

2024

FUKUI - JAPAN

VOLUME 10

PanSIG Journal

GETTING BACK TO BASICS

Edited by
PanSIG Journal Editorial Board



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PanSIG Journal

Selected articles from the PanSIG 2024 Conference

ISSN# 2759-9965

<https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1>

The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

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PanSIG is an annual conference held in May, and organized by many of the **Special Interest Groups (SIGs)** of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). The conference brings together leading scholars and practitioners in language education from Japan, Asia, and throughout the world. It is meant to be a smaller, more intimate conference than the annual international JALT conference, and is a place where SIG members can network with each other.

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

The 23rd Annual PanSIG conference took place from May 24 to 26, 2024, at the dynamic Fukui University of Technology. Under the theme “Getting Back to Basics,” this year’s event encouraged us to explore innovative approaches to pedagogy while addressing the pressing challenges of our time. Set against the backdrop of Fukui’s rich cultural and natural heritage, over 300 in-person and hybrid presentations inspired lively discussions and meaningful collaborations across disciplines.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Parvathy Ramachandran, our Conference Chair, and Bradford Lee, our Site Chair, whose exceptional leadership and dedication were pivotal to the conference’s success. Together with our hardworking organizing team, they created an event that was not only engaging and thought-provoking but also inclusive and forward-looking.

The 2024 PanSIG Journal reflects the vibrant academic exchange and cutting-edge ideas that characterized this year’s conference. This year, the journal debuts a fresh format and style, featuring a new cover design, reorganized sections, and a more accessible layout. Additionally, this volume and each article now possess their own Digital Object Identifier (DOI), enhancing the visibility and accessibility of our authors’ work. My sincere thanks go to Ally MacKenzie, Ezra Vasquez, and Duncan Iske, whose efforts on the Editorial Board were invaluable in bringing this vision to life.

Having now completed my second year as Editor-in-Chief, I’ve gained a deeper appreciation for the immense collaboration that makes this journal possible. This year brought its own challenges, but also reinforced the incredible potential of the PanSIG community to support and elevate scholarly contributions. I am especially grateful to our contributors and reviewers for their commitment to excellence and for engaging so fully in the revision process, transforming submissions into works of outstanding quality.

Looking to the future, I am thrilled about the opportunities to continue advancing the PanSIG Journal and fostering the growth of our academic community. The 2025 PanSIG conference is scheduled for May 16–18, 2025, at Kanda University of International Studies in Mihama Ward, Chiba City, Chiba Prefecture. The conference theme, “Agency and Autonomy in Language Education,” will explore how learners and educators can make informed choices and take action to achieve their goals. Under the leadership of Conference Chair, Robert Dykes, and Site Co-Chairs, Jennie Roloff Rothman and Prateek Sharma, I am confident that PanSIG 2025 will continue to be a platform for innovation and collaboration.

In closing, I hope that the articles in this journal inspire your teaching, research, and engagement with the field. May they provoke dialogue, spark new ideas, and encourage your own contributions to our shared pursuit of educational excellence.

Warm regards,

Miguel Campos
Editor-in-Chief, PanSIG Journal
2024



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Special Interest Groups

Accessibility in Language Learning

Even before the Accessibility in Language Learning SIG acquired its voting rights in February 2023, the SIG has endeavored to create a community of language teachers who seek to better understand the diverse needs of all learners and improve their students' overall learning experiences, especially those who require special support or accommodation. To share this goal of providing access in language learning, the SIG holds discussion forums and collaborates with other SIGs for presentation sessions. From August 2024, select ALL SIG members benefit from the ALL LIFT, a scholarship program created to support professional development on accessible and inclusive instruction.



Art, Research, and Teaching

ART SIG is for artists, researchers, and teachers who are interested in exploring and utilizing visual art in the language classroom. ART SIG is a forum to share teaching resources and ideas about the recognized roles and future possibilities for visual artworks in the language-learning classroom. The visual arts (paintings, photos, illustrations) help students to learn multicultural literacy and multimodal reading skills. Art also engages learners by offering affordances to interact with SLA materials, reduces social anxiety, and increases social inclusion. A deep engagement with the visual arts promotes critical thinking skills, the bedrock of learning how to learn. We welcome everyone who's interested in bringing art and color into their classroom..



Bilingualism

The Bilingualism Special Interest Group (SIG) is made up of around 160 JALT members and subscribers, many of whom are raising or teaching bilingual children. Our aim is to further research on bilingualism as it occurs in Japan. We also promote mutual support among our members through our bi-monthly newsletter, academic publications, and an active email list. Parents in international marriages, people who communicate in more than one language, and teachers of multilingual students all take advantage of the practical and theoretical information available via our group. Further information can be found at <https://www.bsig.org/>



Business Communication

The JALT Business Communication (BizCom or BC) SIG represents a group of like-minded teachers intended to develop the discipline of teaching English conducive to participation in the world business community in Japan. To facilitate this, we aim to provide instructors in this field with a means of collaboration and sharing best teaching practices.



CEFR and Language Portfolio

CEFR & LP SIG wants to discuss the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and European Language Portfolio (ELP), and other similar frameworks and their relevance for Japan. There is an emphasis on developing materials to support educators who would like to use these pedagogical tools; the bilingual Language Portfolio for Japanese University is available on the SIG website..



College and University Educators

Our goal is to provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of educational activities, ideas and research of broad interest to college and university educators in Japan. If you are involved in tertiary education and are committed to professional development, you are CUE too.



Computer Assisted Language Learning

The CALL SIG serves the interests of language teaching professionals who are interested in bringing together knowledge and skills of technology and language learning. CALL practitioners work in a variety of educational settings: private language schools, elementary and secondary schools as well as colleges and universities.



Critical Thinking

The Critical Thinking (CT) SIG was established for the purpose of providing a clear but ever-reforming definition of critical thinking; to provide a forum for the discussion of critical thinking and praxis; to provide research opportunities to language educators interested in promoting critical thinking; and to provide an area where language teachers can enjoy friendly, professional and engaging examination of the rationale, validity and, furthermore, the critical importance of its instruction in various environments.



Extensive Reading

The ER SIG exists to help promote extensive reading (ER) in Japan. Through our website, our newsletter, the ERJ Journal, and presentations throughout Japan we aim to help teachers set up and make the most of their ER programmes.



Gender Awareness in Language Education

The purpose of the GALE SIG is to research gender and its implications for language learning, teaching, and training. We welcome submissions for our newsletter (spring, summer, and fall issues) on topics, both theoretical and practical, related to the SIG's aims. Book reviews, lesson plans, think pieces, poetry -- basically anything related to gender and language teaching is welcomed. To see our past newsletters, please visit our website at www.gale-sig.org.



Global Englishes

JALT Global Englishes SIG is a platform focusing on diverse areas associated with Global Englishes, including World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca and Multilingua Franca (ELF/EMF), English as an International Language (EIL), Translanguaging, Multilingualism, Language Ideology, Language Planning and Policy, and Native-speakerism. The overall goal is to promote more inclusive educational approaches which reflect the realities of English use in diverse contexts and among diverse users.



Global Issues in Language Education

GILE aims to promote global awareness, international understanding, and action to solve world problems through content-based language teaching, drawing from fields such as global education, peace education, environmental education, and human rights education. The SIG produces a quarterly newsletter, organizes presentations for local, national, and international conferences, and maintains contacts with groups ranging from Amnesty International to Educators for Social Responsibility to UNESCO.



Intercultural Communication in Language Education

This SIG explores how language teachers can foster students' intercultural awareness, shape their intercultural perspectives, and promote understanding across cultures. We encourage discussions on diverse approaches to teaching intercultural communication in language classrooms, helping educators stay informed about language and intercultural education theory. We also support the development of practical resources tailored to foreign language teaching contexts, addressing the challenges of integrating culture into language instruction. Our initiatives include an annual conference, with proceedings published the following year on our website. For more information, please visit <https://icle.jalt.org/>.



Learner Development

The Learner Development SIG is an active and supportive community of individuals with a broad range of personal and professional experiences, all sharing an interest in exploring learner (and educator) development. We encourage anyone with similar interests to join us. To find out more, please visit our SIG's website: ld-sig.org.



Lifelong Language Learning

We offer a bright future to our aging society. The energy of older learners who wish to lead active lives is flowing all over Japan. LLL (Life Long Learning) is willing to help these older learners enrich their lives through language learning. LLL also provides resources and information for teachers who teach English to older learners by holding events and publishing online newsletters.



Listening

The Listening Special Interest Group (Listening SIG) provides a forum for focused listening research and discussion in specific regard to teaching and learning. The group offers both teachers and researchers a place to connect, collaborate and share practice and research regarding how teachers teach listening and assess their learners, how learners improve their listening and use it to improve their knowledge, and finally how theoretical aspects connect to classroom practice.



Literature in Language Teaching

Hi! A hearty welcome to the Literature in Language Teaching SIG. We started up this group to encourage and promote the use of literature in the language classroom. Literature provides real content to engage and to motivate our EFL students.



Materials Writers

The MW SIG was established for the purpose of helping members to turn fresh teaching ideas into useful classroom materials. We try to be a mutual assistance network, offering information regarding copyright law, sharing practical advice on publishing practices, including self-publication, and suggesting ways to create better language learning materials for general consumption or for individual classroom use.



Mind, Brain, and Education

The Mind, Brain, and Education SIG is a forum for language educators and researchers to share insights in neuroscience. We hope to be a driving force in bringing relevant new discoveries in psychology, cognitive neuroscience and neurolinguistics into language teaching in Japan.



Mixed, Augmented, and Virtual Realities

Mixed, Augmented and Virtual Realities (MAVR) is not a new concept or area of study, but it is an area that is beginning to be implemented at a larger scale in many other fields. There are those of us working in this area connected to education here in Japan and more specifically language education in Japan. Our SIG is not just about technology, it is also looking into what these technologies mean for how we communicate and learn as we create and augment our own reality.



Other Language Educators

Hello! Dobr denj! Kalimera! Ni hao! Guten tag! Anyong hashimnikka! Bonjour! Buenos días! Hyvää päivää! Bom dia! Haisai! Konnichiwa! In an age where it is easier than ever to learn about how and where others live, there remains one sure way to truly understand what they think, both as individuals and as a culture: by learning their language. Every culture is shaped by unique patterns of thought and perspectives that cannot always be captured in English or easily translated between languages. Learning a language is the key to unlocking the deeper nuances of that culture and the countries that speak it. The purpose of OLE SIG is to address the specific needs of learners and educators navigating this journey.



Performance in Education

The mission of the Performance in Education (PIE) SIG is to provide a forum for teachers and academics to discuss, research, and implement oral interpretation, speech, debate, and drama in language education. The main activities are creation of a newsletter and sponsoring a National Speech, Drama, and Debate Contest. Future activities may be the sponsoring of workshops and conferences, and supporting local and regional speech, drama, and debate contests or festivals.



Pragmatics

The Pragmatics SIG welcomes members who are interested in both research and practical teaching issues related to “how people do things with words.” The group’s newsletter, Pragmatic Matters, is published electronically three times a year. Our Pragmatics Resources series offers practical and theoretical papers on language in use. If you do anything with language, you are using pragmatics! So, come join us!



School Owners

Language School owners have always played a significant role in JALT both at national & local levels. The SO SIG is where owners can share ideas, experiences, and solutions to the academic and commercial challenges they face which cannot be addressed through other SIGs. If you have questions or would like to learn more about what the SIG provides, please contact us at so@jalt.org or visit our website at <https://jaltso.org.wixsite.com/home>.



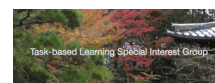
Study Abroad

The Study Abroad SIG welcomes anyone interested into its wide membership, domestically and overseas. The aim is to facilitate an active and working network of faculty, staff, and students who can share and exchange experiences, knowledge, and knowhow on how to plan, prepare, implement, and evaluate different study abroad programs/experiences. Study abroad includes all categories of inbound and outbound, one-way study abroad, exchange, internships, experience, and cultural programs. The goal for many SIG members is to network, to collect and share data and information for future collaboration, research, presentations, and papers in the area of study abroad.



Task-Based Learning

The JALT Task-Based Learning (TBL) SIG is a Special Interest Group aimed at teachers who currently use, or are interested in using, task-based approaches in the classroom. The SIG focuses in particular on issues related to Task-Based Language teaching and learning in the Asian EFL context, where TBLT has yet to enter the mainstream of language pedagogy. We hope that the SIG will serve as a useful forum for the exchange of practical teaching ideas, theoretical discussion, and academic studies of TBLT issues.



Teacher Development

The Teacher Development SIG is a group committed to helping ourselves and our peers to become more effective language teachers in order to better serve learners. As such, our varied activities and interests include forums, conferences, and journals about professional development, practitioner research, and reflective practice. Our SIG offers opportunities for teachers from different educational settings to come together for careful and critical reflections and explorations of their practice, with a view to developing as professionals. The TD SIG is a flexible group, open to new ideas and potential collaborations.



Teachers Helping Teachers

The THT SIG began from the charity work of the late Bill Balsamo and we organize 4 overseas conferences in Laos (Feb/Mar), Vietnam (Early August), Kyrgyzstan and Bangladesh (Sept, date depends on Ramadan) as well as work to develop overseas volunteer opportunities. Participants pay their own way, and are asked to prepare 2-3 presentations (practical presentations are most welcome) that they may present multiple times to organize and fill out the conference schedule. For more information, please contact thtjalt@gmail.com.



Teaching Younger Learners

The TYL SIG is for teachers of younger learners. This SIG was formed by the merger of the JALT Teaching Children SIG and the Junior Senior High SIG in February 2015. The goal of the TYL SIG is to support those involved with or simply interested in the teaching of languages to learners aged 0-18. We publish a bilingual newsletter with columns by many of the leading teachers in the field.



Testing and Evaluation

The Testing and Evaluation SIG aims to provide avenues for research, information, and discussion related to foreign language testing and evaluation both from within JALT membership and with other professional organizations which have common interests and goals. Please visit our website at www.jalt.org/test.

JALT Testing & Evaluation SIG

Vocabulary

The Vocabulary Special Interest Group (Vocab SIG) provides a forum for focused research and discussion in specific regard to vocabulary acquisition. We offer both teachers and researchers a place to connect regarding how learners improve vocabulary knowledge, how to test their knowledge, and how these theoretical aspects connect to classroom practice. The Vocabulary SIG aims to be a driving force for both current and future research in the field of how vocabulary can be taught, learned, and tested in an increasingly global context.



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How to cite the article:

Tiley, W. (2024). Making art in CLIL: A cognitive perspective. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 1–8.
<https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-1>

Practice Article

Making Art in CLIL: A Cognitive Perspective

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Abstract

As one component of the four C's Framework, educators employing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodologies are encouraged to design classroom tasks that enable students to engage in higher-order thinking processes. This paper aims to break down the cognitive processes required in art making through observations of a CLIL art/art history course taught at a Japanese university. The observations indicate that art-making encourages a broad range of thinking processes, both higher- and lower-order, and therefore supports the inclusion of artistic activities as a component of CLIL education. Additionally, art-making may provide an alternative to the challenges of assessment raised in CLIL methodologies by allowing students to display content learning through a non-language-dependent medium, namely visual art. While these observations are promising, further research is required to ascertain the true role that art-making can play in the CLIL classroom.

4つのCのフレームワークの1つとして、内容言語統合学習 (CLIL) の方法論を採用する教育者は、学生がより高次の思考プロセスを採用できるような授業課題をデザインすることが奨励されている。本稿では、日本の大学で開講されているCLILの美術／美術史コースの観察を通して、アートメイキングに必要な認知プロセスを分解することを目的とする。この観察から、アート制作は高次・低次を問わず幅広い思考プロセスを促すことが示され、したがってCLIL教育の構成要素として芸術活動を取り入れることを促進することを目的としている。さらに、アート制作は、CLILの方法論で提起される評価の課題に対して、学生が言語に依存しない媒体を通して学習内容を示すことを可能にする代替手段を提供する可能性もある。これらの観察は有望であるが、アート制作がCLIL教室で果たせる真の役割を確認するためには、さらに詳細な研究が必要である。

Since the initial development of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the 1990s in Europe, it has become a popular philosophy for language instruction worldwide. While the adoption of these ideas occurred later in Japan, CLIL is very much on the rise within Japanese educational institutions, with Ikeda et al. (2013) describing CLIL in Japan as “a new-born baby” that is “slowly and steadily crawling forward in Japanese education” (p. 2). Additionally, Yamano (2013) suggests that the language pedagogy objectives of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) align well with findings from extensive CLIL research in Europe.

Research into the role of art in the language classroom, however, is much more limited. Previous studies indicate that engagement with art can help foster critical thinking skills when incorporated into language programs in Japan (Mertens, 2019; Swanson, 2023) and that drawing can help language learners commit new vocabulary to memory effectively (Masson, 2020). Additionally, Masson & Carroll (2024) have explored the role that creating art can play in allowing language students to express their identities as multilingual individuals in an increasingly internationalised world. Although existing research is limited, it appears that art can offer benefits when incorporated into language education. These studies, however, do not specifically focus on cognitive processes, presenting a gap in the research that this paper aims to begin to address.

In Japan, as with many countries, art class time has become increasingly squeezed in favour of mathematical, scientific and technological skills. Komatsu (2017) states that existing art education in Japan is an efficient means of industrial development rather than an opportunity for self-expression, and Naoe (2003) goes as far as to describe Japanese art classrooms as “inorganic” and “factory-like” (p. 102). It would appear, then, that art education is not highly valued in Japanese educational institutions, despite the opportunities for personal and cultural development that it can offer. Additionally, research suggests that common issues in language education in Japan, such as low motivation and low willingness to communicate (Ushioda, 2013; Yashima, 2013) could at least be in part ameliorated through arts integration in language curricula (Martello, 2017; Tiley, 2022).

The motivation for this research comes from the intersection of these points – can the benefits of art education be realised in a language education context through the CLIL framework? Due to the breadth of this topic, this paper will focus on one component of Coyle's highly influential 4 Cs framework (2010), specifically looking at cognition. This focus on cognition is retroactive - The course that provided the basis for this work was intended as a broad exploration of the area, and the focus on cognition was selected reflectively as one of the more interesting themes that emerged from the experience.

Theoretical Framework

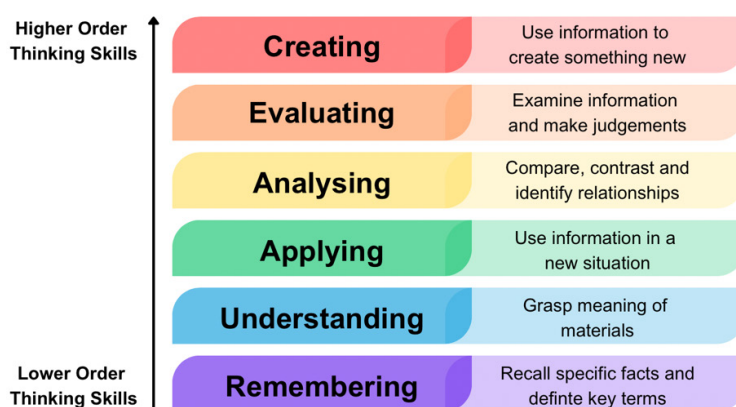
When implementing CLIL courses, researchers often rely on Coyle et al.'s highly influential Four C's framework (2010). This framework has become almost synonymous with CLIL, and therefore underpins a lot of the existing research into CLIL, both art-based (Korosidou & Griva, 2014; Tsantari, 2016) and otherwise. Coyle et al. (2010) outline four domains—Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture - that should form the basis of all CLIL lesson planning in order to promote effective learning.

Cognition in CLIL

When outlining the cognitive domain of the four C's framework, Coyle et al. (2010) draw upon the revised version of the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This outlines six categories of thought processes, detailed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Blooms Revised Taxonomy – Cognitive Domain (after Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)



In short, for effective CLIL to occur, Coyle et al. (2010) state that classwork should enable students to engage higher-order thinking skills to create a meaningful and cognitively engaging educational experience. As a result, the cognitive requirements of the CLIL framework are directly derived from Bloom's Taxonomy, and the higher-order thinking skills indicated in Figure 1 could be considered a requirement for successful CLIL. Therefore, to evaluate the cognitive opportunities offered by art education in the CLIL context, results of research into art education and observations from the elective course will be compared against Bloom's revised taxonomy.

Cognition in Art Making

The process of creating artwork clearly reaches the highest cognitive level of Bloom's Taxonomy—Creating. However, research suggests that art-making is a much more nuanced and cognitively engaging process (Eisner, 2002). Students begin the process with some concept or image of what they intend to create but must then contend with a series of limitations. This can include the limitations of the artistic materials in question, time limitations and technical limitations. The latter limitation is particularly relevant to students with limited experience in art-making, as their lack of technical skill with the materials in question means that the produced work is unlikely to align with the students' initial concept for the work.

