

Peer learning in L1 and L2: Teaching foreign language with Concept-Based Language Instruction (C-BLI)

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Abstract

Concept-Based Language Instruction (C-BLI), grounded in Vygotskian sociocultural theory, richly incorporates peer learning to help learners to internalize high quality linguistic and cultural content. Textbook rules, while easy to learn and remember, often don't accurately convey how the L2 is really used. C-BLI works to fill this gap with high quality materials based on usage-based linguistics research; at the same time, C-BLI promotes learner agency in L2 creation, with the result that the L2 becomes more interesting, engaging, and expressive. Examples from different languages are provided to show how nuanced linguistic and sociolinguistic concepts can be materialized into accessible materials that include clear visuals, written charts, and interactive lecture.

To help students to develop L2 proficiency, we need to help them to internalize L2 concepts. Since students can't engage higher cognitive processes through a low-proficiency L2, C-BLI harnesses L1 to promote internalization of concepts. Then, plentiful L2 practice is needed to promote application of concepts and growth in L2 proficiency. C-BLI guides student internalization processes via social cognition--learner verbalizations with the self (monologue, writing) and one another (pair and group work), focusing on tasks where students problem-solve, re-explain, and transform concepts into their own words and visuals. Through verbalized and visualized concepts, students shift their understandings of how L2 operates, building a strong foundation for L2 practice and creation. Plentiful L2 practice thus builds on conceptual development in an approach that focuses on realizing concepts in L2 use, rather than rigidly focusing on accuracy.

Bio

Amy Snyder Ohta is Associate Professor of Japanese and Applied Linguistics at the University of Washington, where she has been teaching since 1995. She is particularly interested in developmental processes that promote growing language and language-in-culture skills in classroom settings. Her recent research considers applications of Concept-Based Instruction to teaching Japanese pragmatics and pragmalinguistics. Her main interest is to empower students

as agentive L2 speaker/hearers by providing them with classroom opportunities to internalize high quality linguistic and cultural concepts presented visually (via SCOBAs, high quality conceptual materializations), accompanied by interactive peer-learning, role-play, monologue, and writing.