For example, school bullying and wellbeing have come to the attention of managers and leaders in the education system. As an initiative to face these challenges, the Japanese government started the *Council for Implementation of Education Rebuilding* in 2012, to focus on education and develop strategies to enhance its growth.

In 2015, MEXT created a system to improve teachers training, education and productivity, promoted school-community associations and developed the National Curriculum Standards to be evaluated during 2020-2022. MEXT also designed the Articulation Reforms which aims to study the gaps between secondary and university with the goal of improving secondary education, university examination processes and curricula.

Assisting this, OECD Education Policy has reviewed several topics oriented to the needs of the country. "An OECD Education Policy Review typically takes from eight months to a year, depending on its scope, and consists of six phases:

- 1) definition of the scope;
- 2) preparation of a background report by the country;
- 3) desk review and preliminary visit to the country;
- 4) main review visit by a team of experts;
- 5) drafting of the report; and
- 6) launch of the report" (OECD 2018).

This process seeks to provide customized efficient policies to implement the global education system and implement it, based on analysis of the countries' needs and regions. The OECD team in charge of designing policies and implementation methodologies for the education system in conjunction with MEXT has access to OECD's international knowledge and Japanese educational research, statistical information, and policy archives.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is based on qualitative research and ethnographic studies in order to explain their cultural identity on learning, leadership, and autonomous learning experiences. Students were observed and asked about their preferred learning method during the progress of the classes, and they were able to experience several learning methods: 1) Lecture; 2) Discussions; 3) Video viewing; and 4) Essay writing, before choosing the learning method that they considered to be most effective and enjoyable for them.

This research included a literature review and exploratory research about cultural identity on learning and autonomous learning, the importance of interactive learning, and considered CLIL as an effective learning method for the students in tourism management and social science studies.

The Survey

The participants were Japanese and international university students, a total of eighty-one students ($N=81$) between the ages of 18 and 25. The international students were from the U.K., China, and Korea.

All participants in the research were English majors with average TOEIC score levels of between 600 to 900 points and native and non-native international speakers of English were present in the Introduction to Tourism Management, and Tourism Policy II classes. In the English Communication VII class all students were Japanese nationals. The survey was conducted in the classrooms and students were asked to state.

What learning method do you prefer (numbering their preference from 1 to 4)? Number 1 represents their favorite method while four represents their least favorite method in CLIL courses, the methods listed were:

- 1) Lectures, 9.8%
- 2) Discussions, 69.1%
- 3) Videos viewing, 7.2%
- 4) Essays writing, 3.7%

DISCUSSION

Teacher-led learning, or lectures were first perceived as a key learning activity because a couple of the most extrovert students in the classroom acknowledge their learning preference, as teacher-centered. It also shows the cultural identity on learning of Japanese students who have been used to lectures in most classes at the university level. However, their preference did not represent the rest of the class. In fact, discussion was the preferred learning activity in the classroom by most of the students according to the survey conducted in the classes: Introduction of Tourism Management, Tourism Policy I and English Communication VII. This

demonstrates that western cultural identity on learning can be shared with Japanese students that are used to a lecture style.

69.1 percent of the students chose discussions ($N=56$) because they were able to analyze the business tourism cases, provide feedback, and make recommendations. Their active engagement allowed them to interact with their classmates. Group discussions added value to their responses and recommendations because they were able to listen to their classmates' diverse perspectives.

The aspects of cultural identity on learning, autonomy, interactive learning, and socialization were key aspects for most of the students when they studied in groups of three or four. Students read the tourism business cases together, discussed the questions emerging from the cases, and produced alternative solutions. They also implemented marketing and promotional strategies based on the needs of the communities, to attract national and international tourists.

Lectures were chosen by 9.8 percent of the students as their preferred learning method ($N=8$) because they were accustomed to only listening to lectures by academic scholars on the topics to be discussed, and often, this information was already in their reading materials. Some students commented that the teacher needed to mention this during the lectures, which is an example of students' need for a teacher-led classroom environment.

7.2 percent of students ($N=14$) mentioned that they were interested in video viewing, in addition to the couple of videos (of five minutes each) regularly shown in each class. They considered videos essential for their learning process even though the courses were not media-based courses. And finally, 3.7 percent of students chose essay writing ($N=3$). This was the least popular learning method despite the course requirement of submitting a final essay for the Tourism Management and Tourism Policy I courses where students were required to promote a tourist destination and provide material for the management and policy strategies for the countries and cities of their choice.

Based on these results, students need to increase their talk time during the class discussions and share their opinions with their classmates, reading the business cases and providing solutions to the questions motivated the students to provide material for the different cases studied during the classes.