In short, technical, material and scheduling limitations mean that students are unlikely to produce work that meets their own initial standards, something which Eisner refers to as 'the problem'. It is, however, in dealing with 'the problem' that Eisner claims that students truly learn from the creative experience, stating that:

The students inability to deal with the problem to their satisfaction motivates attention and experimental trial; they need, for example, to look hard at what they've created in order to see what is there, to make judgements about it, to use their skills to address it and assess the results. It is in coping with the resolution of a dissatisfaction – the conversion of something less than satisfying into something that satisfies – that children learn from the activity. (Eisner, 2002, p. 95-96)

In this resolution of dissatisfaction with their own work, students must analyse their own work to isolate the source of the dissatisfaction and evaluate how they can address this given the limitations outlined above. As such, Eisner suggests that in creating their own artwork, students engage with their own work in both an analytical and evaluative way ("What is it about my work that is not satisfying?" "Does this adequately convey what I am trying to express?"), suggesting that students are employing multiple higher order cognitive skills from Bloom's Taxonomy in addition to the 'Creating' level.

Despite this, even setting aside the language context, empirical studies at the intersection of art-making and

cognition remain relatively scarce. Heaton (2021) posits that this is due to the complexity of cognitive processes, however, some researchers have attempted to address this. One such study conducted by Yokochi & Okada (2005) explored these processes through a case study, analysing the artistic processes of one subject through observations, interviews and field tests. The results of this study echo the thoughts of Eisner, indicating that the formation and evolution of mental images, combined with the overcoming of limitations in medium and technique, come to the fore in artistic endeavours.

Context

The observations in this article are based on the researcher's experience of teaching an art-based CLIL course for advanced-level English learners (CEFR B2+, GSE 67-75) at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, an international university in southern Japan. The course was designed to serve as an initial investigation into the role that art education can play as a component of language learning and was therefore kept relatively simple, with the goal of identifying potential research themes for deeper exploration in future courses. A total of 10 students enrolled in this course, five from Japan and the remaining students from Thailand, Cambodia, India, Italy, and Taiwan. The course was delivered during the Fall Semester of 2023, running from October 2023 until January 2024, and consisted of two 100-minute classes per week.

The course covered developments in art from the mid-19th century until the present day, loosely divided into four units. Each unit grouped several art movements and covered four classes, beginning with a preliminary discussion class where students were encouraged to discuss the target artwork for the unit and try to draw their own conclusions about the work in question. This was followed by two teacher-led, seminar-style classes explaining the concepts while also providing ample space for student discussion. Each unit concluded with a student-led show and tell class in which students introduced a work of art based on their own independent research into the unit movements. Each unit also involved an assessed essay, encouraging students to further explore the movements in question through their own self-guided research. To support language development, the course included speed reading exercises to develop research skills, and workshops on discussion and writing skills. The course also included a field trip to a local gallery.

However, the main area of interest for this exploration into the cognitive processes of art making comes from the two creative projects that were also included in the syllabus. Students were given an open brief, but were encouraged to experiment and discuss their ideas both with the teacher and each other. Paper, brushes, and acrylic paint were provided, but students were free to bring in their own materials if required. Students were given three 100-minute periods to complete their work; however they were also free to work outside of this time. In practice, most students spent the first period experimenting with ideas and techniques before working on their piece in the second and third periods.

Outcomes and Observations

The preliminary nature of the elective course means that the results are purely observational at this stage. However, based on these emerging themes, further research can be designed and implemented to provide more definitive data on the cognitive dimensions of art making as part of language education.

Development of Initial Concepts

As part of this cognitive process, there were numerous instances where students gravitated towards the previously taught content of the class, exhibiting lower-order thinking skills associated with remembering and applying, as defined in Bloom's Taxonomy. Most students' initial concepts for their work appeared to be influenced by the timing of the creative projects within the course—the first was halfway through the semester, meaning students had learned about Impressionism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Abstraction and De Stijl. Accordingly, student work reflected various aspects of this. The second project was delivered after the completion of the final unit, with students adopting more modern artistic ideas such as Conceptual Art, Participatory Art and Pop Art.

At this stage, students likely had a highly idealised image of the work they intended to create, composed of various ideas derived from class content as well as other sources. However, in the development of an initial concept, students were employing lower-order thinking skills (remembering, applying) in order to achieve higher-order thinking skills (creating).

Cognitive Processes in Art Making

Once students began working on their pieces, further cognitive processes became evident as students began to grapple with Eisner's 'problem' (2002). A great deal of this process occurred internally, as the students worked through the limitations of technique, materials, and time to create a satisfying piece of work. However, many students confirmed this process verbally in presentations, voicing ideas along the lines of "I was not satisfied with this, so I tried...". This provided confirmation, albeit limited, of the process of self-evaluation and experimentation with the overall aim of improving satisfaction, as Eisner (2002) suggested.

In the project classes, students often stepped away from their work to re-evaluate and experiment with different ideas to get closer to their ‘ideal’ image and even consulted each other for ideas. As a result, students ended up invested not only in their own work but also in that of their classmates too as their ideas had been incorporated into each other’s work as part of this problem-solving experience.

Application of Content to Solve Problems

As part of this creative experience, there were some instances where the students employed another strategy to solve ‘the problem’. Rather than experimenting or consulting classmates, these students returned to the content of previous classes to directly address the shortcomings in their work. For example, one student painting a landscape wanted to include a greater feeling of movement and dynamism in their work. This led them to revisit the work of Van Gogh specifically *The Starry Night* (1889), and *The Church at Auvers* (1890), covered in class some weeks prior, and to try to emulate the dynamic style in their own art. Another student employed a similar reflective process when trying to create a conceptual work based on their experience of university. Their desire to depict the communal and social nature of university life led them to the ideas of participatory art, particularly the work of Yoshihara (*Please Draw Freely*, 1956) and Abramović (*Rhythm 0*, 1974), which had, again, been covered in a previous class. The result was a collaborative and performative art piece that involved all class members and thus satisfied the creator’s original desire.

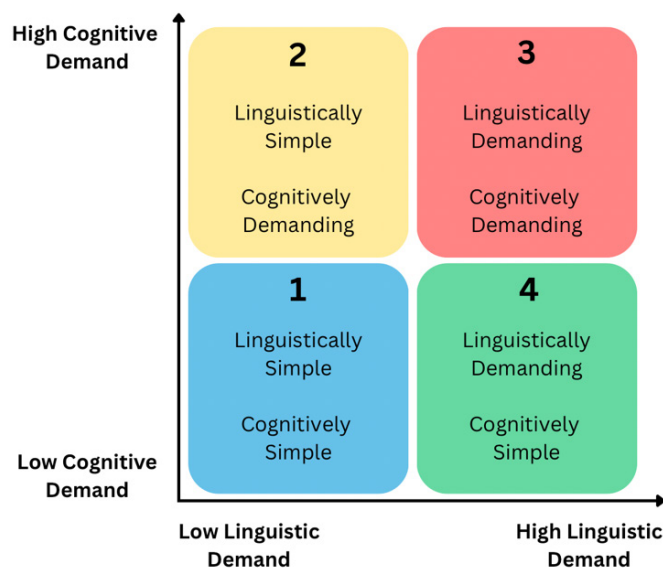
In both situations, the students returned to class content to help them develop their artwork, thus displaying an understanding of content. When considered in tandem with the non-linguistic nature of the creative process, this may offer a solution to one of the issues with CLIL outlined by Coyle et al. (2010)–challenges associated with assessment.

The Role of Language in Art Creation and Presentation

One interesting feature of the art-making process is that while cognitively demanding, it did not place any specific linguistic requirements on students. Such activities can be categorised using the CLIL Matrix (Coyle et al., 2010), shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

The CLIL Matrix (after Coyle et al., 2010)



The matrix is divided into four quadrants and provides a simple way of representing classroom tasks in terms of cognitive and linguistic demands. Accordingly, the creative projects in the elective would be located in Quadrant 2–high cognitive demand, low linguistic demand. Coyle et al. (2010) state that a focus on Quadrant 2 will allow learners to progress into Quadrant 3 by increasing language demands. Thus, while the time spent creating the artwork may not have been linguistically demanding, such tasks can be considered valuable within CLIL as a stepping stone to more linguistically demanding tasks. In this case, students were then required to present their work and their creative process, reincorporating a linguistic element and thus moving the activity into Quadrant 3 in the CLIL Matrix. It should be stated that Coyle et al. (2010) originally intended for the matrix to be used to develop support systems for students, yet Griffiths (2019) states that “it also provides a sound approach for designing a sequence of tasks in a CLIL lesson or unit” (p. 148).

Discussion

While these findings are purely observational at this stage, there are some interesting features regarding cognitive processes and content application that would merit further investigation.

Cognitive Processes in CLIL Art Creation

Coyle et al. (2010) suggest that all cognitive processes in CLIL should be evaluated against Bloom's Taxonomy (Figure 1). Accordingly, it is appropriate to look at the art creation process through this lens as well. When forming initial concepts, most students returned to class content to create idealised concepts for their own work. This demonstrates students using lower-order thinking skills (remembering, understanding, applying) to support higher-order thinking skills (creating). Then, once students start working, they come up against the cognitive challenges outlined by Eisner (2002), specifically dealing with limitations by evaluating and analysing their own work to produce a result that aligns with their initial concept in a satisfying way.

Within this process, students often took time to step away from their work and talk with others, either seeking validation for their decisions or advice on how to improve their work. Thus, in a limited capacity, students were also engaged in evaluating each other's work throughout the process.

Accordingly, it would appear that as a cognitive process, art-making in education requires students to employ multiple thinking processes, both higher- and lower-order, suggesting that art-making aligns well with the cognitive principles of effective CLIL education.

Content Evaluation Through Art

As previously mentioned, most students relied on previous class content to help formulate initial concepts for their own artwork, and then adapted and evolved throughout the creative process to produce something that ultimately aligned with their initial concept. In addition to the cognitive demands of this process, this suggests that students would have to think more deeply about the content underpinning their original concept. To produce a satisfying piece of work, students had to demonstrate their understanding of the taught content and break down the true nature of the style they were trying to emulate, providing an opportunity for a very rich and in-depth personal interaction with the concepts in question.

This deep understanding of content could therefore form the basis of content evaluation, something that is often highlighted as a limitation of CLIL. Coyle et al. (2010) acknowledge that it is often difficult to determine whether students lack understanding of the content, or if they lack the linguistic skills to demonstrate their understanding of content, thus creating a significant issue in assessing student content knowledge within CLIL education. However, art making may offer an opportunity for students to display their understanding of content through a medium that is not dependent on language. While this approach may present other challenges, such as subjective interpretations of artistic concepts and limitations in technical ability, it offers a potential avenue to explore student content understanding independent of language or test performance, thereby addressing the assessment challenges highlighted by Coyle et al. (2010).

Such an opportunity for content evaluation would therefore require a framework for evaluating content understanding through visual art. Several frameworks exist that could potentially be adapted and applied to this field, including art-based research (ABR). ABR provides a framework for using art as a medium for communicating research knowledge (Morris, 2022), suggesting that such methods could be adapted for use in evaluating student work. This type of evaluation could be used in conjunction with student reflections, either spoken or written, to assess student understanding of content, and identify potential discrepancies between a student's representation of their understanding through artwork and their ability to demonstrate content knowledge in the classroom language.

Limitations, Implications and Applications

The key limitation of this study is the scope, and the nature of the data collected. This is due to the general approach adopted in the course delivery –existing research into art-based language education is limited, so a broad approach was adopted to identify possible research themes with cognition being one of the several themes that emerged from this experience. Thus, specific research methodologies designed to monitor cognitive processes, such as those adopted by Yokochi and Okada (2005), will be required to draw any deeper, more meaningful conclusions on the topic.

Despite this, the opportunities presented by art creation as part of language education may lead to some interesting implications for teaching practice. However, at this stage further research is required to fully understand these implications. Any future research in this area is likely to be highly variable due to the multifaceted nature of art creation. Eisner (2002) describes student-art making as a complex process where students work towards an idealised image, but are likely to be limited by time, materials, and technical skills. Thus, understanding the true nature of the student creative process will likely require a longitudinal study. In such a study, students' initial concepts and intentions are clearly defined, followed by close tracking of the process of experimentation and resolution of 'the

problem' undertaken throughout the creative process. By comparing students' initial intentions with their final work, researchers could gain insight into the degree of deliberate content application involved, as opposed to mere 'happy accidents' that may occur during the creative process.

Alternatively, a more scaffolded approach could encourage greater student reflection on taught content as part of the process of developing their own artwork. This more direct approach would require students to reflect on and demonstrate content understanding through specific briefs for artwork creation, rather than the freeform approach used in the elective course. By directly instructing students to apply the concepts of, say, cubism, in their work, the students' individual understandings of the movement are likely to be clearer. This would minimise variables in evaluating student content, as an evaluation framework could be created based on the specific movement in question. This, in conjunction with some concepts adapted from ABR, may offer a solution to the issue of content assessment in CLIL, by providing a non-linguistic basis for assessing content knowledge through the work produced by students.

Finally, the scope of this paper is very narrow, focusing only on cognition as part of CLIL education while excluding the remaining three C's. Based on observations from this elective class, communication is another area that merits further investigation, with students actively developing collaboration, negotiation, self-reflection and mediation abilities in discussion, and employing translanguaging and problem-solving strategies to interpret various works. Additionally, art offers myriad opportunities to explore 'Culture', a further C that would benefit from deeper investigation. As it stands, these areas represent a major gap in the literature yet could provide a path to an arts integrated approach to language instruction.

Conclusion

One thing that is evident from this series of observations is that accurately isolating and categorising cognitive processes can be challenging. However, the observations of the student process as part of the elective CLIL course can be broadly summarised as follows. First, students develop an initial concept for the artwork they wish to create. This is a creative process and may be based on concepts taught as part of the CLIL course, or other external factors such as artistic preferences and previous experiences. Then, once the physical creative process begins, students encounter Eisner's 'problem' (2002) and be engaged in a continuous cycle of evaluation and analysis of their own work to create something that aligns with their original concept in a satisfying way. As part of this process, the aims of the project may shift as the work develops, adding an additional layer of complexity. Finally, once the work is complete, the language element of the process comes to the fore, with students required to explain this creative journey in hindsight.

Overall, there is a gap in the literature regarding the role of art in language education. However, with the growing interest in CLIL and more integrated approaches to language learning, art-making may offer benefits in implementing CLIL in the classroom. While the observations in this paper are preliminary in nature, they suggest that art presents students with opportunities to demonstrate their learning and understanding in ways that are cognitively demanding yet linguistically simple, thus presenting a potential solution to a primary issue with CLIL. The linguistic component can be reincorporated into assessment through presentations and written reflection, encouraging students to think deeply about their own experiences and problem-solving strategies in the process. Accordingly, the use of art in CLIL classrooms may offer educators a unique way to assess and challenge their students, while making the language classroom a more vibrant and engaging place to learn and grow.

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How to cite the article:

Busso, A. (2024). Encouraging inquiry: A semester-long project using science buddies. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-2>

Practice Article

Encouraging Inquiry: A Semester-Long Project Using Science Buddies

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Abstract

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an effective pedagogical approach for developing 21st-century skills while improving English language proficiency. Unlike traditional methods, PBL uses thematic and experiential learning strategies to promote learner autonomy and collaboration, combining content-based instruction with task-based learning (TBL) to achieve practical outcomes (Petersen, 2008). This paper explores the impact of combining PBL with scientific inquiry in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class at a Japanese university. The aim is to promote inquiry, improve language skills, and develop essential 21st-century skills. The paper concludes by discussing the challenges and limitations associated with the implementation of PBL and the use of science as a subject matter.

プロジェクト・ベースド・ラーニング(PBL)は、英語力を向上させながら21世紀型スキルを育成するための効果的な教育手法である。従来の方法とは異なり、PBLはテーマ別・体験型の学習ストラテジーを用いて学習者の自律性と協調性を促進し、実践的な成果を達成するために内容ベースの指導と課題ベースの学習(TBLT)を組み合わせている(Petersen, 2008)。本稿では、日本の大学における外国語としての英語(EFL)の授業において、PBLと科学的探究を組み合わせたことの影響を探る。その目的は、探究心を促進し、言語能力を向上させ、21世紀に不可欠なスキルを育成することである。最後に、PBLの実施と教科としての科学の使用に伴う課題と限界について考察する。

The primary aim of this teaching practice is to improve students' language skills and to promote a sense of curiosity through a semester-long science project. PBL integrates authentic materials and tasks to encourage cooperative learning. By placing students at the center of the learning process, PBL increases their engagement and motivation (Virtue & Hinnant-Crawford, 2019), which, in turn, increases their self-efficacy and confidence. Unlike traditional classrooms, which often emphasize repetition, memorization, and reliance on textbooks, PBL allows students to apply their scientific knowledge through projects while simultaneously developing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving.

This practice-oriented paper explores the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in an English Project Workshop (EPW) class at Tokyo International University (TIU). The EPW course described in this paper was taught by the author and is an elective course offered to Japanese students. The project involved six first-year students majoring in English Communication. This small class size allowed for more individualized feedback and close interaction between the teacher and students, which influenced the design and implementation of the project.

In this focused classroom environment, PBL was an effective teaching approach because it gave students the autonomy to progress at their own pace and level. While this study focused on English Communication majors, the skills emphasized by using science as content, such as inquiry, research, and collaboration, could also benefit students in other fields. The course met twice a week for 100 minutes over a 15-week semester. The author had the flexibility to design the course content, projects, and assessments to suit the needs of the students.

The semester-long project involved selecting a science experiment, drafting a project proposal, conducting research, writing observation reports, and culminating in a final report and presentation (see Appendix for a detailed Sample Project-Based Learning Syllabus). These activities were designed to deepen scientific knowledge while also targeting specific language skills. For example, conducting research improves students' reading comprehension by critically analyzing texts, while writing a report refines their academic writing skills, including formatting, writing abstracts, and drawing conclusions. In addition, making presentations increases students' confidence in communicating their scientific findings and public speaking, and designing presentation slides improves their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Theoretical Framework

Project-Based Learning (PBL) originated in the early 20th century through the educational reforms of John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick. In the context of language education, PBL evolved into Project-Based Language

Learning (PBL), which enables students to use language authentically in real-world contexts while fostering autonomy and critical thinking (Azzad, 2024).

PBL immerses students in the learning process through extended projects that begin with “driving questions or problems” and end with “meaningful products” (Simpson, 2011, p. 40). While definitions vary, in the EFL context, projects should focus on “complex, authentic questions and carefully designed projects and tasks” (Markham et al., 2003, p. 4). Research on the benefits and effectiveness of PBL in EFL classrooms is overwhelming, highlighting improvements in both language proficiency and personal development (Thuan, 2018). Studies show that PBL enhances students’ writing (Barba, 2016; Cahyono et al., 2024) and motivation (Aghayani & Hajmohammadi, 2019), encourages collaboration (Astawa et al., 2017), improves communicative competence (Wu & Meng, 2010), and cultivates 21st-century skills such as critical thinking (Arabloo et al., 2021), problem-solving (Kiyokawa, 2019), creativity (Astawa et al. 2017; Talat & Chaudhry, 2014), and cooperative learning skills (Wu & Meng, 2010). Teachers also benefit from PBL, reporting higher motivation as a result of increased student engagement, and a more fulfilling classroom environment (Demir, 2011; English, 2013; Lam et al., 2010; Astawa et al., 2017).

Another instructional framework often confused with Project-Based Learning (PBL) is Problem-Based Learning. While both approaches share student-centered, collaborative principles, they differ in focus and outcomes. PBL emphasizes inquiry and creating tangible products to enhance language and communication skills (Markham et al., 2003), whereas Problem-Based Learning focuses on solving real-world problems through critical analysis (Savery, 2006). A study by Affandi and Sukyadi (2016) compared the effectiveness of these approaches in an Indonesian tertiary EFL context. The study revealed that while both methods improved students’ writing, PBL promoted exploratory learning and collaboration, whereas Problem-Based Learning was more effective in developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These findings demonstrate the complementary strengths of the two approaches in addressing diverse EFL learning goals.

This study adopts a Project-Based Learning framework for its potential to foster inquiry, creativity, and real-world application while integrating problem-solving tasks to develop critical thinking and adaptability (Thomas, 2000). These elements align with the 21st-century skills essential for EFL learners, as demonstrated in Japanese university settings (Fujimura, 2016; Kiyokawa, 2019).

