CONNECTING THE RICH CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE CLASSROOM IN STUDY ABROAD:
MIXING EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS

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Good afternoon. I would like to talk about a curriculum model implemented in the Critical Language Scholarship Program in Japan 2013, here I will refer to this as the CLS program, which was a 2 month intensive Japanese program. The CLS program was fully funded by U.S. Department of State and hosted by Himeji Dokkyo University. There were 29 students from across the U.S. participated.

INTRODUCTION

Critical Language Scholarship Program in Himeji, Hyogo, Japan

Curriculum consists of three main parts:

(1) Pragmatic explicit instruction (Rehearsal Session)

(2) Implicit learning activity (Action Assignment)

(3) Blended explicit-implicit instruction (Application Session)

Engagement with the target society & people
Linguistic and cultural adaptability toward pragmatic functions
Development of self-identity within the target culture

Although Study Abroad for the purpose of language learning offers rich cultural and linguistic immersion, previous studies suggest that these experiences do not necessarily ensure desirable outcomes (Kinginger, 2013; Spenader, 2011; Shively, 2010; Wilkinson, 1998).

The curriculum model I am presenting today intends to take full advantage of the SA environment through 3 cumulative experiences: (1) pragmatic, explicit instruction, (2) implicit learning activity, and (3) application/blended implicit-explicit instruction.

Observation of students' adaptation in linguistic and cultural areas suggests that the model can potentially have a strong impact in: (1) engagement with the target society and its people, (2) linguistic and cultural adaptability toward pragmatic functions, and (3) development of self-identity within the target culture.

I would first like to quickly review the literature and consider the obstacles of the SA experience, talk about the Performed Culture approach, which was the core pedagogy of the CLS program, then define the notion of implicit and explicit, . After that I will explain each of the components of the curriculum model.
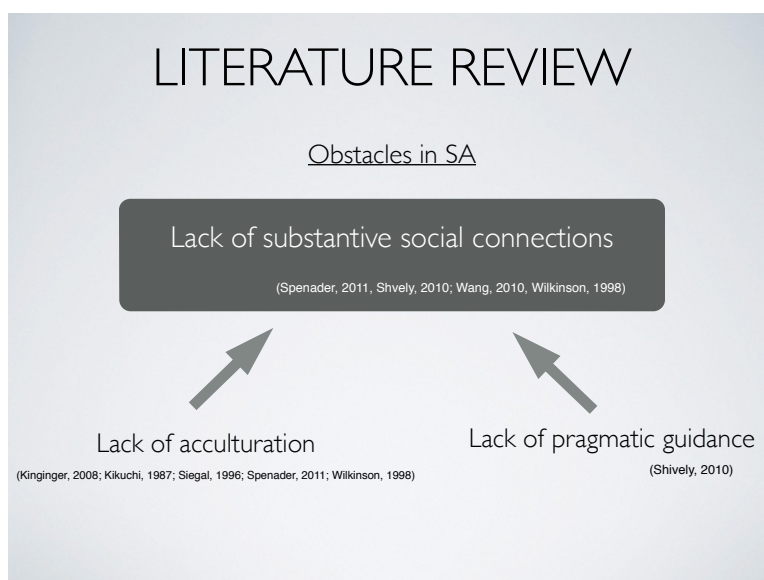
Although, there are plenty of factors that can explain why SA can be a superior means of language learning, a number of studies suggest that SA students do not always experience the kinds of gains in language proficiency that were once assumed (Kinginger, 2013; Spenader, 2011; Shively, 2010; Wilkinson, 1998).

The biggest possible reason is students' insufficient substantive social connections with native speakers (Spenader, 2011, Shively, 2010; Wang, 2010, Wilkinson, 1998). Dewy, Bown, and Eggett (2012) report that both the amount of social interaction outside of class and dispersed social networks were positively correlated with gains in language proficiency among

study abroad students in Japan. Which means with less social interaction and less dispersed social networks, we cannot expect desirable gains.

