

“Beliefs” of Learners in Relation to the Use of Visual Materials in Classroom Language Learning

Toshiko Hosaka*1 & Mami Doi*2

Keywords: beliefs, visual materials, learning content, learning method, change of beliefs

Abstract

Visual materials have become widely used in Japanese-language education in recent years. However, various problems have emerged due to the different views held by learners and teachers on the use of visual materials in the classroom. To develop more effective learning activities, it is essential to ascertain the views of both sides. Herein, we shall refer to a view regarding study content, learning methods and their effectiveness as a “belief.”

To assess the kinds of “beliefs” held by learners, we carried out a survey of foreign students in a Japanese language program. Participants were given a questionnaire asking them to freely describe their opinions and expectations of visual materials and learning methods in the classroom.

Analysis of questionnaire responses showed that the most widely perceived benefit of video study was learning the vocabulary and expressions used by Japanese people in daily life. Most students regard building vocabulary and expressions as the most important focus of video study. Also, according to students, the most effective and highly favored learning method is to watch a video presentation repeatedly. Other methods considered effective were distributing supplementary lists of the vocabulary and expression used in videos to the class, and watching videos after studying the vocabulary on the list. In short, the survey revealed that learners value language comprehension and a “bottom-up” approach to watching videos, where students

develop an understanding of the content of a video by reviewing each word in it. We then presented students holding this “belief” with learning activities that emphasize “meaning and content” and focus on a “top-down” approach to watching videos, where it is not important to understand each word. We confirmed that following these activities, learners changed their “beliefs.” For example, learners pointed out the advantage of watching a video without referring to a word list and also commented that it was annoying to watch videos over and over in order to understand each word. We aim to continue carrying out “belief” surveys and educational initiatives like these in order to develop more effective learning methods that expand the choices of learners.

***1: Center for Japanese Studies, Keio University**

***2: Center for International Studies, Gunma University**