Simpson (2011) outlines several key components of PBL:

- Exploration of a topic over an extended period of time
- Student-centered learning
- Projects that revolve around topics that interest students
- Less focus on teacher-led instruction
- Regular feedback from peers and the teacher
- Practical activities that use authentic materials
- Emphasis on teamwork rather than competition
- Development of a range of skills, including communication and organization
- Build new ideas and skills throughout the project
- Create meaningful artifacts that can be shared with a wider audience
- Continuous assessment throughout the project

PBL allows students to develop language, knowledge, and communication skills by combining language and factual information in real projects (Simpson, 2011). Instructors should make considerable efforts to meet these criteria when designing PBL-based lesson plans and curricula.

PBL in EFL Universities in Japan

While Japanese universities are increasingly adopting Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), many students lack the opportunity to study interesting subjects in English (Kiyokawa, 2019). This challenge is compounded by the limited experience students have in practicing English in EFL contexts, such as Japan. PBL addresses these needs by creating an environment where students are required to use their English language skills to acquire content knowledge and critically analyze information to deepen their understanding (Fujimura, 2016). Several studies demonstrate the positive impact of PBL in Japanese EFL universities.

For instance, Kiyokawa (2019) implemented the “Phone Booth” project, in which students researched a selected topic, created displays, and invited campus-wide participation through written questions and comments in an unused phone booth. Feedback collected from the pre- and post-questionnaires showed positive experiences for Japanese EFL students who were experiencing PBL for the first time. This example illustrates how a PBL project can transform a traditional classroom into an interactive learning space by involving the broader community.

Building on this, Foss et al., (2008) applied PBL in a short-term intensive English program, using four

distinct projects: the Wikipedia project, the newspaper project, the small group video project, and the whole group video project. These projects encouraged students to connect English learning to real-world interests, promoted collaboration, and culminated in tangible outcomes.

Similarly, Barrs (2020) combined PBL with the linguistic landscape approach to help seminar students develop thesis topics. Students researched the use of English in their surroundings by collecting and analyzing photos in class. These analyses led students from a “driving question about English usage in their local environment to producing tangible evidence of their critical examinations in the form of working titles for their theses” (Barrs, 2020, p. 15). This integration of academic inquiry with practical, real-world experiences further illustrates the versatility of PBL.

While these studies share common elements with this teaching practice, such as fostering inquiry, collaboration, and student engagement, this approach is unique in its focus on using PBL to enhance English Communication majors’ language and critical thinking skills through science-based projects. By scaffolding content with L1 resources and simplifying scientific concepts, students were able to develop technical vocabulary, improve presentation skills, and strengthen their English proficiency. This demonstrates the flexibility of PBL to address the specific needs of students in varied educational contexts.

Science Buddies

Science Buddies is a non-profit website that provides science experiment ideas and guidelines for students, parents, and educators to study and teach about various sciences. Their mission is to “inspire and educate students of all ages with hands-on STEM explorations that reflect their unique personal interests” (Science Buddies, n.d., para. 1). They achieve this by offering more than 15,000 pages of scientist-created content, where students can tailor their explorations by science discipline (physical, life, engineering, earth and environmental, behavioral and social, and math and computing), time, cost, materials needed, and grade level (elementary, middle, and high school). Furthermore, students can connect with real scientists through “Ask an Expert” and explore more than 160 STEM career profiles. This comprehensive resource aims to educate and promote a broader understanding of how science is applied in the real world.

For EFL students, the ready-made materials, tailored to individual interests and needs, can be a valuable tool to help them focus on developing their language skills including academic writing, research, and presentation. While some might argue that this resource could discourage creativity, as the research, materials list, and potential risks of the science experiments are already provided, this pre-done information actually allows students to focus more on learning English. With the groundwork laid out, students can spend more time developing a deeper understanding of the science behind their experiments.

Combining Science and EFL

PBL is a popular approach in content-based classrooms and general education, especially in science classrooms (Fujimura, 2016). Because students are already familiar with scientific concepts, they can easily grasp the related terminology and build new knowledge and skills on top of existing ones. Furthermore, science content is rich in media, charts, and graphs, which cater to diverse learning styles. Studies show that PBL in science significantly improves students’ reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary, and translation skills, as they are actively involved in researching and completing projects (Poonpon, 2011).

While the Science Buddies resource is commonly associated with science-focused education, it was adapted in this study to develop English Communication majors’ research, critical thinking, and presentation skills in English. By engaging students with scientific content, PBL encourages interdisciplinary learning, which helps them explore topics across disciplines, make meaningful connections, and enhance transferable skills (Habók & Nagy, 2016). Therefore, the combination of PBL and science projects has the potential to effectively improve students’ English language skills in a unique learning environment.

Description of the Teaching Practice

The PBL approach implemented in the English Project Workshop (EPW) class at Tokyo International University (TIU) aimed to improve the linguistic skills of six first-year English Communication majors in the context of scientific inquiry. With a small, focused class size, the instructor was able to provide individualized feedback and closely monitor each student’s progress. To achieve this, students engaged in a semester-long science project that required them to conduct research, analyze data, write reports, and give presentations, all in English (Table 1).

Table 1

Implementation Stages for the Science Project

Weeks	Description
Weeks 1-2	The first few weeks focused on reviewing the fundamentals, including the scientific method, the importance of inquiry, and the project timeline. During this period, students were introduced to the

Weeks	Description
	the Science Buddies website, which served as a structured starting point for selecting their experiments. The teacher provided initial guidance on navigating the platform, such as filtering projects by complexity, materials, and topics to align with their interests and proficiency levels. Students then began selecting their science experiments, fostering autonomy and decision-making, essential components of PBL (Habók & Nagy, 2016). This extended project allowed students to delve deeper into topics that genuinely interested them. To support the teaching of scientific methods, the instructor adapted and designed close reading exercises, comprehension quizzes, and discussion questions based on Science Buddies content.
Weeks 3-4	Project topics were chosen individually by students to align with their personal interests and levels of understanding. This approach ensured that each student could engage deeply with a topic they found meaningful, fostering autonomy and motivation. After selecting a science experiment, students drafted a project proposal outlining their objectives, methods, and materials. Fortunately, Science Buddies provides a strong foundation that allows students to simplify the language and tailor the proposal to their specific needs.
Weeks 5-7	After completing the project proposal, students gathered background information on their science experiments. While some experiments had suggested readings, students often needed to do further research to fully understand the concepts. To support this process, the teacher allowed the use of L1 websites as supplementary resources, enabling students to access information in their native language. This approach promoted a deeper understanding of the science experiments and related terminology. Additionally, by encouraging them to synthesize information from both L1 and English language sources, it allowed students to focus on developing their reading comprehension and note-taking skills.
Weeks 8-10:	After the background research, students were given a timeline to complete their science experiments outside of class, with ample time allowed. During this phase, class time was devoted to regular individual consultations and workshopping, which was crucial for monitoring student progress. The teacher scaffolded and modeled how to record data and make observations.
Weeks 11-13:	The focus then shifted to developing writing skills. Students learned to organize their scientific findings into a final report, structuring it with an abstract, introduction, body, and conclusion. They applied technical vocabulary from their experiments and learned to format and organize their reports effectively.
Weeks 14-15:	The final stage involved creating a multimedia presentation to showcase their experiments and findings. Students developed presentation skills using a variety of software tools, including Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Canva. These tools enabled students to organize and visually communicate their findings. To simulate a real 'science fair' environment, the instructor invited other classes to attend the presentations, creating a dynamic learning environment. This stage assessed students' understanding of the project, public speaking skills, and information organization skills. Finally, some class time was dedicated to individual and whole class reflection on the process of the science project.

Reflections on the process

The semester-long PBL project, which integrated science and English language learning, aimed to encourage students' curiosity and improve their language skills in a student-centered environment. By choosing their science experiments, conducting research, analyzing data, and presenting their findings, students moved from passive learning to active inquiry. Observations of student engagement and interactions showed that cognitive presence (active learning through interaction, Kean & Kwek, 2014) motivated students to engage with their science-related challenges.

PBL offered several advantages. By exploring a science topic of interest, students were able to develop a deeper interest in and understanding of their science project. In addition, the project-based activities honed essential language skills, including research, writing, presentation, and critical thinking, consistent with studies highlighting PBL's effectiveness in developing 21st-century skills (Arabloo et al., 2021; Yadav et al., 2011). Students also gained valuable experience in using ICT tools and collaborating with peers, which accommodated different learning styles and encouraged autonomy and independent learning. This finding was observed in Yamada's (2021) implementation of PBL in Japanese EFL contexts.

This PBL-based teaching method, combined with science content, is highly adaptable to various classroom settings and levels. For beginner-level students, simpler scientific concepts and structured guidance are essential to make tasks more accessible, whereas advanced students can engage with more complex topics and enjoy greater autonomy. In mixed-proficiency classrooms, such as this one, individualized feedback between the student and teacher is crucial to address varying needs. Assigning roles based on students' strengths can foster effective collaboration,

while scaffolding tools like glossaries and L1 resources can provide additional support for lower-level learners. These strategies ensure that the PBL methodology can be adapted across a wide range of educational contexts, promoting engagement and skill development for all learners.

Outcomes and Observations

The implementation of PBL in the EPW class at a Japanese EFL university setting produced several key findings. Notable outcomes included improved language skills, a deeper understanding of science concepts and their specific science experiments, and improved collaboration skills. However, the implementation also revealed challenges, such as the significant time investment required by teachers, the need for effective feedback, difficulties in promoting autonomous learning among less motivated students, and the varying levels of English proficiency among students. These findings provide valuable insights for future PBL implementations, particularly in tailoring the approach to meet the specific needs of Japanese EFL university students.

Positive Outcomes of the Teaching Practice

Teacher's observations, students' written reflections, and feedback revealed several outcomes: improved language skills (particularly in presentation), deeper understanding of science experiments, improved ICT skills, and improved collaborative skills.

Students reported feeling more confident and demonstrated improved English language skills. For example, one student wrote, "It was the first time that do presentation of my experiment. It was hard, but I could learn to make research papers and ways of presentation..." Another student commented, "My last presentation went great, I had to express what I wanted to say. And I was impression of my background research because I learned a lot of things I don't know". These students' reflections highlight the positive impact of PBL in overcoming challenges and achieving success in gaining practical skills such as research and presentation delivery. The positive attitudes of EFL learners towards PBL are in line with research by Aghayani (2024) and Virtue and Hinnant-Crawford (2019).

Students also demonstrated an increased depth of understanding of their science experiments. As the lesson progressed, students' confidence increased, and they were able to explain their experiments more easily using scientific terminology. For example, a student who initially struggled to explain why fruit turns brown was, by the end, able to confidently explain how polyphenols and antioxidants in lemon juice preserve fruit freshness and why apples with holes changed color the fastest in their experiment.

Moreover, the teacher observed that the students were becoming more comfortable with ICT skills, learning to navigate the internet for research, format academic documents using Google Docs, and use presentation software tools to create their slides. This is consistent with Arabloo et al. (2021), who found that technology-aided PBL significantly improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Finally, PBL improved students' collaborative skills. Students worked together by sharing responsibilities for reading and class quizzes and providing supportive feedback at different stages of the writing process and presentation. Based on students' written feedback, this collaborative environment fostered a sense of community that encouraged students to take risks and support each other. This finding is consistent with Astawa et al. (2017), who found that PBL promoted teamwork, increased students' confidence, and helped them to express their ideas. Furthermore, the mixed-proficiency groups facilitated peer learning, allowing students with different ability levels to learn from each other.

Challenges and Limitations of the Teaching Practice

Despite its benefits, PBL is not without its challenges. The effective implementation of PBL in EFL classrooms requires considerable planning, the establishment of support structures, and the design of activities that promote deeper learning (Kavlu, 2017). Teachers often act more as guides than traditional instructors, focusing on motivating students and fostering a sense of community (Habók & Nagy, 2016). This approach requires continuous monitoring of student progress by the instructor. In this EPW class, the teacher had to invest considerable time in planning and conducting individual meetings to ensure that projects were completed on time.

Providing feedback was another essential component. The instructor emphasized the importance of constructive and targeted feedback at all stages of the project, as highlighted by Simpson (2011). At the initial stage, the instructor provided personalized feedback on the students' hypotheses and research questions. During the writing stage, the instructor helped students refine their academic writing skills and develop their ideas. Finally, for their presentations, the instructor guided students on best practices for creating and delivering presentations, as well as on effectively presenting their findings.

Another challenge was teaching students how to ask insightful questions and engage in meaningful inquiries. Thomas (2000) notes that students often struggle with initiating inquiry and managing time in complex projects. Although the EPW class emphasized open-ended questions and promoted higher-order thinking skills, the use of science as content can be challenging for students with lower proficiency levels (Islam, 2022; Larmer et al., 2015).

Finally, student motivation throughout the project also emerged as a challenge. After conducting their experiments, students' engagement levels appeared to decrease, as evidenced by lower participation and fewer completed submissions during the data analysis, report writing, and presentation preparation stages. This is inconsistent with the findings of Virtue and Hinnant-Crawford (2019), who found that students were motivated to complete the project even if they were not interested in the concept.

While this practice-based teaching approach provides insights into the implementation of PBL in a Japanese EFL classroom, its limitations should be acknowledged, particularly the lack of quantitative data to assess its effectiveness in improving students' English skills. Future research should include quantitative methods, such as pre-and post-intervention surveys, to measure language proficiency gains, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. Additionally, thematic analysis of student reflections could reveal deeper insights into the impacts of PBL on student engagement, confidence, and skill development. Addressing these challenges could lead to the development of more effective strategies for maintaining student motivation and facilitating scientific inquiry in PBL settings.

Discussion

Integrating science and English language learning in a semester-long PBL project produced positive outcomes. The student-centered environment promoted active learning and improved various language skills and 21st-century skills. However, challenges such as the teachers' time commitment, the need for effective feedback and inquiry-based learning, and the difficulty of maintaining student motivation were observed.

Although the findings of this practice-based method cannot be generalized, they provide valuable insights for future PBL implementations in EFL classrooms and highlight the importance of tailoring the approach to meet the specific needs of mixed-proficiency Japanese EFL university students.

Conclusion

The implementation of a semester-long PBL science project in the EPW class at TIU demonstrated the potential of PBL to enhance language skills, foster curiosity, and promote 21st-century skills in EFL students. By engaging students in a meaningful and authentic project, PBL transformed the EPW classroom into an active learning environment, where students took ownership of their learning and developed a deeper understanding of both scientific concepts and the English language. While the teacher's observations provide important insights, this study also incorporates student reflection. Thematic analysis of students' written feedback revealed that participants experienced a progression from initial uncertainty to confidence in their ability to communicate scientific findings in English. Additionally, their reflections highlighted increased motivation and a deeper understanding of the scientific method.

Further research on the effectiveness of PBL is needed, particularly in assessing its impact on student learning, achieving measurable outcomes, and maintaining motivation. Currently, there is no standardized framework for implementing PBL, which requires instructors to independently design lesson plans, materials, activities, and assessments. While this encourages flexibility and creativity, it may not always align with well-established, research-based practices. Additionally, a common challenge with PBL lies in addressing students' limited academic backgrounds in specific subject areas.

This study demonstrates how structured resources like Science Buddies, paired with scaffolding techniques and the use of L1 materials, can effectively bridge gaps in subject-specific knowledge. Although PBL is relatively new to Japanese universities, there is a growing interest in adopting it to promote interdisciplinary learning. The successful integration of PBL into other programs, however, will depend on factors such as institutional support, resource availability, and teacher training. The methodology outlined in this study provides a practical example of how PBL, when combined with science content, can be applied in an EFL context, offering insights for broader implementation in similar educational settings.

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How to cite the article:

Kuster, W. (2024). Non-native Japanese speaking teachers' use of Japanese in university EFL classrooms. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 18–24. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-3>

Practice Article

Non-Native Japanese Speaking Teachers' Use of Japanese in University EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

While teachers using Japanese in the EFL classroom is still a hotly debated issue, recently there has been a wealth of research that shows Japanese can be a useful tool in Japanese university English classes (Bartlett, 2017; Joyce, 2021). However, non-native Japanese-speaking teachers may find it difficult to reap the benefits of using Japanese due to a number of reasons such as insufficient language proficiency, low confidence, or the time commitment needed to prepare materials in Japanese. This practice-based paper will explore some of the current research on teachers' Japanese use and describe how this research was implemented in EFL courses at a Japanese university by a non-native speaker of Japanese. Afterwards, the author will share some reflections and give suggestions for other non-native Japanese speaking teachers interested in using Japanese in their teaching.

日本で第二言語としての英語の授業を日本語で教えることは、現在でも議論が続いているトピックだが、日本語が授業で結果的に使用できると述べる論文は、近年増加する一方だ (Bartlett, 2017; Joyce, 2021)。しかし、日本語母語話者ではない教員は、低い日本語能力や劣等感、日本語の教材を作る時間がない等の理由で、日本語で教えた場合の利益を享受出来ない可能性がある。この実践に基づく論文は、教員の日本語使用に関する文献を紹介し、日本語母語話者ではない大学の教員が、この文献の研究結果を授業で実践した方法を説明する。その後、筆者は実践した際の感想を述べ、日本語母語話者以外の教員向けの、日本語を英語の授業で使用する方法の提案をする。

The use of L1 in EFL teaching remains a hotly debated issue. Many researchers argue that an English-only (EO) approach which minimizes the use of students' L1 in the classroom is the preferred method (Ford, 2009; Kawabata, 2024; Nae & Kim, 2018). However, there is a growing amount of research that has shown L1 use to have positive effects on student learning outcomes (Auerbach, 1993; Rouzbahani & Alipour, 2019).

Bartlett (2017) suggests that Japanese university English classrooms in particular are a good context for L1 use in the classroom because the vast majority of students share Japanese as their first language. Moreover, Mari and Carroll (2020) argued that teachers should self-reflect on their L1 use in the classroom with regard to their students' specific needs and resources.

It is with this in mind that I decided to incorporate Japanese use into my teaching in specific and targeted ways. In this practice-based article, I will describe how and why I incorporated my students' L1 (Japanese) into the classroom even though I am not a native speaker of Japanese. I will also provide some suggestions for how other non-native Japanese speaking teachers can effectively use Japanese in the classroom.

Context

I speak Japanese as a second language, and I teach English courses at a private university in western Japan. The university's courses are divided into four levels (Basic, Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced) based on student aptitude measured by TOEIC score. All students with a TOEIC score below 305 are placed into Basic-level courses. Elementary-level classes require a score of 305–400. Intermediate-level classes require a score of 400–520. Any student who scores higher than 520 is placed in an Advanced level course. All these courses are compulsory for students who are not majoring in English. I teach mainly Elementary- and Intermediate-level courses, and occasionally Basic- or Advanced-level classes. Most of the students are in their first or second year of studies, unless they have failed a course and need to repeat the class in their third or fourth year. The main goal of the courses, according to the standardized syllabus, is to “develop students' ability and confidence in using English to communicate in informal, everyday situations” (Kyoto Sangyo University, 2024).

Need for Japanese in the Classroom

The need for Japanese language use in these courses was caused by several different factors. First, a large

number of the teacher-student interactions in the class had little to do with the course content and instead pertained to classroom management or university policies. Roughly four to five students would approach the teacher during each class to engage in one of these interactions and dealing with these often took up a third of the class time.

Examples of these interactions include explaining detailed university attendance or plagiarism policies, assisting students with purchasing the correct textbooks, and informing students of changes to the class schedule. Many of these interactions require an unreasonably high level of linguistic competence for lower-level learners.

In addition to this, the Covid-19 pandemic also brought about some new challenges while exacerbating those already mentioned. As a required part of the courses, students use a language learning application called EnglishCentral, and the instructor is required to use one of two online classroom management systems in some capacity, either Moodle or Microsoft Teams. Teachers could choose to use both systems in tandem as well, but I opted to only use Moodle. At the beginning of the pandemic, all the courses were moved online and taught synchronously using Zoom. Also, at the same time that teachers and students were trying to get accustomed to this new teaching context, the university was introducing two new required tasks to be completed in the aforementioned online learning application, and a second completely separate yet also required, online learning application (My Mobile World) to be used in some courses. The addition of My Mobile World brought the total number of different applications required to participate in these courses to four. Introducing these different online platforms and tools all at once to students not yet accustomed to university life or life during a global pandemic led to a sharp increase in Japanese-language emails from students requesting technical support for these applications.

Theoretical Framework

Through examining previous research in order to create a theoretical framework to guide my Japanese use in the classroom, three trends emerged: many Japanese students prefer at least some L1 use by their teacher, Japanese is best used with lower-level students, and Japanese can best be used for classroom management or to provide scaffolding.