Lack of social connections maybe explained by two factors. One is lack of acculturation. Previous case studies show that learners who had a low level of acculturation could not obtain desirable connections with native speakers, and their linguistic gains were limited (Kinginger, 2008; Siegal, 1996; Spenader, 2011; Wilkinson, 1998). Another one is poor pragmatic acquisition, which maybe due to lack of explicit guidance (Shively, 2010).


Now I will talk about the Performed Culture approach. What we mean by culture here, defined by Walker and Noda (2010), is "what we do and, also, how we know what we have done." (p. 24) Thus, the main focus here is culture of behavior, which resides in our everyday life. Language learners, especially those who learn "truly foreign languages" (Jorden and Walton, 1987), should learn how to perform in the target culture.

Walker and Noda (2010, p. 199) define performance as "communicative events that are enactment of scripts or behaviors situated at a specified time and place with roles and audiences specified." Successful performance lead to successful social relations. The more frequent one's successful performances, according to Walker and Noda (2010), the "richer one's second language perspective becomes," and this increases chance to succeed in new performances. For this reason, they argue that gain of second language perspective is cyclic rather than linear.

C2 Compilation (Walker & Noda, 2010)
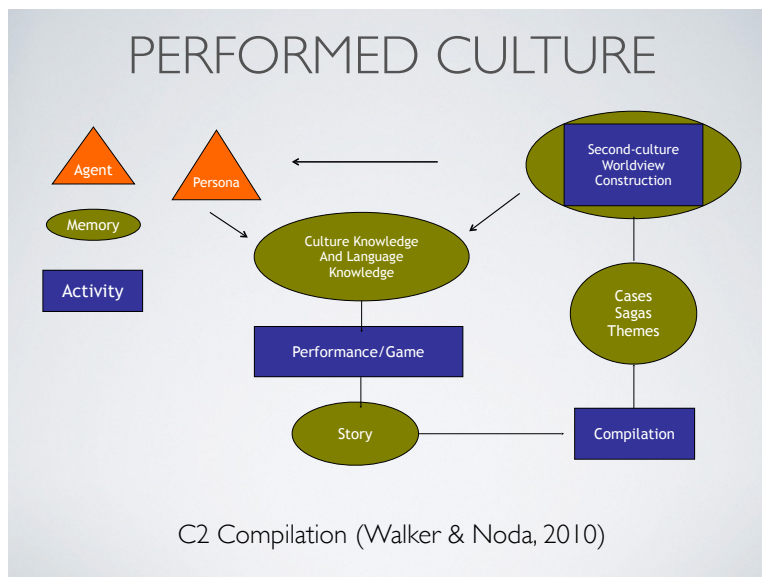
This is Walker and Noda's cycle of C2 compilation model (Walker and Noda, 2010). As you see, through a performance or a game, learners to construct a story. Those memories are compiled into categories of memories. "Sagas are memories related to specific people or places. Cases are memories related to tasks and functions. Themes are memories related to a culture-specific concept that underlie a wide range of behaviors. "(Noda, 2007, p. 301) These memories lead to one's second culture worldview construction which in term influence one's persona - "aspect of the person that a learner brings to the learning environment" (Noda, 2007, p. 300). Worldview and persona support the language and culture knowledge development.

The Performed Culture approach aims to get learners accumulate their successful performances, which, as explained, lead to their acquisition of target culture and language knowledge.
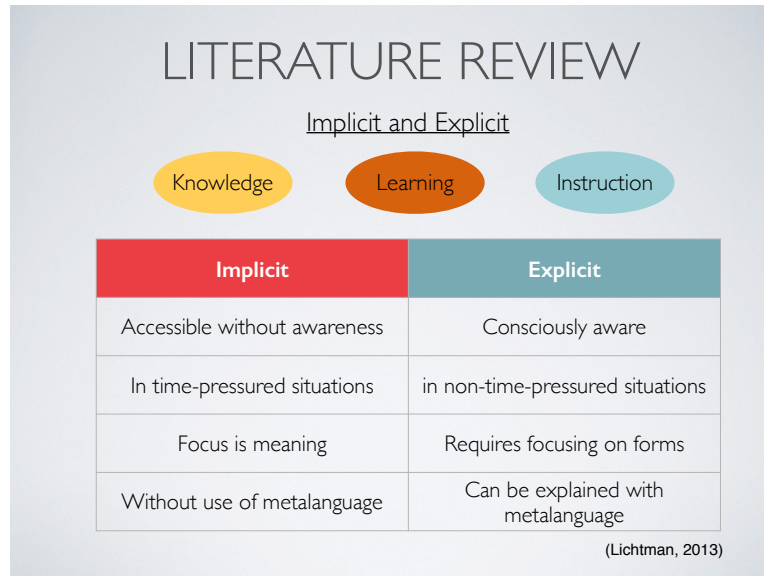
Next, I would like to talk about the notion of implicit and explicit. The terms explicit and implicit are often described as having three aspects: knowledge, learning, and instruction.