According to Egitim (2022), in a Japanese environment, teacher-centered classes are necessary at the beginning of the knowledge sharing experience because the teacher needs to lead the learning process, build students values toward language education, and guide them to become efficient and productive during their participation in the classroom. In class direct interactions and discussions will increase students' communicative skills and learning ability.

In a Japanese learning context, it is not common for university students to share their objective observations, thoughts, solutions, and recommendations because they are used to a teacher-learning center style where the teacher is the authority, therefore this cultural identity on learning is a challenge when students are asked to share their objective views and recommendations. In most university classes, they are supposed to sit and listen quietly to their

teachers, without making any comments or questions. Meanwhile, a western style on cultural identity on learning and learning autonomy brings the opportunity for the students to discuss, debate, share thoughts with each other, gather information, and decision-making strategies in choosing the best solutions for the problems and cases discussed in the classroom. Thus, autonomy needs to be developed with practice, and it requires to be defined according to the context of the culture (Blidi, 2017). For example, Japanese university students will require guidance in planning their learning, detail-oriented instructions and weekly monitoring of the learning objectives and goals accomplished is recommended because in Japanese culture consistent confirmation and verification is required.

Leadership identity and approaches in my classes contributed to guiding students to learn the materials of Tourism Management and English Communication classes. After listening to lectures they were able to discuss the course materials and find solutions for the case study to read and learn in the classroom. Students provided a variety of answers and these constant searches for answers kept students motivated and enthusiastic about their learning.

Students need to take the initiative to boost their cultural identity on learning instead of waiting for a teacher to begin this process for them. In the Tourism Management and Tourism Policy I classes, students were asked to read several chapters of a high-level Tourism Management textbook before coming to the course, as well as social sciences reading for the English Tourism VII course. They were also asked to prepare the textbooks' answers to the questions, and the tourism business cases available in the chapters.

Learner autonomy in the students of these courses is a new process experience because most students are not used to studying in groups, or sharing their objective comments, solutions, and recommendations in front of their classmates for the business cases and social science readings studied. This was challenging for some students because they were used to teacher-led classes and required guidance, preparation, and consistency in reminding them of the objectives and goals of the course and learning materials. Some students will rely on the most outspoken ones in the delivery of solutions until they felt confident enough to share their perspective on the business cases.

In the Japanese context then, according to the cultural identity on learning expectations, students will require constant guidance, reminders, and weekly review of the objectives, and goals of the tasks required for each class. Therefore, handouts and writing notes given in online software like Moodle can be used to remind students. Perceptions and acknowledging several aspects need to be considered when introducing and guiding students to become autonomous, on how to plan their objectives, goals and methods that can be used while studying the content and target language and then evaluating their learning with self-assessment and recognizing improvements that need to be taken into consideration in the continuing process of their education.

Advantages of Innovative Interactive Learning Strategies in Class

The following advantages were observed after the students' interactions in the classes (Table 1).

Table 1: The advantages of allowing interactive learning in classes include:

a- Enhanced students' confidence
b- Increased student talk time in class.
c- Increase motivation levels.
d- Developed fluency and accuracy
e- Learning language and content simultaneously.
f- Learning through socialization.
g- Creating a culture of sharing, collaborating and support.
h- Acquiring critical and analytical skills.

Cultural Identity on Learning

Understanding cultural identity on learning is required to provide different perspectives of learning in the classrooms because this will enrich students' experiences, motivation, and progress in their studies of interest. A western style of cultural identity learning can help students to follow the guidance offered, satisfy their needs to learn new materials of their interest, and contribute to the development and improvement of their learning. Therefore, professors and instructors must do a self-evaluation of their cultural identity and their own role in the classroom and how they are going to positively influence the cultural identity of their students, share leadership and autonomous skills with the students and then when students become professionals be sure that they will bring the same skills to their future work environment, organizations, and societies.

Learner Opportunities

Students can improve their English communication skills and learn the course content when they work in groups and discuss with the members the tourism business cases. Some of the courses where students were observed were: Introduction to Tourism Management, Tourism Policy II, and English Communication VII. Students planned discussions of the questions in the tourism business cases and put the theory studied into practice in class. The discussion learning style is commonly used in western education, where students have to present their objective comments, recommendations, and solutions to the social problems discussed in the class, therefore, they have an opportunity to put into practice the theory learned during their classes and courses.

Students discussed several tourism management and policy cases around the world, they gathered in small groups and provided ideas, recommendations, and solutions for the questions of tourism business cases studied. They learned how to analyze the information, applied the theory, and provided practical solutions to the problems in the cases of study. However, one of the challenges expressed by the students was that some of them spoke more than others because of the difference in their personalities and/or knowledge about the cases; some students were extroverted, and others were familiar with the business cases and reading contents. On the other hand, other students were introverted or unfamiliar with the readings content due to different English level proficiency levels.