Student Preferences

One important factor worth taking into account when choosing classroom teaching methods is what students prefer. There are still researchers who argue for EO policies because they believe limiting the amount of L1 use in classrooms improves students' English proficiency (Nae & Kim, 2018) or because there is little research on the efficacy of using Japanese in the EFL classroom (Berger, 2011). However, there is also a growing body of research that suggests Japanese university students prefer L1 support in the classroom.

In a survey conducted by Bartlett (2017) the majority of students felt that use of Japanese in the classroom was a benefit to their language acquisition. One of the reasons provided by the respondents was that they felt more comfortable approaching their teacher if they could use Japanese.

In a similar study the majority of both Japanese English teachers and Japanese university students felt that classroom L1 use was beneficial to learning (Kawabata, 2024). In another study, students displayed a preference for their teacher to be proficient in Japanese (Carson & Kashiara, 2012). Examples of tasks that a proficient teacher would be able to complete in Japanese include explaining complex concepts, comparing and contrasting the Japanese language with the English language, and assisting students in checking comprehension (Carson & Kashiara, 2012).

These sentiments were echoed by participants in a survey conducted by Joyce (2021). The majority of these Japanese university students felt that it was important for their teacher to be able to give explanations in Japanese, speak Japanese well, and allow students to ask questions in Japanese.

A possible reason for Japanese students having these preferences when they reach university is their past experience with English during their primary education. According to Lee (2013), prior to entering university, most Japanese students take English classes where Japanese is the primary or sole language of instruction. These experiences could lead students to become accustomed to learning English through the Japanese language.

Students' English Proficiency

Another factor to consider when deciding when to use students' L1 in the classroom is the English language proficiency of the students in a given class. Lee (2013) argued that L1 use is unavoidable when teaching lower-level Japanese university students. Several reasons for the need to use Japanese with lower-level students have been suggested.

According to Ford (2009) the overall English comprehension ability of first-year Japanese university students has been steadily decreasing every year, and many students are unable to understand basic English speech, making Japanese use necessary to conduct English courses. Lee (2013) also suggested that adopting a strict EO policy with low proficiency students will make it difficult for teachers to build a rapport with the class.

Moreover, with regard to student preferences for L1 use in the classroom, lower-level students tend to desire more Japanese language support in the classroom. In a survey conducted by Carson and Kashiara (2012), students were shown to have a greater desire for their instructors to use Japanese for classroom instruction when students

had lower language abilities. A later study showed similar results with students' preference for Japanese use in the classroom declining as their proficiency increased (Carson, 2018).

However, it is not just students who feel the need for more L1 support at lower levels. Teachers have also been shown to tend to utilize their students L1 as a teaching tool more frequently when teaching lower-level students (Hall & Cook, 2013).

One suggested way to incorporate these research findings into pedagogy is for all teachers to be familiar with Japanese and have lower-level courses taught only by teachers with high Japanese language proficiency (Carson & Kashihara, 2012). While this may not always be feasible for every institution due to staffing restrictions, it could prove to be a useful consideration for administrators when hiring instructors and assigning courses.

Also, low language proficiency is not the only factor that influences student preferences for L1 use. According to Joyce (2021) in addition to low language proficiency, students with low motivation are more likely to desire L1 support. Therefore, teachers could use more Japanese in courses where students have low motivation.

Scaffolding and Classroom Management

The third factor to consider when using Japanese in the classroom is in which situations and for completing which tasks is Japanese best used. Even though Shibasaki (2020) argued for the use of EO policies whenever possible, she still suggested that Japanese could be used for scaffolding.

One study found that teachers and students both tend to prefer that Japanese be used to describe difficult concepts (Carson & Kashihara, 2012). Furthermore, many teachers in Hall and Cook's (2013) study used their students' L1 to explain meanings, vocabulary, or grammar that was unclear. Mora Pablo et al. (2011) found teachers in Mexico used their students' L1, Spanish in this case and not Japanese, for similar functions in their teaching as well.

In addition to scaffolding and clarifying course content, students' L1 can also be used for classroom management. According to Hall and Cook (2013) teachers working with lower-level students were particularly likely to use their students' L1 to maintain discipline in the classroom. All these L1 uses make pragmatic sense, as many of these would require language that is well beyond the abilities of many students. Also, while an argument could be made that these could all lead to teachable moments, in many instances they are likely to fall outside the goals and objectives of many courses.

Description of the Teaching Practice

When first looking at which classes to begin using Japanese in, I decided to follow my discoveries from reading previous research by targeting my lower-level classes. Therefore, I began to provide more L1 linguistic support for my Elementary-level courses, Elementary English Communication I and II, and provided less for Intermediate- and Advanced-level courses.

In my Intermediate- and Advanced-level courses, I teach almost entirely in English with the exceptions of important departmental announcements or if a student specifically requests Japanese language support. Focusing on my Elementary-level courses was a logical first step, as it was in these courses that the largest number of communication issues occurred. These issues happened because there are several aspects of the class that, while required by the university, are not easily presented in English at a level accessible to students in Elementary-level classes. Examples include setting up students' accounts in EnglishCentral and reviewing university attendance and testing policies.

After deciding which courses to use Japanese in, I chose how to implement the language in class. There are five main ways that I began using Japanese in my classes: first, writing bilingual course syllabi; second, writing bilingual posts on Moodle; third, responding to emails in Japanese; fourth, giving certain in-class instructions in Japanese; and fifth, answering student questions in Japanese upon request.

The first use of Japanese in my classes was writing the syllabus. In addition to a general syllabus that is available online, each teacher is expected to provide a more detailed syllabus for each course that they teach. The syllabus that I distribute in each course is bilingual, with information presented in English with a Japanese translation immediately below.

For example, the attendance policy for each course is relatively complicated and tends to cause confusion among students. This is an issue because failing to follow the attendance policy negatively impacts students' grades and failing to attend enough lessons results in an immediate failure of the course. Therefore, this was the first portion of the syllabus that I began providing in English and Japanese. To illustrate this, in the syllabus the English sentence "If you are late due to a train delay, you can be marked present or you can receive an excused absence. However, you need to provide sufficient evidence" is followed by the Japanese translation "電車の遅延のせいで遅刻する場合、遅刻・欠席の代わりに出席・公欠として記録する可能性があります、電車の遅延が十分に確認できる物を提出しないとけません" (Kuster, 2024). All these translations were proofread by a native speaker of Japanese to check for accuracy and clarity.

The second use of Japanese is providing bilingual information on Moodle, the online learning platform that the university has adopted for use in all classes. Here all of the instructions for homework assignments, reminders, and the course schedule are posted in both English and Japanese. The information here is presented in the same way as the

syllabus, with a Japanese translation following each piece of English text (Appendix A). All of the translations provided on the online platform were proofread by a native Japanese-speaking colleague before they were posted.

The third use of Japanese is emailing students. The main way that most of my students choose to interact with me outside of class is through email, and most students send their emails in Japanese. They often email to request excused absences or to troubleshoot issues with the various online learning applications. Many of these issues are too complicated for the students to navigate in English. As such, I began responding to any email written in Japanese. Some of the questions that I receive are so common that I made a few Japanese email templates to cut down on my response time to each individual email (Appendix B).

The fourth use of Japanese is giving in-class instructions. Occasionally, I need to give in-class instructions in Japanese, such as when certain textbook activities are very complicated or contain difficult grammar. Giving these instructions in Japanese allows students to complete activities that they otherwise would not be able to complete due to limited English proficiency. Also, there are many times when I use Japanese for classroom management or to make in-class announcements about upcoming university events, exams, etc.

In these moments using English presents three issues. First, many of these instructions would require English that is beyond the students' level. Second, the students might be negatively impacted if they do not understand the information. Third, these announcements are often unrelated to the course itself. Therefore, I use Japanese in instances such as these to avoid taking up too much class time that could be better spent on other activities.

Finally, I use Japanese to answer student questions both during and outside of class during office hours upon the students' request. Many of these questions that the students ask me do not pertain to the class content or would require English that is above their ability to comprehend. Examples of these questions include "Can I get an excused absence for attending a funeral next week?" or "How many points do I still need to receive credit for this class?" One of the most common interactions that I have with students is assisting with technical issues they often encounter while using the various online learning applications used in the course. In these instances, I use Japanese instead of English.

There are a few important things to note about the process I used to have my documents proofread by a native speaker of Japanese. The native speaker who proofread my Japanese documents is an English educator and colleague of mine, who occasionally asks me to proofread their English language documents as well. In order to try and avoid overwhelming them, as they are also very busy, I tried to refrain from sending too many documents to proofread at one time. When I had a document for them to proofread, I requested their assistance via email or in person.

Observations and Reflections

In the following section I will present a few of my observations and reflections of this process. First, I will discuss the benefits of using Japanese in the classroom followed by some limitations and challenges I encountered. Finally, I will share some comments that I received from students about my use of Japanese.

Benefits

As a result of incorporating Japanese language support, overall, my lower-level courses seemed to run more smoothly. There were two main areas where I noticed using Japanese improved the course.

First, the number of student emails, particularly those relating to information covered in the syllabus, greatly decreased. Before providing Japanese language support I was receiving roughly 25 emails a day from students. After incorporating Japanese in my classes this number dropped to about five student emails each day. This was a very welcome development as it allowed me more time to focus on giving students meaningful feedback as opposed to writing copious emails about the university attendance policy. Furthermore, because there were fewer emails, I could respond to each one in a more timely manner, and the students did not need to send as many follow up emails for clarification as the information was in Japanese.

Second, the amount of class time devoted to helping students set up and log in to their EnglishCentral accounts was greatly reduced. When the course was taught only in English, it took upwards of 20 minutes in at least two different class sessions to help students log in to the application and set up their accounts. However, all of this was accomplished in around 15 minutes in one class when the teacher explained the process to the whole class and assisted individual students in Japanese. This allowed for more class time to be devoted to focusing on course content.

I believe that both benefits that I observed were achieved due to the fact that I was using Japanese to provide linguistic support for relatively complex information, as suggested by Carson and Kashihara (2012).

Limitations

There is one area where I think caution might still be required. I did observe that upon realizing that their instructor spoke Japanese, some students would only communicate in Japanese. They would completely ignore very basic instructions in English and would not try to express themselves in English even if they had previously demonstrated the ability to do so. Verbally encouraging these students to use more English did not seem to have an

effect on their motivation to do so. This only happened with a handful of students, so it is not yet a major issue for the courses overall. However, it is still worth addressing, especially if it becomes more widespread, and the effect of verbal encouragement on students' motivation to use English could be a topic for future study. One possible solution might be to have certain periods of class time devoted to the whole class, including the teacher, using only English.

Another limitation that I encountered was the increase to my workload to prepare for my classes. In addition to the changes I made in the classroom, this undertaking also required some personal language development and study. As I am not a native speaker of Japanese, I took extra steps to acquire the language necessary and appropriate for use in the classroom. The language used in academic settings by teachers is different from the language used in everyday conversation. Therefore, in order to develop the tone of a teacher, I studied a variety of materials. Examples of materials I studied included Japanese language syllabi from other courses, Japanese language textbooks, and YouTube videos of university lectures. I paid particular attention to the language used in syllabi and the instructions for textbook activities. I can see how this added workload might be an obstacle for some teachers who are already extremely busy, but I think the benefits justified my time spent studying.

Student Voices

At the end of each semester, I conduct end-of-course surveys with my students where they are able to give their feedback or voice their overall opinion of the course. While not every student mentioned Japanese, a few of them left comments about my use of Japanese in the course. One student commented that they were glad they could email their instructor in Japanese, because they lacked confidence in their English writing ability. Another student said that they were able to easily keep track of the course schedule and meet assignment deadlines because of the Japanese instructions on Moodle. I found these comments to be encouraging, and I believe that conducting a follow-up survey to collect some quantitative data is a good next step.

Recommendations

In general, I would recommend that any teachers who are interested at least try incorporating Japanese into their classroom, and after reflecting on my own experiences, there are a few things that I would suggest to any teachers considering using Japanese themselves.

First, as research has shown, it is probably most appropriately used with lower-level or possibly low-motivation students (Lee, 2013) for the purposes of explaining difficult concepts (Carson & Kashihara, 2012; Hall & Cook, 2013).

Second, I think it is imperative for non-native speakers of Japanese to seek the aid of a native-speaking proofreader. This can help avoid creating further confusion among students that Japanese grammatical errors might cause. Otherwise, there is a risk of defeating the entire purpose of using Japanese in the classroom. A good proofreader should have strong language skills and preferably be familiar with interacting with students.

Third, teachers should study the Japanese used by teachers in various teaching and academic contexts. Activities such as reading Japanese language syllabi can provide examples of the type of grammar and diction appropriate to use in one's own teaching.

As all of my teaching is done in university contexts, many of the suggestions that I have made are too specific to university teaching to be used in other contexts such as business English courses or children's English education. However, I think that using Japanese could be beneficial in these contexts as well.

While I spent time trying to acquire the specific Japanese vocabulary and language appropriate for a university instructor, I would recommend that teachers in other contexts try to find the language that would best suit their teaching context. For example, a teacher working at a Japanese elementary school could learn the phrases and keywords teachers use when interacting with younger learners in Japanese. I would also recommend finding a good native-speaking Japanese proofreader who also teaches in that context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, non-native speakers of Japanese can use Japanese as a tool in the classroom. Japanese language ability can be especially helpful when teaching low-level students in compulsory English courses. Also, using Japanese can allow teachers to cut down on time spent in and out of class discussing items that are not part of the course content but are required nonetheless. With a little work, and the help of a good Japanese-speaking proofreader, any teacher can take advantage of their students' L1. Non-native Japanese-speaking English language teachers' use of Japanese is an area that calls for more research and possibly the development of materials such as teaching aids or textbooks.

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Appendix A

Transcription of Bilingual Moodle Announcement

体調不良のため、本日の授業を休講致します。Unit 10の小テストが来週あります。Moodleで「Week 11」にある宿題を来週までに提出してください。

I am cancelling today's class because I am not feeling well. There is a quiz on Unit 10 next week. Please complete the homework posted on Moodle under Week 11 by next week.

Appendix B

Example Email Template and Translation

Japanese:

(名字)さん

(挨拶)。

了解しました。病院の診断書などを提出すれば、本日の欠席を公欠として記録します。

お大事になさってください。

クスター ウィリアム

English:

(name)

(greeting).

I understand. If you submit some form of documentation from a doctor, I will mark you excused from today's lesson.

Get well soon,

William Kuster

How to cite the article:

Dalziel, G., Terashima, A.V., & Bordilovskaya, A. (2024). Laying the foundation for meaningful research collaboration: A reflective inquiry. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 25–31.
<https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-4>

Research Article

Laying the Foundation for Meaningful Research Collaboration: A Reflective Inquiry

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Abstract

For language teachers in higher education, research is essential for career advancement and, for many, an enjoyable part of academic life. However, setting up and maintaining a successful research project as an individual can be daunting, particularly, in teaching-focused positions with a heavy teaching load and no research requirements. In this paper, we discuss the process of reflection on our experiences as three instructors at the same institution with very different academic backgrounds, who came together to develop a meaningful research project. Using reflective inquiry and narrative analysis, we examine the factors that sustained our collaboration and identify three key lessons for other language teachers in Japanese higher education struggling to progress their research individually.

高等教育機関で働く英語教師にとって、研究はキャリアの向上に不可欠であり、学問的な生活の楽しい部分でもある。しかし、一人で研究プロジェクトを立ち上げ、維持することは困難である。特に、教育を中心とする、授業負担が重くて、研究義務のない職位では、研究活動を維持するのが困難である。本論文では、異なる学術分野のバックグラウンドを持つ同じ教育機関に勤めていた3人の教師が、一緒に有意義な研究プロジェクトを開発した経験に対する反省プロセスを検討する。リフレクティブ・インクワイアリ(省察的探求)とナラティブ分析を用いて、持続的な共同研究につながった要因を考察する。研究者の反省を共同研究に関する文献と結び付けることで、単独で研究活動に困難している日本の高等教育機関の英語教師たちに参考になる3つの助言を紹介する。

GD: I was having a lot of fun teaching... But I had consistently struggled to finish writing, start new writing, make any progress on doing anything outside of just teaching since my dissertation finished.

AT: Around 2021 I wanted to continue my research but found it difficult to do so on my own... I knew that there were other colleagues with interest in this type of research.

A Russian fable tells the story of a swan, a pike, and a crayfish who together try to move a cart. Each does what is most natural to them: the swan flies skyward, the pike jumps in the river, and the crayfish scuttles backwards. The result is they are unable to move their cart forward. The fable is a cautionary tale about the potential pitfalls of collaboration. However, in this paper, we tell a different story of three colleagues with very different backgrounds, experiences, skills, and goals who found success in collaboration. To better understand our success, we utilized a reflective inquiry approach to examine our collaborative dynamics and share potential lessons for other teachers so that they, too, may move their carts forward.

This paper advances two arguments. First, that collaboration is a powerful and potentially transformative tool for language teachers in Japan because it allows people with diverse backgrounds and personalities to make mutually beneficial progress in their careers and identities as teachers. More than converting our labor into academic capital in the form of publications or grants, a shared commitment to moving our collective cart forward has the power to transform us from isolated individuals to a supportive community of practice. Simply recognizing that collaboration is beneficial, however, is not enough to make it work. This leads to our second argument: the crucial role of reflective practices in sustaining and strengthening collaboration. Reflection can be transformative both individually and collectively. For the individual, this process can trigger a re-examination of one's professional identity, which in turn can enable personal and professional growth, including a greater sense of meaningfulness in one's work. Collectively, it can transform a group from a one-time goal-oriented endeavor into an ongoing community of mutual trust and support.

Language Teaching in Japanese Higher Education

Language teachers in Japanese higher education often work in precarious conditions, juggling heavy teaching loads across multiple campuses. Many are contingent faculty in teaching-focused term-limited contract positions

where research is not required for contract renewal.

Conversely, securing a tenured or tenure-track position requires a demonstration of research output through publications and grants. Increasingly, even term-limited contract positions demand a publication record. This paradoxically makes research crucial for increasing chances of job security, yet challenging due to demanding teaching schedules—and the often-solitary nature of our jobs.

Our experience shows how collaboration can be a powerful antidote to these challenges. Conducting collaborative research can refresh teaching practices, reduce burnout, and enhance and legitimize professional identity. More importantly, collaboration fosters mutual support and care as well as being an important source of the community and support that can be lacking in solitary teaching roles (Mountz et al., 2015).

Collaboration Background

Until recently, all three authors (GD, AT, and AB) taught compulsory first-year English-language writing courses at the University of Tokyo. Both AT and AB primarily taught science-track students who conducted experiments and wrote papers mimicking the IMRD structure often found in scientific research articles. Students submit a final paper at the end of the semester, and all papers are added to a central database, hereafter referred to as a corpus.

As three language teachers in contract teaching positions, we understood the necessity of engaging in work that increases the chance of stable jobs: namely, carrying out research, applying for grants, and publishing our research. We also had experienced the challenges and frustrations of trying to do these things alone and were motivated to seek out like-minded others to collaborate on a research project.

Our backgrounds vary significantly. AB obtained her master's and PhD in linguistics in Japan, with several years' experience teaching in higher education. AT's first academic role followed a PhD in genetics (completed in the US), and several years of scientific editing experience in Japan. GD had previously worked as a policy researcher in Singapore, before moving to Japan and completing an interdisciplinary social science doctorate.

Despite our diverse backgrounds, we shared an interest in text analysis and corpus linguistics. This common ground drew us into conversations about the possibility of pursuing a joint research project using the student papers' corpus we had access to. In early 2022, we began meeting fortnightly, initially without a clear research goal or question. Our approach was exploratory, using the corpus of student papers as a data source and sharing relevant literature to brainstorm possible uses of the corpus. Initially, we each had our own ideas for analyzing and measuring features of the corpus that could be publishable (such as an analysis of frequent errors, or usage of multi-word phrases) and/or used in our teaching (such as useful examples of student writing).

These regular meetings were not solely focused on the project; we also discussed our teaching experiences and student needs. Allowing for this kind of drift in conversation led us to share an understanding we wanted to focus our corpus analysis on doing something that could be helpful for enhancing our students' learning experiences. By this point, we also had gained a realistic view of our own working pace and the time we could devote to research within the rhythms of the semester (Berg & Seeber, 2017).

This period of brainstorming and trying to find consensus can potentially be frustrating for groups, especially if there is a rigid focus on the end-product or tight time pressures. It is certainly an easy place for groups to dissolve through failing to find consensus. As we share in our reflections in this paper, we understood later that our willingness to persist as a group indicated there was something worth exploring about our collaborative dynamics.

Using Swales' (2004) Create a Research Space (CARS) model to analyze the rhetorical moves of the Introductions of student papers in a sub-corpus of our student papers, we developed and tested teaching materials and classroom activities. We presented the results of this project at JALT2023, marking a significant milestone in our collaborative journey (Terashima et al., 2023).