Based on Ellis's description, Lichtman (2013) defines implicit knowledge as "accessible without awareness, in time-pressured situations, when focus is on meaning rather than form, and without the use of metalanguage." (p.94) Implicit learning and instruction are carried out in this way in order to tap implicit knowledge.

Explicit knowledge is "something the learner is consciously aware of, is only available in non-time-pressured situations, requires a focus on form, and can be verbalized using metalanguage" (Lichtman, 2013, p. 94) and Explicit learning and instruction are delivered in this manner in order to tap explicit knowledge.

Now, I would like to talk about how implicit and explicit learning and instruction are incorporated in the curriculum of the CLS program.

The curriculum of the CLS Himeji program consisted of three main parts: rehearsal sessions, Actions!, and application sessions. These parts were comprised of explicit instruction, implicit learning activity, and blended implicit-explicit instruction, respectively. These components were cyclically carried out.

As the name suggests the rehearsal session was where students rehearsed for their real world experience. It is maybe easier to picture the classroom as a dress rehearsal for a ballet rehearsal, and students as dancers. Dancers practice their parts by themselves prior to the rehearsal, then in the rehearsal, they practice their parts in more realistic settings.

Before coming to the class, students were expected to practice performing various pragmatic scripts and drills from Action Himeji, a set of materials that includes two textbooks and a large set of audio files created specifically for the program.

Then in the class, students performed these scripts and drills not only through oral delivery, but also by acting out all the communicative components such as body movements, behaviors, affects, and so forth.

FUNCTION OF REHEARSAL SESSION

Linguistic Development
- Provided guideline to the real world experience
- Supported students' development of pragmatics

Student exhibited active utilization of what they learned in rehearsal session.

Identity Development
- Supported students' acculturation
- Supported students' development of "audibility"

The rehearsal session seemed to contribute to both linguistic and identity development of students.

The rehearsal session seemed to be successful at providing guidance to the real world experience. Especially for the students with lower proficiency because they generally have certain degree of anxiety due to lack of confidence and communicative skills in their L2. Based on my observation, students actively followed the guidance and in the real world, they utilized the communicative strategies they learned in class. For example, in a writing class for the lower level students, students learned how to write an email to a professor to ask questions. After the instruction, students dramatically started utilizing the format they learned in the class. At this point of time, it has been about 7 months since the end of the program, but some of the students who have emailed me are still using the format.

It was not only the students with lower proficiency who benefited from the rehearsal session, but also advanced students. Advanced students seemed to benefit from explicit pragmatic instruction and acquired more pragmatic communicative strategies.

It should be noted that throughout the program, many students excitedly reported when they encountered native speakers using the phrases they learned in class. Hence, it is plausible to assume that pragmatic explicit instruction could enhance students awareness of pragmatics.

Acculturation, according to Schumann (1986), is "the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group" (p. 379), and as he describes, "the learner will acquire the second language only to the degree that he acculturates" (p. 379),

acculturation is one of the core missions of language learners.

Another element I would like to talk about here is audibility. According to Block (2009), "audibility is about developing an identity in an additional language not only in terms of linguistic features, but also dress expressions, movement, behavior and other forms of semiotic behavior." (p. 42)

Because the performed culture approach aims to get students to experience target culture through performances with explicit guidance, it was highly likely that rehearsal sessions contributed to students's acculturation and development of audibility.