Debate

Class debates can also contribute to the learning and discussion process in the classroom. Students presented their solutions in front of the class, and the groups debated the best

solutions for the marketing and promotion of tourism destinations as well as the policies that can be implemented in the tourism business cases studied in the classes.

All group members discussed their answers with their classmates and debated them during short presentations in front of the class. Students had to choose a team leader and he or she had to present the answers and best alternatives to the rest of the class, group members were encouraged to rotate their team leader member, who was the presenter of the day during the tourism business cases group discussions and allow other students to have a leadership role in the classroom to build these skills in others and to allow them to present their answers in the class.

Students were encouraged to present innovative, creative, and unique management and strategy policy-friendly solutions for the cases and allow all members in the groups to participate as a strategy to be inclusive in the class environment. International students were divided into separate groups to allow at least one international student in each group.

Feedback

The feedback from the students was positive because they enjoyed the interactions with their classmates and acknowledge the importance of interacting with their classmates and sharing thoughts, the interactions increased enthusiasm and motivation for their learning experiences. Some students mentioned that other students in the groups needed to present their analysis and increase their talk time in class, discussions, and presentations.

Students thought that discussions were a useful learning method because they were able to put into practice the theory learnt during the readings and present their knowledge through discussions, debates, and essay writing. Some students thought that class discussions could become the center of student learning instead of the lectures, because it was a method that boosted their learning motivation according to their survey answers.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is an important aspect of the learning process (Delgado, 2015) because students get to share thoughts, opinions, objective recommendations, and solutions to several of the tourism business cases and social science problems discussed during the classes. Students also build analytical skills because they have to negotiate their answers and solutions to the cases studied during the classes. Students were able to develop confidence during their groups' presentations in the classes. They acquired knowledge in the field; used the target language in their discussions and created friendly relationships with each other. Student observations were conducted during the groups' interactions, students were able to think critically, analytically and create rapport during the group dynamics. They felt that they needed to contribute to the group and participated actively during their discussions, most of these were conducted in English and when they spoke in Japanese they were encouraged to always talk in English.

CONCLUSIONS

The general objective of this research was to demonstrate the importance of cultural identity on learning, leaning autonomy, and interactive learning during the University of Kitakyushu

courses on Tourism Management. Education was designed to increase students' English communication fluency, accuracy, motivation, confidence, and knowledge to boost their cultural identity on learning regarding the importance of tourism management and sustainable practices, policy and marketing and promotion strategies. In conclusion, cultural identity on learning, learning autonomy and interactive learning were combined strategically and students were then able to read, prepare the answers to the business cases, and discuss effectively with their classmates in the courses and present their objective recommendations in front of other groups members.

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To determine how interactive learning activities like discussions, debates, shot presentations, and critical thinking during the classes increase students' learning autonomy. The data shows that discussions, debates, and shot presentations contribute to students' autonomy by allowing them to present their objective feedback, solutions, and opinions on how to contribute to the marketing and promotion of tourists' destinations analyzed in class and at home to make policy recommendations to the cities and countries of study;
2. To find out how to contribute to information exchange and acquisition of language and knowledge in the field of tourism management. From the data obtained, students should be able to share information with each other and their increased talk time in class will contribute to their English communication competency, fluency and accuracy for the language target and intercultural communication skills; and
3. To show how interactive learning is going to be a key factor in developing analytical and critical thinking in Japanese students that are not used to this learning methodology. After these exercises, Japanese students were able to speak out and expressed their analytical and critical solutions for the tourism business cases and share diverse alternatives to the marketing and promotion of tourism in various places around the world.

Most university classes in Japan are lecture based, and teacher-led courses and students do not have the opportunity to develop a cultural identity on learning different to the Japanese system. Without learning autonomy and interactive learning classes, students are highly dependent on their instructors, teachers, professors, and their seniors. Therefore, creating a cultural identity on learning, autonomous learning and interactive learning presents an opportunity to universities in Japan to implement classes where students will be able to become analytical and critical learners if they build a different cultural identity on learning, create discussion strategies, debates, class presentations skills, and self-monitoring, especially in content-based courses, communication, and language classes.

Teachers are responsible for creating a stimulating learning environment where the students will acquire academic knowledge, building a social and emotional bond with their classmates, and for facilitating and developing a relaxing and friendly learning environment where they can explore the theory-reach and practice in the classroom considering the Japanese Educational Policy. The acquisition of these skills is key because they will require them for their future professional careers and contribute to Japanese society.

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