Although conferences do not hold the same academic capital as research publications, presenting at JALT2023 was a meaningful experience for each of us. For GD, for example, it was the first presentation in the field of language teaching research and something they felt they would not have been able to accomplish alone.

For our group, the conference presentation served as a checkpoint, completing our first research cycle. We evolved from a group with an initial lack of direction to one that developed a shared focus and vision, engaged in meaningful research, and presented initial findings at an academic conference.

Moreover, we connected the recognition we had of the transformation of our group with our own increasing interest in—and desire to actively learn, explore, and apply—research into the various ways teachers can meaningfully work with and support each other. Work presented on critical friendship at JALT2023, and the accompanying book (Uchida & Rothman, 2023) was especially useful. Seeing ourselves reflected in much of this work, we began to recognize that our own group dynamics and professional lives could themselves constitute a valid, meaningful, and useful research context (Adamson & Muller, 2018; Allard et al., 2007). In examining our intra-group dynamics, we seek to not only enhance our own professional and personal development but also to serve other teachers in our community.

Methodology

Rather than focusing on specific critical incidents, a common technique in reflective teaching practices (Brookfield, 2017), we wanted to generate reflections that we could share with each other that could also provide a springboard for further conversations focused on our collaborative group dynamics. For these purposes we drew not only on the reflective practices literature but also were considerably inspired by emerging work situated both in collaborative autoethnography (CAE; see Adamson & Muller, 2024; Chang et al., 2013) and duoethnography paradigms (Lowe & Lawrence, 2018; Jones & Noble, 2021; Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

Critics argue that autoethnographically-inspired methods risk self-indulgence (Delamont, 2009). We recognize it is easier for these approaches to be more obviously self-focused than other forms of research. However, for language teachers who are often isolated, systematically examining shared experiences can reveal structural challenges that may remain hidden in solitary teaching contexts. As such, our method aligns with calls for research on underexplored professional communities (Adamson & Muller, 2018).

By analyzing our experiences together, we gain a clearer view of how our seemingly individual challenges reflect wider issues in our professional community. By sharing these reflections publicly, we create opportunities to uncover common threads in our individual journeys that might otherwise remain hidden. This process of collective meaning-making has the potential to be transformative, not only in how we understand our own experiences, but in how we conceptualize our shared professional identity and collective challenges.

Moreover, it's not clear to us how distinct these autoethnographic techniques are from the varieties of reflective practices often encouraged in teaching and other professions (Brookfield, 2017; Farrell, 2018; Thompson & Pascal, 2012). We see these as complementary and think they have the potential to be transformative at the individual, group, and social level. CAE was particularly fruitful as an initial methodological orientation as it is a "method in which researchers work in community to collect their autobiographical materials and to analyze and interpret their data collectively to gain a meaningful understanding of sociocultural phenomena reflected in their autobiographical data" (Chang et al., 2013, pp. 23–24). However, while through this process we encountered a means to connect our own experiences with "sociocultural phenomena," we were also focused on our professional development vis-à-vis our group dynamics and on a relatively specific timeframe which fits better with some of the work on reflective inquiry.

We collectively worked towards developing six prompts. In addition, we set ground rules for this reflective writing process: (a) everything shared in the group stays in the group; (b) consent must be given before using any reflections outside of the group; (c) everyone may withdraw consent to share at any time. While these were originally inspired by GD's experience with group discussions on a meditation retreat, there are also similar recommendations in the literature (e.g. Bolton & Delderfield, 2018).

The prompts were as follows:

1. Original expectations from the project.
2. Biggest challenge during the project so far.
3. Biggest achievement so far.
4. Looking back, what was the best thing about teamwork? What was the most difficult? What was your personal most significant contribution to the teamwork and what do you think others contributed most to the project?
5. Expectations going forward at this point.
6. Something that surprised you about the collaboration or something unexpected that you discovered, learned, or experienced because of the collaboration.

We conducted our analysis in iterative stages (Chang et al., 2013). We individually wrote responses to the prompts in separate Google Doc files, doing so without reading each other's writing so as not to be influenced by each other. However, we each approached this reflection activity somewhat differently. Some of us wrote from memory, while others referred to handwritten notes taken during our prior meetings, or to emails from the beginning of our collaboration. In addition, while AT and AB wrote their reflections, GD dictated and transcribed their responses to the reflective prompts.

After we all finished writing our own reflections, we then engaged in peer commentary. This consisted of reading each other's writing and commenting on aspects of each other's narratives that evoked a response. We then wrote analytic memos (Saldana, 2011), with the goal of "captur[ing] [our] initial understanding and 'mini-analysis' of the data as a whole" (Chang et al., 2013, p. 103) along with any evolving insights. These memos were also written as Google Docs, shared with, and commented on by the group members. Finally, we met in person to have a conversation about the process and to discuss what themes we saw arising. This meeting (along with others) was recorded and transcribed as part of the iterative process. We then went back to previously collected notes and emails to provide additional contextual details to themes.

Unlike in a typical qualitative research project, where researchers analyze external data, we were both the subjects of research and the analysts in this case. This was a new (and somewhat strange) experience for us. We

decided to eschew the typical qualitative thematic analysis we might have engaged with if dealing with qualitative data generated by others (Saldaña, 2011). However, we collectively re-read our reflections and analytic memos, and through discussion and further memo writing identified seven common themes, which we presented at PanSIG2024 (Bordilovskaya et al., 2024). These themes were: (a) evolution of project over time; (b) valuing different perspectives; (c) setting realistic goals; (d) low stress and supportive collaboration; (e) alignment of future expectations; (f) professional identity; (g) sense of community.

Results

Lessons for Meaningful Collaboration in Academia

For this paper we condensed the themes that have particular significance for language teachers in Japan and presented them in the form of 'lessons.' This is done with the aim of connecting and contextualizing our reflections within the research literature and the wider social context within which we locate ourselves. We include short, representative excerpts to illustrate how our collaboration shaped our professional identities, mindful that extensive quoting can appear self-focused (Delamont, 2009).

Lesson 1: Change of Research Focus Over Time

Throughout our collaboration, our research focus shifted and evolved. Being flexible and accommodating of new ideas is one of the reasons we could sustain the collaboration.

As Allard et al. (2007) note, "Different perspectives are the reality of collaborative teaching and learning" (p. 308). In our case, AB reflected, "Each of us had a different way of thinking and approaching the research." Similarly, Allard et al. found in their own collaborative reflection on a shared research project that "at the outset of our collaborative journey, we had very different notions about the form that narrative inquiry might take" (p. 310). Our experience mirrors this, as evidenced by AB's observation: "Originally, I expected that the project would be more focused on the collocations and more linguistic analyses rather than genre analysis."

- GD: Once the three of us got started in March 2022 — and thinking back to that and where we are now — it really feels way different. We started looking at a lot of linguistic features of texts, student texts. We talked about various things we could do. We were bouncing around ideas for quite some time. It took us a while to have that spark where we all realized this is what we can be working on.
- AT: Regarding the research project — what I found most unexpected is how the project evolved over time. Initially I was just envisioning a corpus analysis type of study, but our combined ideas led us in a new and interesting direction and resulted in a multi-directional project that I initially could not have envisioned.

Lesson 2: Balancing Expectations and Realities and Finding a Group Working Pace

Regular meetings and shared reflections helped us gain a more realistic perspective on what we could accomplish given our various responsibilities. This understanding helped alleviate the self-doubt and anxiety that often accompany academic work, particularly in the pressure-cooker environment of publish-or-perish academia (Lee, 2014).

- AB: Moving away from slightly unrealistic goals/timeframes and finding how much we can allocate time to the project as a team is probably one of the most challenging but also one of the most important aspects of being able to continue this collaboration. Embracing that between three of us, on the one hand, we can divide some of the work but, on the other hand, we also can't go to the next step/stage unless all of us are on the same page is one of the most challenging but also most important aspects of learning about teamwork for me.
- GD: There were certainly times where I felt a little frustrated about the pace of the project, especially I think in the beginning when we were searching for what we wanted to focus on. We were doing a few iterations of some different ways of looking at the texts and trying to come to some sort of consensus and agreement on what we wanted to achieve. At the same time, even if progress was "slow," we always kept coming back to each other, kept meeting every week, or every few weeks when we had time. I think that's meaningful!
- AT: It has been really helpful to have regular meetings with AB and GD because this gives me a concrete deadline to get something done. I often set unrealistic goals for what I can achieve in the time that I have, so coming to terms with the fact that I can usually only achieve a fraction of what I imagine I can do has been tough as well. But sharing these struggles with my colleagues and making progress regardless of these setbacks continues to provide motivation to keep moving forward.

Lesson 3: Regular Low-stakes, Supportive Check-ins

Common in all our reflections were acknowledgments that returning to each other—either every week or less frequently as the rhythm of the semesters demanded—provided a key means through which we could begin to reframe our emotional relation to the labor of research. In addition, maintaining a consistent, regular schedule of meetings was a way for us to maintain momentum and to help us overcome periods of low motivation or energy.

- AB: The best part for me was that we didn't have a lot of stress or pressure to achieve something ... of course, we had a goal but the stakes were not super high, and when some/all of us had some downtime, we could take a break from the project. Feeling support and flexibility but no pressure from my colleagues made this collaboration psychologically sustainable.
- AT: For me, the best part of teamwork is the continuous renewal of motivation to get the next step done—even if the next step is very small. I find it is so easy to lose momentum when doing research is not a top priority. Meeting regularly, brainstorming ideas and coming up with the next target is a huge benefit of working on this research project collaboratively.
- GD: The best thing, the most rewarding aspect about working together as a research team, was having regular, relatively low stakes, low stress checkpoints, times to talk with each other, space to talk through things with other people. That was really rewarding in terms of sometimes reducing my own internal expectations, keeping things manageable in some ways.

There were weeks where, due to work or family commitments, one of us could not get a small action item accomplished. However, having two other people meant that at least something got done.

Here, technology is a useful support for collaboration. Much of the time we could meet face to face, when we were working in the same university. However, depending on schedules we could use Zoom at times. At a certain point, AB was fortunate to get a new job and we switched to largely using Zoom. This had the added benefit of making it easier to make high-quality recordings that we could transcribe using AI-assisted tools. This also made it possible that if one person could not attend a meeting, we could share the summary and transcript with them. The transcripts have also become an ongoing data source for future ethnographic research.

Discussion

The Value of Reflective Inquiry in Collaborative Work

One of the most significant outcomes of our collaboration was the realization that many of our struggles were not unique to us as individuals, but rather common experiences shaped by structural factors in academia. As Boyd (2023) observes, when we fail to move our cart forward or sustain momentum, we often attribute these setbacks to personal shortcomings. However, the reflective inquiry process gave us the space and means to identify and recognize the broader structural issues that can impede our progress in academic work, while also helping us notice some of the unskillful ways we might relate to the emotions such situations and structures can trigger.

Even more significant was our recognition that we needn't cling too tightly to future goals, or to work only with a fixed view of some future desirable state. Small internally imposed deadlines or external ones from conferences helped us stay focused, but the social dynamics of a group make everything work. Using our meeting times to allow for extended conversations outside of a fixed goal-oriented agenda allowed us to find common ground on issues that have come to help us evolve, refresh, and motivate our research agenda. More importantly, it provided a way for our group to coalesce—from having an unfixed research question, largely driven by anxiety about adding lines to our CV, to what Boyd (2023) terms a "community of support" (p.35) and "warm, supportive companionship" (p.11). Such community and companionship are too often missing from academic life (Lemon, 2022).

Our reflective dialogues allowed us to generate new understandings about our self-assumptions and actions, and their implications for our professional identities. However, the process of engaging in this kind of reflection with others was emotionally charged—an aspect not always acknowledged in the reflection literature. Allard et al. (2007), for example, found that "reading a story of another person's practice [was] highly engaging and a non-threatening method to invite educators into reflective practice" (p. 306).

For us, however, the experience was more complex. While we also found this process ultimately engaging and positive, it was not entirely without discomfort. Writing reflections stirred up emotions, and both sharing our own writing and reading our partners' pieces was, frankly, a little scary. At first, this process left us feeling exposed and vulnerable. Whereas Allard et al. focused on teaching practices and experiences, our reflections perhaps delved more deeply into personal territory. Our project, centered on developing research expertise along with teaching material innovations, may have surfaced uncertainties in areas where we felt less confident than in other areas of our professional lives.

These unexpected emotions were temporary. Once those feelings passed, we found that making our thinking and reflection visible to each other ultimately "opened the door for learning and professional growth" (Allard et al., 2007, p. 307). It helped us understand how much work we could realistically accomplish given our various responsibilities,

providing a more balanced perspective on our productivity. More importantly, we were able to recognize and articulate the safety and trust we felt with each other.

Although reflecting on our collaboration was a valuable and affirming experience, we acknowledge two potential challenges for other groups considering a similar approach. First, as mentioned above, writing and reading each other's reflections evoked unexpected feelings of vulnerability. This required not only recognizing and acknowledging these emotions but also discussing them openly with each other. We suggest that research groups first consider whether they are prepared for possible shifts in group dynamics that might arise from such reflection. Second, the process of writing, reading, discussing and analyzing reflections, is time-consuming—time that must be allocated in addition to the primary research project. Therefore, research teams should consider whether their collaboration allows for this additional investment in reflective practice. While we found this process transformative, this may not be the case for all groups.

Conclusion

Life in academia can be lonely and challenging, particularly for language teachers working across disciplines in Japan's often contingent job market. Boyd (2023) writes that “without a community of support that reflects on your experience, it is easy to rely instead on explanations of individual inadequacy” (p.35). Our collaborative process allowed for this kind of community to develop, giving us a chance to contextualize our struggles within broader structural challenges that exist within academia.

More broadly, our reflective inquiry process helped us redefine success beyond the traditional metrics of lines on a CV. It led us to reconsider what success means in academia. Doing this conscious, sustained reflection together helped us focus on the meaningfulness of our work. It also made visible how the mutual aid and supportive relationships found in our collaboration had enhanced our learning, well-being, and professional satisfaction. Unlike the crawfish, pike, and swan, we could move our cart forward.

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How to cite the article:

Conaway, P., & Rouault, G. (2024). Turn-taking in cooperative board games: A study of speech act clusters. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 32–43. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-5>

Research Article

Turn-taking in Cooperative Board Games: A Study of Speech Act Clusters

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Abstract

Effective speaking in group interactions is crucial for foreign language learners, yet many Japanese EFL students struggle with self-selection (i.e., speaking without direct invitation). This study adopts a corpus pragmatics approach to analyze speech act clusters used among L1 English speakers during cooperative board game play, which involves convergent decision-making. By identifying common speech act patterns, the study aims to establish language targets that promote interactive utterances, to help learners self-select more effectively in group discussions. Transcriptions from YouTube of board game play were annotated for speech acts using DART v.3 (Weisser, 2019a, 2019b) and analyzed with AntConc (Anthony, 2020) to identify clusters. Results indicate that acknowledging others' utterances is common when interlocutors self-select, while explicit opinion elicitation is rare. These insights can guide the development of materials that support group decision-making, such as consciousness-raising frameworks or guided practice, and offer a method for creating materials for other communicative contexts.

外国語学習者にとってグループ交流での効果的な発話は重要だが、日本人EFL学習者の多くは自己選択（直接誘われずに発話すること）に苦戦する。本研究は、コーパス語用論的アプローチで、収束的意思決定を伴うボードゲーム協力プレイ中の英語母語話者の発話行為クラスターを分析する。YouTubeからのトランスクリプトをDART v.3 (Weisser, 2019a, 2019b)でアノテーションし、AntConc (Anthony, 2020)で分析した結果、自己選択時には他者の発話を認める行為が多く、意見の引き出しは稀であることが示された。これらの知見は、意識喚起フレームワークやガイド付き練習など、集団意思決定を支援する教材の開発に役立ち、他の文脈の教材作成にも応用できる。

The ability to participate effectively in group discussions is a key goal in foreign language learning. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) acknowledges this by distinguishing between “spoken production” and “spoken interaction” (Council of Europe, n.d.). At the B2 (upper-intermediate) level, L2 users should be able to take turns effectively, both initiating and responding in discussions. This distinction is also reflected in Japan's Ministry of Education (MEXT) guidelines for English education at the junior high and high school levels (MEXT, n.d.).

Board games have been recognized as valuable collaborative language learning tasks (Chung, 2013; Hastings, 2023; York et al., 2019). Cooperative board games, in particular, encourage information exchange and opinion-sharing as players strategize toward a common goal with game play decisions. The repetition of limited possible actions in the game lowers lexical demands, allowing learners to focus on meaning rather than vocabulary constraints.

As Williamson (2022) notes, those unable to adjust to turn-taking norms in cross-cultural communication often speak less and less often during meetings. For Japanese university students, difficulty in self-selecting turns may hinder participation and result in marginalization in globalized workplaces. Beyond vocabulary and grammar, these students must learn to initiate discussion effectively. While cultural norms and individual differences may play a role, raising awareness of how pragmatic moves fit into discussions can help learners engage more actively. If students recognize available utterances for self-selection and the signals that invite participation, they may become more comfortable taking turns without needing an explicit invitation to speak.

This study applies a corpus pragmatics approach to identify frequent speech act combinations in L1 cooperative board game play. The next section outlines key research areas: board games and tasks in language education, turn-taking, speech act theory, and corpus pragmatics. The methodology details the transcription and annotation procedure, while the results present the frequent speech act clusters. The discussion addresses the study's implications and limitations.

Literature Review

Board Games in Language Education

The use of board games in language education aligns with a task-based approach to language teaching. Ellis (2003) defines “tasks” as work plans involving linguistic activity with a primary focus on meaning to achieve a clearly defined, non-linguistic outcome with learners using their available linguistic resources. Long (1989) highlighted information distribution (e.g., two-way information flow) and *goal orientation* (e.g., *closed goal orientation* with a small range of possible solutions) as task design features that promote collaboration and language use to negotiate decisions and solve problems. These principles support cooperative board games as communicative tasks.

While games often foster competition, cooperative board games require group members to work toward a shared, common goal (e.g., firefighters with different skill sets or tools working to extinguish fires and rescue victims). Similarly, in research on “cooperative learning,” Johnson and Johnson (1994) identified “positive interdependence” and “individual accountability” as essential principles for collaborative learning. Meta-analyses by Hattie (2009) reported high effect sizes (0.54 and 0.59, Cohen’s D) for cooperative learning compared to competitive and individual approaches. Thus, cooperative game play not only provides language practice but also promotes effective learning.

Studies on learning with board games highlight divergent and computational thinking in discourse. York et al. (2019) found that Japanese university students did not pre-read the English tabletop game rules, leading the teacher/researchers to develop a structured 90-minute lesson sequence: (1) pre-play rule learning, (2) recorded gameplay, (3) analysis of recordings, and (4) reporting. Surveys indicated that non-linguistic goals in the board game positively affected student attitudes, though excessive L1 Japanese use was noted. In tabletop role-playing games (TRPGs), Chung (2013) linked creative divergent thinking to fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration, with TRPG players scoring higher in divergent thinking tests. Berland and Lee (2011, as cited in Hastings, 2023, p. 44) examined group discourse in Pandemic gameplay, categorizing it into “computational functions such as conditional logic, algorithm building, debugging, and simulation.” Conaway and Rouault (2023) found that several high frequency word clusters used in cooperative board games matched those in Handford’s (2010) corpus of business meeting communications, a recognized L2 user need.

Turn-taking in Conversation

In a pioneering study analyzing turns in English conversation, Sacks et al. (1974) have presented 14 patterns for turn-taking (see Appendix A). For the analysis of conversations, Schegloff (2007) further explains two foundational points. Speaker turns are comprised of “turn-constructual units” (TCUs) that perform a specific action, and transition to the next speaker typically occurs at a “transition-relevance place” (TRP). In research comparing turn-taking in conversations, for English Furo (2001) found fewer backchannels, more overlaps and interventions, and features of intonation to keep the speaker from being interrupted. Conversely, the Japanese conversation data in Furo’s study showed more backchannels (and even strategies to invite them) and few overlaps or interruptions.

In multi-speaker discussions, there are several ways in which the next speaker may be decided. One method of determining who is to speak next is for a participant to nominate themselves to speak, which is called self-selection. Another method is for the current speaker (or another participant) to nominate the next speaker, which can be done by explicitly inviting the speaker to speak or through body language (Wong & Waring, 2021). In the experience of the authors, Japanese university students have a tendency to rely on conventions such as seating arrangements (e.g., speaking in clockwise order) or expecting nomination by the teacher while rarely engaging in self-selection.