Next, I would like to talk about Action!.

ACTION!
&Task Note

Actual implementation of the communicative tasks learned in rehearsal sessions.

Students could try as many times as they want to and reported the results with the task note.

Example of Action

"You want to see if the University library has a good space for you to study, so you need to ask for the location of the university library. In this case, look up the location of the library by yourself, so that you are actually asking for directions to a place you already know. Them proceed to ask someone from directions. Did the person respond in the way you were expecting? How did that person's explanation differ from what you were expecting?"

(Noda & Terada, 2013, p.17)

Actions! were homework assignments for students to actually implement communicative activities they learned in the rehearsal session.

This is an example of the Action: In this action, students first predict how the native speaker directs students to the library, then find out the difference between their prediction and real experience.

Students were expected not merely to carry out the actions, but also to find out something new from the experience, such as use of grammar & vocabulary, culture, and so forth. In addition to actions, students also had "task notes," which were lists of communicative tasks, with space to write notes. Those tasks were closely connected to the scripts and actions and students were expected to implement those tasks as many times as they wanted, and to report how they performed their tasks with contextual information and their findings.

Through the actions!, gains were observed in these three areas.
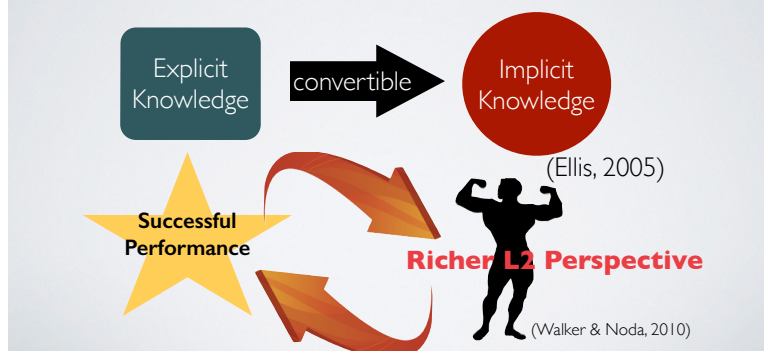

Although performance of the action assignments involved the same communicative tasks as the rehearsal session, they required students to spontaneously utilize their linguistic and cultural knowledge. Therefore, the actions were implicit activities.The strong interface position claims that "explicit knowledge can be converted into implicit knowledge through practice" (Ellis, 2005, p. 144). In most cases, students reported success on their actions because of they had prepared well in the rehearsal session. Needless to say, experience of success in the real world contributed to their self-esteem.

ACTION!

(2) Social connections

Do not occur naturally. (Kinginger, 2013; Spenader, 2011; Shively, 2010; Wilkinson, 1998)

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Learners need to make effort to push themselves.

Students' report: More comfortable starting the conversation with native speakers

A number of previous case studies suggest that in SA, social connections do not occur naturally, but students need to make efforts to push themselves for communicative opportunities (Spenader, 2011, Shvely, 2010; Wang, 2010, Wilkinson, 1998). Because action assignments pushed students to talk to local people and their language buddies from the host university, actions became opportunities for students to construct social connections with native speakers. Many students reported that lost their fear of starting conversations with native speakers through the actions.

ACTION!

Various theories suggest

people reconstruct their identities through social activities.

This is especially striking in a foreign environment.

Real world experience provided students better idea of what would work and what would not.

Various different theories, such as Vygotskian sociocultural theory, poststructuralist theories, take the position that people reconstruct their identities through social activities (Kinginger, 2013; Kramsch, 2000). This phenomenon is especially striking in the non-native environment. Because the actions promoted active engagement with the target society and communication with native speakers, they contributed to students reconstruction of the self in Japanese society. With the preparation process of the rehearsal session, students learned how they were expected to present themselves, and real experience of the actions confirmed what worked and what did not.

LIMITATIONS OF ACTION!

(1) Native speakers do not offer feedback about pragmatics in natural interactions.
(Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1996)

→This was dealt in the application session to some extent.

(2) Students labeled as "gaijin" and correct use of pragmatics were not understood.

(i.e. use of おひや at a restaurant)

(3) Doing action for the sake of action.

These are the limitations of action. First, usually, native sparkers do not voluntary offer feedbacks about pragmatics in natural conversations (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1996) and this could lead to students' belief that their pragmatics worked properly. This problem was dealt with to some extent in the application session, which I will discuss later.

Second, there were some cases where students proper use of pragmatics could not be understood assumably because their use of pragmatics violated native speakers assumption that "gaijin would not use such phrases. For example, one of the students reported that he ordered おひや at a restaurant, but could not be understood.

Third, there were some cases where students did the action for the sake of action. These cases happened mostly with their language buddies. There were some actions students needed to ask questions about the information they already knew about their buddies. Some students told me that because students did not wanted to be seen as "strange," and language buddies knew those were for the actions, the communicative activity did not go entirely naturally.

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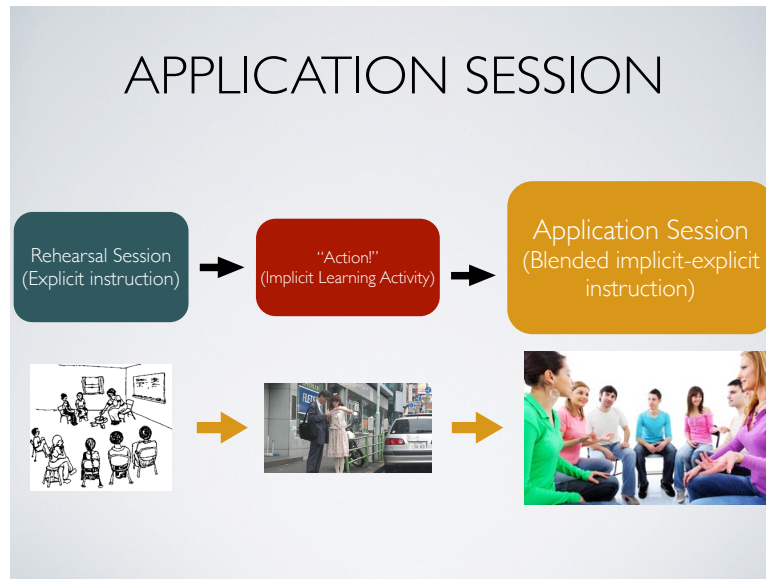
Finally, I would like to talk about application session.
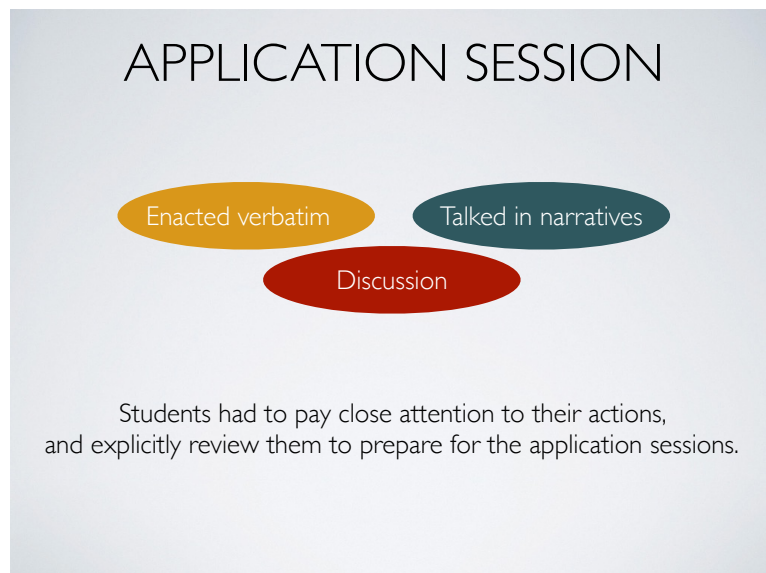
In the application sessions, students either enacted verbatim or talked about their actions in narratives, then discussed about their experiences with classmates. In order for students to do so, they had to pay close attention to how a particular conversation was done in their actions. In other words, they worked as ethnographers who collect pragmatic linguistic and cultural data through their actual experiences and observations.

APPLICATION SESSION

(1) Strengthened their implicit knowledge through explicit reviews,

(2) Corrected students' misunderstandings from the actions,

(3) Gained story-telling and discussion skills, and

(4) developed students' independent learning skills.

Application sessions seemed be contributing to these four areas.

APPLICATION SESSION

(1) Strengthened their implicit knowledge through explicit reviews,

The interface position suggests

Implicit Knowledge → Convertible → Explicit Knowledge

(Ellis, 2005)
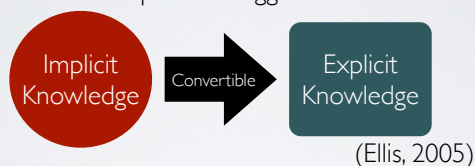
By explicitly understanding their implicit action, their knowledge seemed to be strengthened.

Prior to coming to the class, students had to revisit their actions and explicitly analyze them. This explicit review process seemed to have effect on solidifying students' implicit knowledge. Students showed greater linguistic and cultural understanding of communicative activities after this process. For example, the asking-for-a-direction action introduced before, some students found out that by changing how they phrased their questions, the responses were likely to be changed, and the class discussed why that would happen, what kind of nuance difference they made by changing question sentences, and so forth.

APPLICATION SESSION

(2) Corrected students' misunderstandings from the actions,

Natives do not usually offer corrections to errors on pragmatics.
(Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1996)

Corrections prevent fossilization of errors.

Effects of this could be seen in the task notes, where students could retry their actions.

There were cases where students' enactments or recall narratives contained incorrect sentences that presumably came from the limitation of their listening comprehension and linguistic knowledge. Application sessions enabled us to explicitly correct those misunderstandings and prevented fossilization of the errors. The effect of the correction could be seen in students task notes.

APPLICATION SESSION

(3) Gained story-telling and discussion skills

Narratives:

In lower proficiency class, targets were presented and students told story using the target.
(e.g., 〜だそうです, ○○すると、〜したので、〜でした, etc.)

Students active utilization of those targets were observed, and in the end of the program, many students achieved high score on a story-telling task in the oral final exam.

Discussion skills

Students were engaged in discussions talking about their linguistic and cultural findings.

Through recall narratives, students gained story telling ability. In the lower proficiency class, the instructor presented target phrase and students talked about their story using the target. For example, after student A and B enacted their conversation at a restaurant, student C talked about their story in narratives such as Aさんが趣味は何ときくと、Bさんが映画を見る事

と答えたので、Aさんはじゃあ映画に行こうといいました。Although in the beginning, most students in the lower proficiency class did not have enough variation of phrases to tell a story smoothly, most students received high scores on a story telling task implemented as a part of the oral final exam.

CONCLUSION

Rehearsal Session (Explicit instruction)	Action (Implicit Learning Activity)	Application Session (Blended implicit-explicit instruction)
Non-time pressured	Time pressured	Preparing w/o time pressure, but enacting/narrating w/time pressure
Use of metalanguage	No use of metalanguage	Used metalanguage
Targets were presented clearly & separately	Not limited in target grammar/vocabulary patterns	Not limited in target Grammar/vocabulary patterns

Through ethnographic activities: collecting linguistic and cultural data and analyzing them, it was presumed that learners could develop independent learning skills.

As explained, each of the components of the curriculum had different functions, and these functions interacted and reinforced each other.

CONCLUSION

Although CLC program had OPI test as pre-test & post-test and paper-based test scores, this report on the effectiveness of this curriculum relies on anecdotal evidence.

Thus, in the future, it is necessary to have more systematic data collection and analysis on students' use of pragmatics, quality and quantity of interaction, and degree of acculturation for more reliable and valid study.

The only hard data on learning outcome for the CLS Himeji Program is offered in the OPI scores and paper-based test scores. Because this study relied on the author's personal observation and students' feedback comments, thus is subject to the criticism that the effectiveness of the design is supported only by anecdotal evidence. Thus, in the future study, having systematic data collection for students' use of pragmatics, quality and quantity of interaction students have, and degree of acculturation would make the study more reliable and valid.

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