Speech Act Theory

In using language to communicate and express themselves, people are not only employing words and grammatical structures; they are also performing actions with their utterances. These actions performed via the utterances are called “speech acts” (Yule, 1996, p. 47). As an early nod to the more recent interdisciplinary focus around applied linguistics, the two pioneers of speech act theory were philosophers John Austin and John Searle. In the 1960s, Austin proposed a taxonomy of speech acts with three parts: (1) locutionary acts - saying something meaningful or in a literal sense, (2) illocutionary acts - saying something with an intended, conventional force, and (3) perlocutionary acts - what we achieve or effect in the listener by what we say (as cited in Félix-Brasdefer, 2019). The five macro-types of speech acts in Searle’s (1976) taxonomy are shown with examples in Table 1. Declarations are speech acts that change the broader current environment. Representatives (assertives) are assertions of what the speaker believes. Expressives present what the speaker feels or express a psychological state. Directives are speech acts used to get the listener to do something. Commissives create an obligation on the speaker to take some future action. Although all five types of speech acts occur in the information exchange, bargaining, and agreement phases of the communication and decision-making in business negotiations (Gardani, 2018), a more finely defined taxonomy at the micro level of speech acts would be useful in conducting language research. Additionally, Austin (1962) recognized that the successful performance of an illocutionary act involves co-construction by the speaker and listener based on both understanding the utterance and responding to it.

Table 1

Speech Act Taxonomy: Five General Functions of Speech Acts

Speech act type	Direction of fit	S=speaker X=situation	Examples
Declarations	words change the world	S causes X	words used in an institutional role
Representatives	make words fit the world	S believes X	assertions, facts, descriptions
Expressives	make words fit the world	S feels X	pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, sorrow
Directives	make the world fit words	S wants X	commands, orders, requests, suggestions
Commissives	make the world fit words	S intends X	promises, threats, refusals, pledges

Corpus Pragmatics

In pragmatics, determining a speaker's illocutionary force can be labor-intensive, requiring analysis of the utterance and its context. Consequently, studies often focus on small text samples. Conversely, corpus linguistics seeks generalizable results using large datasets analyzed with software tools. Rühlemann (2019) describes corpus pragmatics as merging the computational search capabilities of corpus linguistics with the detailed interpretive analysis of pragmatics. He identifies two analytical approaches: form-to-function and function-to-form.

The form-to-function approach involves searching a corpus for a word or phrase (form) and analyzing concordances to determine their usage and associated speech acts. For instance, Adolphs (2008, as referenced by Rühlemann, 2019) analyzed collocations of *why don't you*, finding differences in usage when suggesting versus questioning.

In contrast, the function-to-form approach begins with speech acts (functions) to examine their contextual exemplification (form). Originally, this required the labor-intensive task of coding the corpus by hand with tags representing speech acts. Weisser (2015) introduced Dialogue Annotation Research Tool (DART), a software program that automated parts of the process for annotating dialog transcripts with speech act tags, arguing it outperformed existing annotation methods. Later, Weisser (2020) proposed a more nuanced speech act taxonomy, enabling distinctions between communication genres based solely on speech act tags, a feat unachievable with traditional taxonomies.

In their very detailed guide, *From Corpus to Classroom*, O'Keeffe et al. (2007) proffer that "interesting examples of pragmatic specialisation can be found when we look at small corpora of data from specific social interactions" (p. 163). Because such interaction data is from a very specific context of use, these patterns may not be noticed in a large corpus. The hypothesis of the authors is that with a speech act annotation such as DART, a corpus can be searched for clusters of speech acts, much like corpus linguistic analysis allows for the identification of words that frequently co-occur. Following this approach, this corpus-based, exploratory study was designed to address the following research questions: Does self-selection for turn-taking occur more frequently in board game play than the nomination of others? Which speech acts occur most frequently in decision-making during board game play? Which sequences of speech acts (speech events that involve more than one speaker taking a turn) are most frequent in the negotiations for board game play decisions?

Methodology

To create the speech act-annotated corpus for this study, multiple software packages were used. Establishing a proof of concept for this technological method of language analysis required adjustments to the output formats for compatibility between the steps. Below is a description of the software and the steps needed to facilitate the analyses of this or other spoken interaction genres.

Selection of the YouTube Video

From the Missclicks YouTube channel, which features people joining remotely to play a different board game each episode, the video "Flash Point - Ep. 6 Gameplay - Table Flippin Games" was selected to create the corpus. This 90-minute video features four L1 speakers of English playing the cooperative board game "Flash Point Fire Rescue" with one of the players appearing to have more experience with the game than the others. A multi-player video was chosen to offer more variation and complexity in speaker transitions. Each player had a separate microphone, aiding audio transcription.

Audio Transcription

The first step in creating the corpus was transcribing the audio. While YouTube provides transcripts, they

often lack diarization (speaker labeling), which is essential for annotating speech acts. The online tool Jimaku Editor for File, developed by Hidehito Aoki (n.d.), was used to transcribe and edit the audio.

Voice Recognition and Diarization

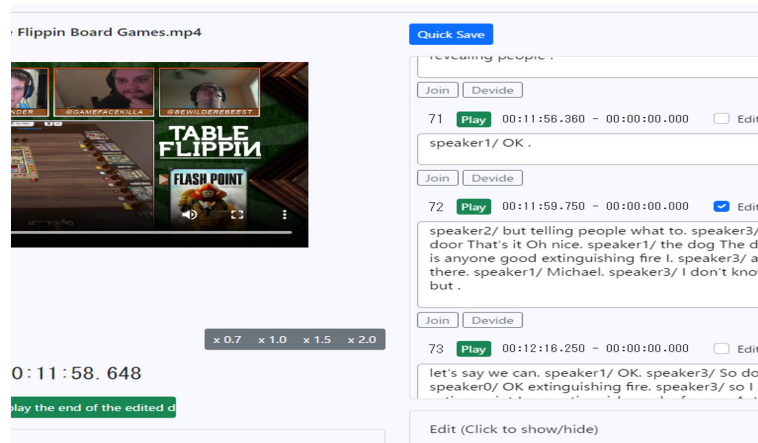
Jimaku Editor for File utilizes the Amivoice Cloud Platform for speech-to-text transcription, which offers 60 free minutes per month. After setting up the API key, the video file was loaded, the language was selected, and speaker diarization (labeled as speaker01, speaker02 etc.) was enabled by entering the number of speakers. The “Get Speech Recognition Results” option generated the English transcription of proficient L1 speech.

Transcription Editing

Editing involved comparing the transcribed utterances on the right side of Jimaku Editor for File with the audio preview on the left, which is shown in Figure 1. Once all corrections were made, the transcript was saved as a text file. For more details on using the tool, refer to Aoki (2022).

Figure 1

Jimaku Editor for File UI



Speech Act Annotation

The next step in the process was to annotate the transcript with speech acts. The Dialogue Annotation & Research Tool (DART) v3 (Weisser, 2019a, 2019b) was used to tag the transcript with speech acts. The software, its manual, and taxonomy can all be downloaded freely.

Preparation of Transcripts for Annotation

The text file produced by Jimaku Editor for File is not in a format that can be used by DART v3. While the text file displays the start of each turn with the speaker label (speaker1/), DART v3 requires each turn to be labeled in an XML markup language format. XML (eXtensible Markup Language) is a text-based format for organizing and storing data in a way that is both human-readable and machine-readable, using customizable tags to label the data to aid analysis. Each turn was marked with a tag that denotes both the sequence of the turn in the conversation and the speaker label (<turn="X" speaker="speakerx">). Also, for ease of editing later, each utterance within a turn was moved to a new line. Finally, a closing tag was added to the end of the turn (</turn>). While these transformations could also be performed by hand, Chat GPT 4o was employed to automate this process. See Appendix B for Chat GPT prompts. Lastly, a header was added to the top of the file so that it could be read into DART v3. As shown below, the *dialogue id* refers to the specific file and the term *corpus* specifies the group of files that you would like to analyze together.

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<dialogue id="file_name" corpus="corpus_name" lang="en">
```

Speech Act Annotation

In DART v3, a new file was created, and the reformatted transcript was imported. Under the “Annotation” menu, “Pragmatic” was selected for speech act tagging. The output includes tags for semantic topics, negation, punctuation, syntax, and speech acts, which is shown in Figure 2. See Section 4 of the DART v3 Manual (Weisser, 2019a) for further details.

Figure 2

DART v3 UI and Output

no	dm	decl	frag	imp	q-wh	q-yn	address	exclam	quote	title	Insert values			
se	vocal	overlap	event	unclear	backchannel	comment	anonym	correction	deletion	insert				
aker	who	sp-act	mode	topic	status	polarity	content	meaning	length	type	sounds_like			
="9" speaker="speaker1">														
"11" sp-act="expressSurprise">														
="12" sp-act="reqInfo" polarity="positive">														
much it takes to dangle														
="10" speaker="speaker3">														
="13" sp-act="answer-state" polarity="positive" mode="habit" topic="spell-ry double AP costs I got that														
="14" sp-act="elab-state" polarity="positive" topic="spell">														
need to get to the center I														

Speech Act Cluster Identification

Preparation of Annotated Transcripts for Cluster Analysis

DART v3 can count individual speech acts but lacks cluster analysis capabilities. For this, AntConc 3.5.9 (Anthony, 2020) was used. To enable AntConc to recognize speech act tags as words, a simple transformation was performed to move brackets around the tags. The speaker label (e.g., speaker01) was also standardized to “newspeaker” to better capture clusters involving speaker changes. Removing the unnecessary tags from DART v3 and repositioning the brackets was performed using automated prompts in Chat GPT 4o (Appendix B).

Identification of Speech Act Clusters

The reformatted DART v3 output was imported into AntConc 3.5.9, using the n-grams tool. As shown in Figure 3, the minimum n-gram size was set to 3 to capture sequences with at least two speech acts and one speaker change, and the maximum was capped at 5 to eliminate infrequently appearing combinations. Figure 3 also shows the ranked frequency results of n-gram analysis in AntConc. As mentioned above, three-tag clusters (e.g., *state newspeaker state*) show a speech act by one speaker followed by the speech act of a different speaker.

Figure 3

AntConc UI and Output

The screenshot shows the Concordance tool interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Files', 'Global Settings', 'Tool Preferences', and 'Help'. The 'Files' tab is active, displaying a list of files: 'asTextN151N300', 'asTextN151N300', 'asTextN301N450', and 'asTextN451N613'. Below the file list, there are tabs for 'Concordance', 'Concordance Plot', 'File View', 'Clusters/N-Grams', 'Collocates', 'Word List', and 'Keyword List'. The 'Concordance' tab is active, showing a table of concordance results for the search term 'acknowledge'. The table has columns for 'Rank', 'Freq', 'Range', and 'N-gram'. The results are as follows:

Rank	Freq	Range	N-gram
10	27	3	state newspeaker state
11	24	4	state newspeaker refer
12	23	4	state newspeaker refer newspeaker
13	23	3	state newspeaker state newspeaker
14	21	4	newspeaker refer newspeaker acknowledge
15	21	4	state newspeaker acknowledge
16	19	3	refer newspeaker state
17	18	3	refer newspeaker state newspeaker
18	16	3	newspeaker pardon newspeaker
19	16	3	newspeaker state newspeaker refer
20	16	2	newspeaker state newspeaker state
21	15	3	newspeaker state newspeaker refer newspeaker
22	15	3	refer newspeaker init

Below the table, there are search filters. The 'Search Term' is 'acknowledge'. The 'Words' checkbox is checked, and the 'Case' checkbox is unchecked. The 'Regex' checkbox is unchecked, and the 'N-Grams' checkbox is checked. The 'N-Gram Size' is set to 'Min. 3' and 'Max. 5'. The 'Min. Freq.' is set to '15' and the 'Min. Range' is set to '1'. The 'Sort by' is set to 'Invert Order' and the 'Search Term Position' is set to 'On Left'. The 'Sort by Freq' dropdown is set to 'Freq'. The 'Advanced' button is visible.

Results

Although this study only analyzed one 90-minute video of cooperative game play, it produced 613 turns that were analyzed in DART v3, tagging 917 speech acts—a significant quantity to provide proof of concept for this method of transcribing audio, annotating speech acts, and identifying speech clusters. From direct observation of the video and the calculated frequencies of the various speech acts and speech act clusters, it is possible to answer the three research questions for this sample.

Prevalence of Self-selection

In response to RQ1, self-selection to speak was much more prevalent than nominated speaking. Nominations of others *reqinfo* and *direct*, respectively representing the speech act of requesting information and telling someone to do something are only the ninth and tenth most frequent speech acts, with fewer than 25 occurrences each (see Figure 4).

Direct nominations by name of the next speaker were primarily observed at the very beginning of the game, when the host was welcoming a new guest.

Gillyweed: I am joined with Ogreyonder and Gamefacedkilla who are my cohosts, and Moeshka, who is our guest this week. How are you?

Bewilderbeast: Doing Alright. How about - I'm looking forward to playing.

In some instances of asking questions regarding the rules of the game, although not explicitly nominated by name, the player who was most familiar with the game tended to respond to questions as well as follow-up questions without much speaking from other players.

Gillyweed: Ok. I'll go first. So what am I doing?

Gamefacedkilla: So you're going to spend your action points.

Gillyweed: I've got four?

Gamefacedkilla: and. yes you have four. And you can do anything on your reference card.

After all players became familiar with the game, during game play self-selection to speak was used more commonly than the nomination of others. Three or more players were also noted participating in exchanges rather than being limited to question and response patterns in dyads.

Bewilderbeast: Oh no. You're all gonna hate me.

Ogreyonder: What is it?

Gillyweed: Where is that?

Ogreyonder: Did you kill Chad?

Bewilderbeast: The fire's right there.

Gamefacedkilla: Whoah.

Gillyweed: Ah.

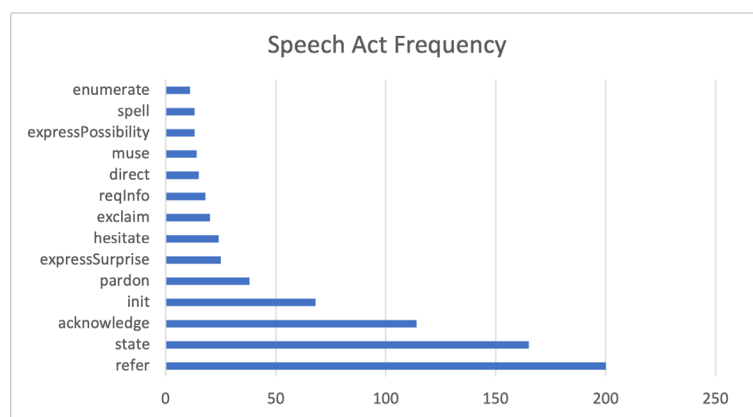
Ogreyonder: Laughter.

Gamefacedkilla: No. but it's just smoke.

Gillyweed: Wait. If it's smoke it's fine

Figure 4

Frequent Speech Acts (SA)



Frequency of Speech Acts

Figure 4 shows the frequencies of the speech acts identified in the cooperative board game play. *Refer*, *state*, *acknowledge*, and *init(iate)* were the four most frequent speech acts labeled using the DART taxonomy. These four accounted for over 500 of 917 identified speech acts. The speech act *refer* indicates using deictic reference which

means using words that are only clear from the context such as *now*, *there*, or *you*. For the speech act *state*, the speaker is conveying information, while *acknowledge* signals understanding. The speech act *init(iate)* is for when a speaker starts a new phase of the dialog. As the board game and its conditions are known to all players, referring to things with deictic speech is frequent. Similarly, in order to play the game, especially when rules are not well known, conveying information takes up a large portion of communication. In order for the game to move forward, information about the game also must be acknowledged before a decision is taken by a player. After each assessment of the game's condition and acknowledgement of the next play to be made, initiating acts are used to introduce the next round of play.

Frequent Speech Act Clusters

Figure 5 shows the most common combinations of speech acts as identified using AntConc's n-gram function. The speech act clusters in the left column are those that include a speaker change (denoted by *) in between speech acts. The speech act clusters in the right column are by one speaker who holds the floor. Although information exchange is an important aspect of cooperative board game play, question and answer patterns indicated by *reqinfo*answer* were relatively infrequent in the corpus with only 10 occurrences. Instead, players tended to share information about the rules or conditions of the game as indicated by the clusters *refer*refer* (87), *refer*acknowledge* (37) and *state*state* (27). For speech act clusters by one speaker, three of the top four most frequent were “acknowledgement” of the previous speaker's contribution—a frequent precursor to sharing information or commenting about the state or condition of the game. *Reqinfo abandon* represents when a speaker has asked for information but performs another speech act without receiving an answer or without finishing the question. Such abandonment of information requests was often related to self-talk while planning a move, or suddenly noticing something more important than the question asked.

Figure 5

Frequent SA Clusters

Freq.	SA Cluster (2 speakers)	Freq.	SA Cluster
87	refer * refer	13	acknowledge state
30	refer * acknowledge	12	acknowledge refer
27	state * state	11	init(iate) state
24	state * refer	10	acknowledge init(iate)
21	state * acknowledge	10	reqinfo abandon
19	refer * state		
15	refer * init(iate)		
	acknowledge *		
12	acknowledge		
10	acknowledge * init(iate)		
10	reqinfo * answer		
10	state * pardon		

Note. Speaker change is indicated by *.

Discussion

The results of this study provide a corpus-based breakdown of speech act frequency and clusters of speech acts in cooperative board game discussions among L1 English speakers. While the single-game sample limits generalizability, the large number of turns allowed for a proof of concept of the method to extract and code speech acts from board game chat audio on YouTube.

Nominations for others to speak predominantly occurred in what Handford's (2010) six-stage business meeting model refers to as the “opening of meeting.” Self-selection for speaking turns is seen as a natural transition but is subject to felicity conditions (Kasper, 2006; Searle, 1972) related to propositional, preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions. Additionally, as seen in business English research (Nelson, 2006), frequent collocations exhibited non-random patterning.

Limitations

While DART v3 allows relatively quick and easy annotation of a corpus, the accuracy of annotation for this corpus taken from one 90-minute video has only been validated in a limited manner by the authors. Some may also argue, as does Kasper (2006), that the illocutionary force cannot be determined without incorporating information directly from the speaker about their intentions. Also, while there are similarities between cooperative board games and business situations, the low stakes nature of games may influence how communication is patterned.

Directions for Further Research

Future research could compare turn-taking behaviors and speech act frequency in this dataset with discussions among English learners playing in their L1 and L2. Further analysis could identify recurring word clusters associated with specific speech acts and examine syntactically incomplete or semantically empty fragments in the interaction which, as O’Keeffe et al. (2007) suggest, contribute to “pragmatic adequacy and integrity.” Establishing this tagging procedure also enables comparisons across different game types and communication genres.

Implications for Teaching

The obvious implication is that business English materials and teaching should not focus only on single lexical items of vocabulary but also on the unique combinations that better represent language in use from the actual business world. As Handford (2010) notes, the key in “doing business” is not about language ability, but rather the ability to maneuver within a community of practice. Additionally, language educators must help students become aware that interruption strategies (for self-selection) and elicitation strategies (for the nomination of others) which are often focused on in textbooks for discussion and meetings are not so prevalent in authentic language use. Cooperative board games provide a closed task with frequent repetition of pragmatic moves and language use in the game play decisions. This reduced cognitive load allows learners to perform the tasks and self- and peer-assess performance where “the comprehension and/or production of meaningful messages may spur motivation for students to continue learning beyond the language program” (Van den Branden, 2021, p. 323). Additionally, as part of formative learning, teachers can adapt interventions for gaps or obstacles in performance, such as providing a transcript review or offering a form-focused drill in the post-task stage based on the top self-selected language clusters used in the game. Finally, if cooperative game play can prompt the use of the relevant speech act clusters needed in co-created discourse, then board games can serve as an engaging, task-based pedagogical tool to provide learners with experience in the decision-making exchanges they will face in the future.

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Appendix A

Turn-Taking in English Conversation

14 recurring patterns of turn-taking in English conversation

1. Speaker-change recurs, or at least occurs.
2. Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time.
3. Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief.
4. Transitions (from one turn to the next) with no gap and no overlap are common.
5. Turn order is not fixed, but varies.
6. Turn size is not fixed, but varies.
7. Length of conversation is not specified in advance.
8. What parties say is not specified in advance.
9. Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance.
10. Number of parties can vary.
11. Talk can be continuous or discontinuous.
12. Turn allocation techniques are obviously used.
13. Various 'turn constructional units' are employed.
14. Repair mechanisms exist for dealing with turn-taking errors.

(Sacks et al., 1974)

Appendix B

Chat GPT 4o Prompts for Text Reformatting

Reformatting Jimaku Editor for File Output for Use in DART v3.

Prompt: I have a text file that needs to be reformatted. Please do the following steps:

1. Replace Speaker Labels: Convert all instances of speaker labels like "speaker0/" to XML-style tags such as <turn n="x" speaker="speakerx">, where "x" is the sequential count of turns in the discourse, not just for each speaker.
2. Add Closing Tags: Append </turn> at the end of each turn to properly close the XML tags.
3. Format Utterances: Ensure each utterance within a turn that ends with a period (.) starts on a new line to enhance readability and organization of the text.
4. Three-Line Formatting: Structure each turn into three lines:
 - The first line contains the opening <turn> tag with attributes.
 - The second line contains the dialogue or text of the turn.
 - The third line contains the closing </turn> tag.
5. Sequential Turn Counting: Ensure the "n" attribute in the <turn> tag accurately reflects the turn number in the entire dialogue sequence, ensuring it captures the flow of the conversation from start to finish.

Reformatting DART v3 Output for Use in Antconc

Prompt: I have an XML file containing <turn> elements, and I need to transform the data as follows:

1. Locate all <turn> elements in the XML.
2. Change the speaker attribute to "newSpeaker" for each <turn> element.
3. Within each <turn> element, locate any child elements containing the sp-act attribute.
4. For each child element with an sp-act attribute:
 - Extract the value of the sp-act attribute.
 - Extract the text content of the element.
5. Format the output as follows:
 - The first line for each <turn> should be "newSpeaker".
 - The second line should be the sp-act attribute value.
 - The third line should be the text content of the element enclosed in angle brackets (<>).
 - For subsequent elements within the same <turn>, repeat steps 4 and 5 without the "newSpeaker" line.

Example Input:

```
<turn n="4" speaker="speaker0">
  <dm n="4" sp-act="expressSurprise">
    Oh
  </dm>
  <dm n="5" sp-act="pardon">
    sorry
  </dm>
  <decl n="6" sp-act="state" polarity="negative" topic="spell">
    I didn't realize you
  </decl>
</turn>
```

```
<turn n="5" speaker="speaker3">
  <decl n="7" sp-act="state" polarity="positive" topic="spell">
    That's all I do I just look it over
  </decl>
</turn>
<turn n="6" speaker="speaker2">
  <dm n="8" sp-act="muse">
    well
  </dm>
</turn>
```

Desired Output:

```
newSpeaker
expressSurprise
<Oh>
```

```
pardon
<sorry>
state
<I didn't realize you>
```

```
newSpeaker
state
<That's all I do I just look it over>
newSpeaker
muse
<well>
```


How to cite the article:

Bartlett, K. (2024). Pedagogical translanguaging in Japanese university EFL classes: A case study. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 44–51. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-6>

Research Article

Pedagogical Translanguaging in Japanese University EFL Classes: A Case Study

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Abstract

Translanguaging has been gaining momentum in ESL and EFL classrooms throughout the world over the past few years, and results of studies that have allowed students to incorporate their whole linguistic repertoire in the classroom to promote language development and build knowledge have shown to be beneficial to students' overall development (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019). This paper will explore the pedagogical translanguaging approach and provide results of a study in which students ($N = 28$) who studied their "Graduation Seminar" class in a translanguaging approach reported that they felt that being able to incorporate their L1 in L2 classes was beneficial to their linguistic and knowledge development.

近年、ESL(第二言語としての英語)およびEFL(外国語としての英語)教育において、トランスランゲージング教育法が広がっている。学生が教室内で自らの全ての言語レパートリーを活用することを許可したことで、言語発達と知識構築の両面において有益であることが示されている(Deroo & Ponzio, 2019)。本研究では、教育的トランスランゲージングアプローチを検討し、その結果を報告する。具体的には、トランスランゲージングアプローチを用いて「卒業セミナー」クラスを受講した学生($N = 28$)を対象に調査を行い、L2の授業においてL1を取り入れることが、学生の言語発達および知識発達に有益であると感じたことを明らかにした。

Translanguaging as a pedagogical approach has gained significant traction in both ESL and EFL classrooms over the past decade (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019). This approach encourages students to utilize their entire linguistic repertoire during classroom and assessment activities, aiming to foster language development and content learning, which has yielded positive results (Lin, 2019). This paper aims to outline various pedagogical translanguaging approaches and highlight the benefits of integrating this method at the classroom level. Additionally, it introduces findings from a two-year study involving 28 Japanese university students who completed their 3rd and 4th year "Graduation Seminar" within a translanguaging environment.

The purpose of this study is to investigate and identify how students felt about studying their Graduation seminar in a pedagogical translanguaging approach, and to outline the results obtained from a post-course survey and a focus group discussion to see what students thought was beneficial to their language development and content comprehension, and whether a class taught in a translanguaging approach was beneficial to developing their research skills to complete an original paper to qualify for graduation from their BA program.

At first, a literature review outlining the theoretical and pedagogical benefits of incorporating translanguaging approaches in the classroom will be provided, before a brief outline of the seminar, its design and the tasks students were asked to do being presented. Then the results of the survey and focus group discussion will be provided and discussed to show that regarding this group of students who took their seminar in a translanguaging approach found that it had a positive impact on their language development, linguistic knowledge, and content comprehension.

Literature Review

Translanguaging, as defined by Garcia and Wei (2014), involves the deliberate and systematic incorporation of a student's full linguistic repertoire in the classroom. This practice supports knowledge building, promotes inclusion, and enhances language development. It allows learners and instructors to leverage the student's native language (L1) in second language (L2) classes, facilitating language acquisition and transfer. Furthermore, translanguaging provides opportunities for students to draw upon their past experiences and expertise on various topics, regardless of their proficiency level in the L2 (Otheguy, Garcia, & Reid, 2015).

In Japanese EFL contexts, translanguaging approaches enable students to utilize Japanese (L1) during English (L2) classes. This is facilitated through using bilingual materials and resources, and it allows students to switch to Japanese during group work discussions in English, thereby promoting the exchange of opinions and clarifying

language nuances (Bartlett, 2023).

By allowing students to incorporate their home language in the classroom, it has been shown to contribute to their overall language development and creates a feeling of inclusivity (Garcia & Lin, 2017; Bartlett, 2023). Although this feeling of inclusivity is more felt in ESL contexts where home languages may not be the main language of use in the country in which students are located, in EFL environments, it enables students to connect their understanding of the foreign language with their broader metalinguistic awareness, thus fostering further comprehension of language rules, structures and usage patterns across from their L1 to L2.

Canagarajah (2011) outlines that permitting code-switching to occur in translanguaging centred classrooms allows for the inclusion of a student's whole linguistic repertoire to be present, which further helps promote L2 language acquisition and the learning of content (p.8). The inclusion of students' L1 in L2 classrooms further aids in communication between participants at different levels of L2 proficiency and allows for language transfer from the L1 to the L2 to occur more succinctly. The process of using learners L1 to support L2 acquisition has been suggested by Cummins (2023) as a means to close the gap between linguistic and content knowledge, and as a way to move students' proficiency from Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

When it comes to classroom praxis, pedagogical translanguaging promotes flexible assessment tasks that mainly focus on formative assessment to provide scaffolding opportunities, which allows for learners to gradually develop their language skills and academic skills while drawing on past knowledge from their L1. Once students have had opportunities to develop their language and form their opinions on certain topics and themes following formative and developmental tasks, it is only then suggested that students are given summative tasks to check their language and comprehension accordingly (Baker, 2011).

Incorporating collaborative learning approaches such as group discussions, group presentations, and then getting students to write papers after they have worked in groups allows for students to discuss and clarify their ideas and opinions prior to writing a paper or giving a presentation for assessment purposes. It is during these formative tasks where the benefits of Translanguaging are most prevalent in EFL classrooms. By allowing students to code-switch and use their L1 as a support tool during group discussions in their L2, it allows for the discussion to continue to flow, for real time feedback on their language usage from their peers to be ascertained, and for them to continue to develop their ideas on the topic at hand which is conducive to developing their CALP skills. It can further be evident that incorporating Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT) in classrooms that follow a pedagogical translanguaging design are beneficial (Creese and Blackledge, 2010).

This case study involved Japanese university students in a seminar class that was taught using a pedagogical translanguaging approach, that also incorporated elements from CLIL, in which students were simultaneously learning the required language and contents required to complete an original research project in their area of specialization in order to qualify to graduate from the Bachelor of Arts in English and Global Studies.

Seminar Design

This case study was conducted in a seminar class at a university in Japan. The seminar in question is a compulsory subject that students start studying in their third year. During the second semester of their second year, students are provided with outlines of all of the seminars offered by the faculty, and then apply for the seminar that they are most interested in. In the Department of English and Global Studies, there are currently 21 different seminars offered, ranging from topics such as the literature of Shakespeare, American Literature, International Business, Language Acquisition in children, international outreach and NPO activities, Education, Intercultural Studies to name a few.

The seminar in question is focused on improving students' CALP skills, while exploring content in the areas of Education, ESL/EFL, Social studies and Anthropology. In this seminar, students explore themes related to English Education in Japan, and further focus on socio-cultural issues and intercultural studies themes in which they compare Japan and another country. The subject, though mainly conducted in English, also allows for Japanese to be used. The teacher introduces information in English, and then summarises it in Japanese if necessary to clarify any points that students may not have understood. The teacher introduces materials written in Japanese and English, and students compare and contrast the materials through a text analysis, outlining the different opinions presented in both papers based on cultural standpoints (such as Japan's stance on a particular topic VS an Australian/American/ British stance based on the English article). Students then discuss the similarities and differences in groups.

During these group discussions, students are encouraged to talk in English, but are also told that they can switch to Japanese if they want to clarify things that they are not sure of how to express in English. Through this translanguaging approach, students can develop their specialist vocabulary in English, seek confirmation in Japanese, and also compare and contrast opinions outlined in the papers to enhance their cross-cultural understanding as a means to develop an intercultural viewpoint. When students are conducting a literature search, they are encouraged to find articles written in both Japanese and English about the topic, and compare the differences in opinions outlined in an attempt to compare the ideas introduced based on the country in which the study took place in order to broaden their intercultural understanding and view the issue through many lenses.

The focus of the seminar in third year is aimed towards teaching students how to conduct research, search

for information and reference materials, and to get them familiar with how to analyse original data. During the first semester of their third year, students explore themes that are related to their lived experience, with the question “University students and _____” being provided. Students in groups decide on the theme they want to explore, and through group discussions and group literature searches and analysis, students form their opinions on the theme they have selected. They then write a literature review, create surveys using Google Forms to give to their classmates, and compare the responses received to what they discovered in the literature. Towards the end of the semester, students write a group research project in English which includes a literature review, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion, and references section, and then give a final 15-minute group presentation in English about their project. Some of the themes explored in semester 1 are:

- University students and stress
- University students and time management
- University students and part-time work/finances
- University students and their use of SNS

In semester two of their third year, students continue to develop their knowledge and understanding in their area of expertise while developing their CALP skills. Through group work tasks, students analyse and critically think about the issues related to their area of specialization. Students choose their own work groups based on the topic they want to explore in their fourth-year thesis, and start the background work of learning about the theory and current trends that are prevalent based on their area of exploration. During classes, the teacher works with each group to promote opinion exchange and clarify any information that students are not sure about. Following the same structure as outlined above, students create working groups depending on the theme they want to explore. Some of the themes that students select in semester two are:

- Limitations in high school English education/Developing Communication skills.
- NPO activities in Japan and abroad. How does Japan contribute?
- Gender issues in the workplace?
- Benefits and limitations of studying abroad at the Mukogawa US Campus
- How to improve critical thinking in Japanese EFL classes.

As outlined above, students work in groups discussing the resources they have found, try to find outlined limitations to the themes they are exploring, give a survey to their peers, and then analyse and compare the data to that in the surveys they conducted to those outlined in the literature they used. They then write the research paper and present their results to the class.

Finally, in their fourth year, students once again work in groups and undertake group discussions with students who are exploring similar themes, but this time, students are required to write an independent research paper in English and give the presentation in English on their own. As a result, the fourth-year seminar is a year-long subject, in which students focus on their literature reviews and methodology during semester 1, and then in semester 2 work on their results, discussion and conclusion sections. In the final weeks of semester 2, students give a 10-minute presentation about their project in English, and then officially submit their theses to the academic affairs office for evaluation. If students successfully pass their graduation thesis, and have fulfilled all requirements in their other classes, they then qualify to graduate from the Bachelor of Arts.

Some of the themes that students choose to explore in their fourth-year graduation thesis are:

- Promoting pragmatic comprehension in Japanese EFL classes
- Comparing communicative approaches in EFL classes between Japan and Korea
- Vocabulary development from Elementary to JHS
- Cultural information in university textbooks
- MUSC study abroad and cultural understanding
- Gender issues in the workplace in Japan and America: A comparative study
- Integrating AI to assist Japanese farmers
- Promoting ecotourism in Japan and Australia: A comparative analysis
- L2 language acquisition in younger learners
- Promoting self-expression in EFL classes: Multiple Intelligences.

Methodology

This case study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, that first collected data through

surveys that were analysed statistically and thematically. Then, in step two of the data collection, a focus group discussion was conducted with randomly selected participants ($n = 12$) to seek further information as to why they answered the questions in the survey the way they did, and to attempt to delve deeper into their opinions and reasons behind how they felt about being taught in and undertaking classes that followed a pedagogical translanguaging approach. Each question of the survey was asked in the discussion group, and participants were asked to expand on their reasons for answering the way they did. The research was conducted over a two-week period with 28 participants who were all Japanese nationals, who belonged to two separate “Graduation Seminar” classes that were taught by the researcher. The overarching research questions of the project were: What are students’ opinions towards taking classes in a translanguaging approach?, and do translanguaging approaches have a benefit on students’ L2 language acquisition and content knowledge?

Participants

28 participants were approached to take part in this case study. At the time of data collection, participants were fourth year students studying a subject titled “Graduation Seminar II”, and were in their final two weeks of semester 2 of the course when the surveys were given out, and in their final week of the course when the focus group discussions took place. All participants also took the prerequisite third year subjects “Graduation Seminar 1A and B” with the researcher in a translanguaging approach. Participants belonged to the Department of English and Global Studies at a Women’s University in Japan.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

A six-question survey was created using Google forms to ask participants about their opinions about being taught in a pedagogical translanguaging approach, and sought to elicit data about whether they felt that they were able to improve their language skills, increase their knowledge in relation to their majors, and whether they felt being taught in a translanguaging approach had a positive or negative impact on their motivation. The survey was created bilingually in English and Japanese to limit misunderstandings that may arise based on participants’ language proficiency. Results were automatically generated by Google Forms and then confirmed by being manually input into an excel spreadsheet. During the focus group discussion, 12 participants were randomly selected using a Google randomizer program, and they were invited to take part in a 30 min focus group discussion held at the end of the final class of the semester. During the focus group discussions, participants were asked to share further information about why they answered the survey questions the way they did, and to provide further details about their experiences studying within a pedagogical translanguaging approach. These discussions were recorded on the researcher’s phone, and were then transcribed and then thematically analysed to attempt to discover why participants answered the questions in the survey the way they did, and to look for further reasons and examples that supported their opinions on the question at hand.

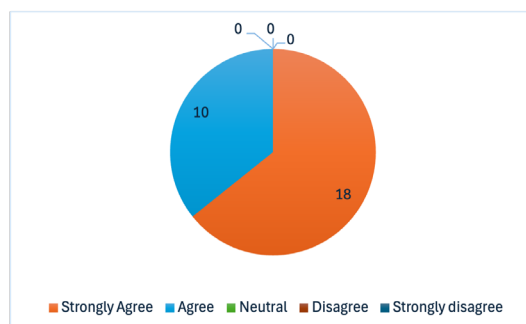
Results

Question 1 of the survey asked students whether they think being able to use their L1 and L2, and being able to search for and use materials in both English and Japanese was beneficial to preparing for writing their graduation thesis. As seen in Figure 1, 64% ($n = 18$) of participants responded that they “strongly agree” that it was beneficial, with 36% ($n = 10$) of respondents stating that they agreed it was beneficial. No responses were recorded from neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. This shows that all 28 participants responded positively when they were able to use bilingual / multilingual resources to prepare for writing their graduation theses. During the focus group discussions, reason such as:

- Participant C: I could compare content and see the differences between Japanese and foreign ideas.
- Participant F: It helped me to understand different viewpoints and approaches.
- Participant H: I could learn how to write an academic paper by looking at real examples in both Japanese and English, and using them as a template to develop my ideas from.

Figure 1

Using L1 and L2 to Search for Materials



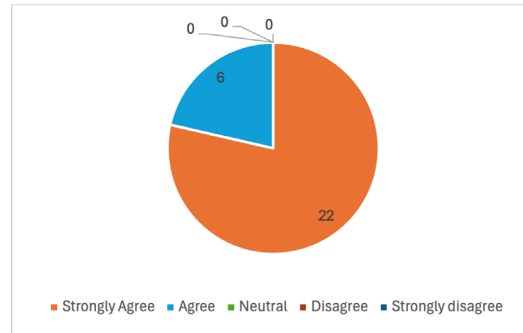
These responses show that students felt that they were able to compare and contrast different ideas, and compare different approaches based on the country that the articles they used were published in, which helped them to develop their understanding of the main ideas present in their areas of specialization, and then to utilize that knowledge in their graduation theses.

Question 2 of the survey asked participants whether they believed that being taught in a translanguaging approaches assisted them with both language acquisition and developing their specialist knowledge in their related fields, as can be seen in Figure 2, 79% ($n = 22$) of participants responded that they strongly agreed that it did, while 21% ($n = 6$) of participants replied that they agreed that it did. These results show that based on the participants in this study, they felt that translanguaging was beneficial in assisting them in gaining both language skills and specialist knowledge related to their majors. During the focus group discussions, reasons such as:

- Participant B: I was able to improve my English by looking at Japanese examples, and then how they are written about in English. I could also see the differences in opinions about similar topics which helped me think more deeply about teaching approaches.
- Participant C: I could learn how to talk about my topic and area of study in English better, and could hear different opinions that my classmates had.
- Participant I: I was able to see differences in opinions provided from Japanese researcher and foreign researchers, and felt I was able to see how there are different focuses based on where the paper was written.

Figure 2

Impact of Translanguaging on Language Acquisition and Content Knowledge



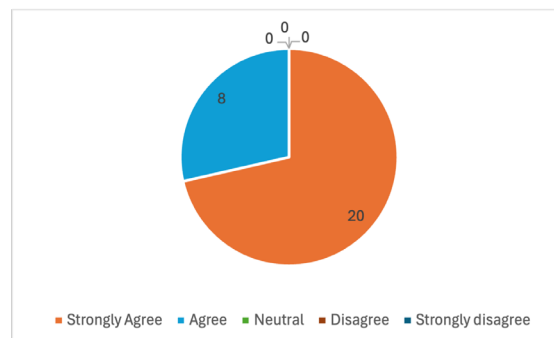
The above responses outline the reason why students felt that learning in a pedagogical translanguaging approach had a positive impact on both their language acquisition and knowledge and content comprehension.

Question 3 of the survey asked participants whether they thought being able to work bilingually in groups had a positive impact on their English language development. As can be seen in Figure 3, 71% ($n = 20$) of participants strongly agreed that being able to work bilingually in groups was advantageous to their English language development, while the remaining 29% ($n = 8$) agreed that it had a positive impact. These results show that participants believed that being able to utilize their L1 and L2 in group discussions had a positive impact on their language development. During the focus group discussions, reasons such as:

- Participant A: Being able to use Japanese to confirm understanding when the English was difficult was helpful.
- Participant D: I could talk more without taking a break and stopping.
- Participant F: It was good to clarify ideas in Japanese and then to try and explain them in English.

Figure 3

Bilingual Group Work



The above responses show that participants felt that being able to take part in group discussions incorporating both their L1 and L2 had a positive impact on their language development.

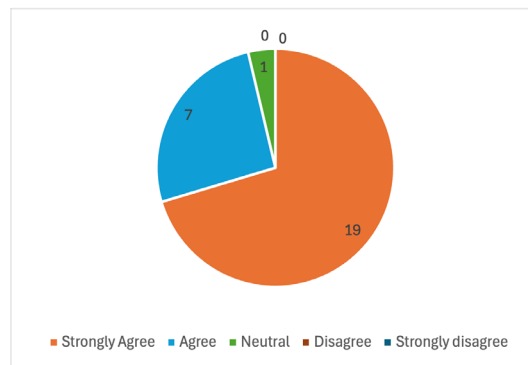
Question 4 of the survey asked students if they felt that being taught in a translanguaging approach had a positive impact on their motivation. As shown in Figure 4, results show that 70% ($n = 20$) of participants strongly agreed that it did, that 26% ($n = 7$) of participants agreed that it did, and that 4% ($n = 1$) of participants replied with neutral. During the focus group discussions, reasons such as:

- Participant A: In all English classes, it's too hard to focus when the content is too difficult, so I lose focus and motivation. In this class, I was able to stay focused because I could clarify my understanding in both languages, which was fun.
- Participant D: Using both L1 and L2 materials felt like I was learning something new each class, and I always looked forward to this class.
- Participant F: I feel more comfortable using both languages to participate. Talking with my friends using English and Japanese, and looking at papers from multiple countries was exciting.

The above responses show that being able to use L1 and L2 during classes and for task preparation had an overall positive impact on their motivation.

Figure 4

Impact of Translanguaging Approaches on Motivation



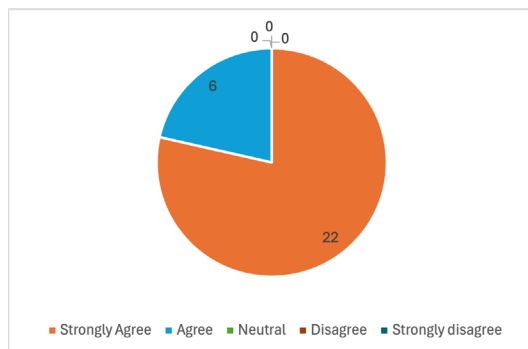
Question 5 of the survey asked participants if they felt that being taught in a translanguaging environment had a positive impact on both their English and Japanese language skills. 79% ($n = 22$) of participants responded that they strongly agreed that it did, with 21% ($n = 6$) of participants responding that they agreed it did. During the focus group discussions, reasons such as:

- Participant D: I could transfer what I read in L1 and L2 to better understand content, and to write more succinctly in both languages.
- Participant F: My style of writing and summarising points in both languages improved.
- Participant K: It helped me think about how I express myself in both languages more clearly.

The above responses show that participants believe that studying in a class that followed a translanguaging approach had a positive impact on both their L1 and L2 language skills and made them think critically about their language usage in both languages.

Figure 5

Translanguaging Classroom Environment



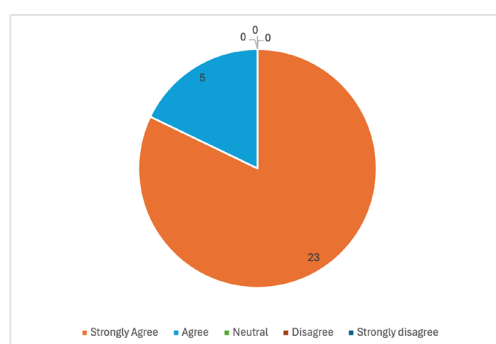
Question 6 of the survey asked participants whether they felt that they were able to study more advanced knowledge and improve their research skills in this subject when compared to their other subjects. As outlined in Figure 6, 82% ($n = 23$) of participants responded that they strongly agreed that they were able to, with 18% ($n = 5$) of participants responding that they agreed that they were able to. During the focus group discussions, reasons such as:

- Participant B: I could learn more different (varied) opinions and standpoints, which helped me form my arguments and opinions.
- Participant J: I could compare different views from around the world and consider them from many angles, which I couldn't do as much in my other classes.
- Participant L: I feel more confident talking about information related to my study (area) of specialization in English now, not only in Japanese.

The above responses show that students were more able to compare information from various regions and sources from which they were studying and allowed them to think critically about the information they were using, thus allowing them to nurture and develop more advanced skills in regard to research and knowledge development.

Figure 6

Could Students Improve Their Research Skills with Translanguaging



Discussion

As can be seen from the results of this case study summarized above, according to the 28 participants who took part in this study, they felt that undertaking their class in a pedagogical translanguaging approach had an overall positive impact on their language acquisition, content knowledge, and motivation levels. Participants highlighted several reasons for these positive outcomes, such as being able to use both English and Japanese resources for preparation to write their research papers and make presentations in English, and enabled them to compare different opinions. This comparison fostered critical thinking from diverse perspectives.

Additionally, observations during class time found that allowing students to use their L1 and L2 during group work tasks was beneficial by enabling students to continue conversations without breaking the flow of discussions, thereby maintaining momentum. This point was similarly found in the studies conducted by Lin (2019). It further provided opportunities for students to learn and experiment with the new L2 language necessary to discuss their areas of specialization which allowed them to feel confident to participate and express their ideas. These results indicated that these translanguaging strategies positively impacted students' levels of motivation and participation in classes. The ability to draw on their full linguistic repertoire not only made the learning process more accessible but also more enjoyable and fulfilling.

The above results clearly demonstrate that pedagogical translanguaging had an overall positive impact on all participants who took part in this study. The findings suggest that translanguaging not only supports language acquisition and content learning but also enhances students' motivation and engagement. This is particularly important in a CALP-focused seminar class, where the integration of language skills and content knowledge is critical.

Additionally, although the survey was created bilingually in an attempt to limit misinterpretation by participants, they may have understood what each question was asking slightly differently to their classmates. Furthermore, due to the participants belonging to the same class, a study with more participants in different subject and educational settings is needed to validate and clarify whether translanguaging approaches are fully able to be implemented across various subject areas and educational settings, which is a prospect for further research into the benefits of translanguaging in the higher education section both in Japan and beyond.

Conclusion

This project sought to outline the benefits of pedagogical translanguaging in a CALP-focused university seminar class designed to enhance both students' language acquisition and specialist knowledge. The findings have demonstrated that allowing students to use their L1 in CALP-focused L2 classes positively impacts their metalinguistic

awareness, motivation levels, and critical thinking skills. Participants reported high levels of satisfaction when it came to asking questions about their L1 and L2 language skills development, their comprehension and acquisition of new specialist content, and their overall levels of motivation.

The implications of these findings are significant. As a result of this study, the researcher intends to expand and adapt the focus of the class, while continuing to incorporate a pedagogical translanguaging approach to better cater to the students' needs and desires. This includes designing activities that more explicitly integrate L1 use in complex content discussions, creating materials that leverage students' bilingual abilities, and fostering an environment that encourages seamless language switching to enhance learning outcomes.

In conclusion, the success of the pedagogical translanguaging approach in this study underscores its potential as a valuable pedagogical tool. Future research could explore its application in different educational contexts and subject areas to further validate its efficacy. By continuing to investigate and implement translanguaging pedagogies, educators can better support language learners and create more inclusive and effective learning environments. The insights gained from this study can inform the development of teaching strategies that recognize and utilize the full linguistic repertoire of students, fostering a more holistic and integrated approach to language and content learning.

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How to cite the article:

Zaitseva, N. & Petersen, J. (2024). Expanding university EFL learners' conversations with a familiar audience. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 52–59. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIG10.1-7>

Research Article

Expanding University EFL Learners' Conversations with a Familiar Audience

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Abstract

This study investigates university EFL learners' perceptions of and interactions with a familiar audience during their presentations and follow-up conversations in the context informed by communicative approaches to language teaching. The research seeks to gain insights into the lexicogrammatical resources used by students to expand a dialogic space. To allow for a more individualized approach to student understandings of their audience, a qualitative design was employed. Grounded in appraisal theory, the thematic and lexicogrammatical analysis of six first-year university students' presentations, subsequent conversations and semi-structured interviews revealed the student tendency to view and realize the presentations as monogloss and the conversations as predominantly heterogloss. The student preference for certain formulaic expressions as lexicogrammatical engagement resources hindered the full comprehension of their conversation expansion choices. The study concludes with recommendations for further refinement of the communicative-teaching informed syllabi and provides suggestions for future research.

本研究は、コミュニケーション・アプローチに基づく言語教育の文脈において、大学のEFL学習者がプレゼンテーションおよびその後の会話で、なじみのある聴衆に対して抱く認識と関わり方を調査します。対話的空間を広げるために学生が使用する語彙文法的リソースについての洞察を得ることを目的とし、質的デザインを採用しました。評価理論に基づき、6人の大学1年生のプレゼンテーション、会話、および半構造化インタビューを分析した結果、学生がプレゼンテーションを単声的に、会話を主に多声的に捉える傾向が明らかになりました。特定の定型表現を好む傾向が、会話の拡張選択の完全な理解を妨げていることが示されました。本研究は、シラバスのさらなる改良と今後の研究への示唆を提供します。

In academia, presenting to an audience is an essential skill, and participating in post-presentation conversations, or Q&A sessions, has been receiving increased value too. However, it is not always clear who Japanese university EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners envision their audience to be, when preparing and delivering presentations. It is even less obvious whether the presentations are crafted and delivered with the aim of having subsequent extended conversations.

In EFL classrooms, often the said audience is a teacher awarding a grade without much engagement on the student-presenter part or the other students present (in the current study the terms “learner” and “student” are used interchangeably). Such behavior would contradict the call for communicative approaches in the classroom, as well as real-world scenarios (e.g. presenting and conversing at a conference). Additionally, presenting in front of an audience exclusive of any interaction with them somewhat undermines the importance of both production and reception skills highlighted by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) even at the lowest language levels (Council of Europe, 2020). This gap calls for more attention to investigating EFL learners' understandings of the role of the audience in presentations and conversations, their actual linguistic behavior and the development of appropriate communicative teaching strategies to enhance learner audience awareness.

This study commences a longitudinal research project aimed to bridge the gap. The purpose of the study is to investigate EFL learner engagement in presentations and post-presentation conversations with a familiar audience in a communicative-teaching informed environment and to identify lexicogrammatical resources that allow for extended conversations in English in small groups of university students in Japan. To highlight student familiarity with the research procedure recreating their class conditions, the terms “(follow-up) conversations” and “(follow-up) interactions” are used interchangeably.

The objectives of the study are to explore learner understandings of their audience pre-task (preparations for presentations and conversations) and during-task (presentations and follow-up conversations) and to establish the similarities and/or discrepancies between the identified learner understandings and the actual learner behavior. To be more specific, we seek to answer the following research questions: Who do EFL learners envisage as their target audience when preparing for presentations? How do these student assumptions manifest in presentations and follow-up conversations?

The significance of this study lies in aiming to provide valuable insights into the EFL learner communication dynamics. By identifying the potential alignment or mismatch in learner understandings of their positioning and the meanings' negotiation actualized in specific utterances, the research contributes to the development of language teaching methodologies at the tertiary level. The findings will be of assistance to language educators seeking to develop student in-class participation skills, and for this development to extend to more general communication skills

Literature Review

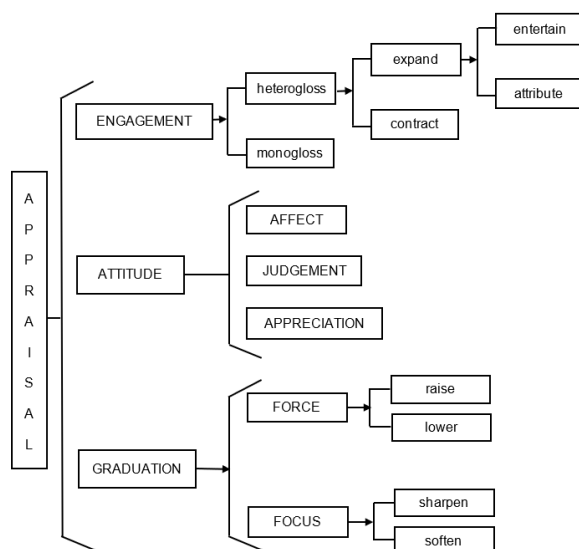
Student spoken communication in English has received ample attention in research literature. Among existing communicative approaches, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has proven to be effective in emphasizing interaction and meaningful language use. Ellis (2006) divides a TBLT-informed class structure into three phases: pre-task, during-task, and post-task. Only the during-task phase is obligatory. According to Long (2014), one of the TBLT principles is to “promote cooperative collaborative learning” (p. 7). East (2024) echoing Jackson (2022) highlights that the use of tasks in the learner-centered TBLT pedagogy enables “student choice; authentic language use; and engagement with issues” (p. 7). Therefore, exploring the choices EFL learners make in communications with their peers (e.g. lexicogrammatical choices) would be of great importance. This discovery could assist the EFL teachers in further syllabus development as well.

Despite the large influence of TBLT on teaching practice, up until now undergraduate classroom presentations seem to have been mostly perceived as monologic, which was observed by Ducasse (2023). In his research of the undergraduate classroom presentations, Gray (2021) also acknowledges that the essential for presentations move of closing remarks is the “concluding the monologue” (p. 6) and the question-and-answer move is optional. However, it is precisely the question-and-answer section of the presentations that was found to be dialogic. Its optionality and the predominantly monologically-perceived undergraduate classroom presentations render the role of the audience passive and, thus, does not promote collaborative learning.

Upon entering tertiary education, Japanese students generally feel uncomfortable communicating in English with their new peers. This could be due to their reluctance to converse with strangers, which Ohashi's (2021) study participant acknowledged to be common among the Japanese people. However, such aversion to speaking in English may also be tied to EFL students' previous experiences learning English, which are typically grammar-translation-focused. Grant (2014) discovered that “students reported that they look forward to starting new [sic] with university classes by getting away from their prior grammar-focused pedagogy” (p. 6). Despite this, subsequent class observations in Grant's (2014) showed that many students often were not willing to converse in English with their peers. Additionally, Freiermuth and Ito (2020) found that, besides previous learning experiences, in certain cases student personality and, perhaps even more interestingly, “their perspective on interacting in the target language” (p. 7) may have a noticeable effect on how such interactions unfold. This claim should be, however, supported by more evidence from within and outside the language classroom.

Figure 1

Overview of Appraisal Framework



Note. The framework is summarized from *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*, by J. R. Martin and P. R. R. White, 2005, Palgrave Macmillan. Copyright 2005 by J. R. Martin and P. R. R. White.

To our knowledge, undergraduate presentations in Japan (monologic vs dialogic) and their influence on the follow-up conversations have been undeservedly given scant attention. Of some interest is also the mastery of Japanese EFL students to engage their partners in such conversations. To investigate this engagement, the study follows

Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory, informed by dialogism and heteroglossia, that outlines engagement as "those meanings which in various ways construe for the text a heteroglossic backdrop of prior utterances, alternative viewpoints and anticipated responses" (p. 97) and understands it as one of the three main categories within appraisal theory (Figure 1).

The individual systems of appraisal framework have been utilized to explore both written (Mills et al., 2020; Sun & Crosthwaite, 2022) and spoken communication (Lee, 2020; Ngo & Unsworth, 2015). Since this study is interested in the heteroglossic (i.e. dialogic) approach to student presentations and subsequent conversations, particularly in expanding the latter, the finding of whether student presentations and conversations are dialogically expansive would lead to valuable insights. Provided students choose to use certain lexicogrammatical features to engage their partners, the conversations would last longer as the dialogic space is expanded. It is expected that learners at the CEFR A2-B1 levels, common in first-year university EFL classrooms in Japan, would opt for more formulaic phrases. Yeldham (2020) suggested that the relative ease of such formulaic language processing assisted lower-level listening. Conversely, it is possible that students would shut down or otherwise restrain the conversation by either delivering a monoglossic (i.e. monologic) message and/or by contracting a dialogic space. One of the factors that may influence the amount of space allowed for communication is thought to be the interlocutors' (i.e. the presenter and the audience's) unfamiliarity. To reduce such influence reported by researchers (Namkung and Kim, 2024; Saito et al., 2019), it is proposed that this investigation should focus on the audience familiar to the conversation partners.

In summary, research indicates that even with the rise in the popularity of TBLT as the pedagogical approach in EFL classrooms, classroom undergraduate presentations and presentation-based conversations are still acted out as mostly monoglossic, or monologic, experiences. The appraisal framework employed in this study allows for the investigation of such classroom interactions, with a focus on the lexicogrammatical resources chosen by students to engage their communication partners in extended conversations.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative approach to explore how Japanese first-year university students engage their presentation audience in subsequent conversations about the content of their presentations. The use of qualitative instruments often allows greater flexibility with emerging categories and adoption of the emic perspective to data interpretation (Mackey & Gass, 2022). The data collection was conducted at the end of a two-semester EFL course. The first semester of the course primarily focused on developing student conversations, while the second semester introduced presentations delivered in front of a small familiar audience. The methodology is comprised of three subsections: participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Participants

Six CEFR A2-B1 level first-year university students from two EFL classes. Each class was taught by one of the teacher-researchers (i.e. the authors of this paper), invited to participate in this research. They were divided into two groups of three members, to recreate their class conditions (e.g. small-group time-limited presentations and conversations, self-selection during turn-taking, etc). This was also done to ensure that all students in each of the two groups were familiar with one another and the general procedure. To protect student privacy, each student-participant was assigned a pseudonym and is referred to throughout this study using the corresponding pseudonym. The teacher-researchers are named Teacher A or Teacher B.

Data Collection

The data was collected during two rounds of teacher-observed student presentations, conversations and follow-up semi-structured interviews with one of the teacher-researchers. The participants provided their informed consent to participate in this study, which was carried out in accordance with the university regulations.

Student Presentations and Follow-up Conversations

Each group of students met twice for about 15 minutes, resulting in four meetings in total. The meetings set-up was informed by the TBLT approach previously utilized by both teachers in their classes. At the pre-task stage, before each meeting, students were given class standard notes' templates, which they were instructed to use to prepare for presentations, following the procedure employed by the EFL course they had taken shortly before the meetings. The topic choice was limited to one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To avoid extensive topic familiarity, the participants were prompted to choose the SDG they had not presented in class.

To ensure the meetings resembled class (during-task phase), the time interval between them was kept to 3-4 days. During the meetings, students delivered their presentations (ending in a question directed at the audience with the next speaker self-selecting to talk about the question), took notes and had conversations based on the presentations and their notes' content. Although the sequence had slight variations, depending on how a teacher-researcher in charge had delivered their class, the overall procedure was familiar to the students. The teacher-researchers who observed the presentations and conversations also took notes on how the student communication unfolded, although

the role of teachers' notes at this stage of research is insignificant. All student communication during the meetings was audio-recorded and stored securely. As the post-task phase is not in this study's focus, the researchers opted to avoid advising students to reflect on the first meeting's process and outcomes. Therefore, any such reflection performed by the participants was of their own will.

Semi-structured Interviews

After each meeting, a semi-structured interview with each participant was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of their approach to engaging their group members in conversations pertaining to the content of their presentations and to compare teacher observations with student perceptions. As far as it was possible, each teacher-researcher aimed to interview a student who was previously enrolled in the other teacher's class. Overall, the data was obtained from 12 English-medium interviews of approximately 30 minutes each.

Data Analysis

The data from the meetings' recordings and the follow-up semi-structured interviews were explored using a multi-step thematic analysis. The subsequent coding and categorization of the data was performed to identify any lexicogrammatical patterns demonstrated in Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework that would allow for the expansion of heteroglossic episodes. It followed the process outlined in Saldana (2015). The use of Quirkos software package ensured that the data was appropriately and easily visualized for the analysis.

The results of this study not only allow for better understanding of the EFL student interactions in presentations and conversations. Since the participants had been enrolled in the teacher-researchers' classes, the results may also shed light on the effectiveness of the teaching approaches utilized in the first-year university EFL classes relative to expanding student conversations and potentially outline the areas of the syllabus development. The findings are presented in two sections, each answering one of the research questions posited earlier.

Results

The results of the thematic and lexicogrammatical engagement analysis of the presentations and conversations and the follow-up interviews' transcripts suggested limited discrepancies between student pre-task understandings and actual realizations of their presentation and conversation moves. Both at the pre-task and during-task stage the students seemed to have viewed and performed their presentations as a single-voiced monogloss, which shifted towards a combination of the monogloss and increasingly the heterogloss instances during conversations.

Students' Target Audience at the Pre-task Stage

During the semi-structured interviews, the students were asked to elaborate on the audience for which they prepared their presentations. The lexicogrammatical choices students made to talk about their preparations are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Students' Audience Focus in the Pre-Task Phase

Audience Theme	No. of Times Mentioned
Me	13
Team members	4
Listeners	3
Everyone	3
Teachers	1

It can be clearly seen that overwhelmingly the main audience of the presentation notes that the students had prepared for the meetings during the pre-task phase were the authors of those notes. In 13 instances out of 24 in total, the interviewees acknowledged that the *I* was more important than the other students. This can be best illustrated by a student acknowledging that "I prepared these notes for me the most. When I watch this sheet, I can talk and... When I watch this, I can talk my idea".

Team members, *Listeners* and *Everyone* received roughly equal attention from the students, albeit this attention was rather limited, predominantly focusing on "the words" rather than shared presentation ideas, as stated by a student later: "Preparation note, the word I wrote, the word is I think most important word I wrote. This is for listeners. Most for preparation note is for me, the most, but next is listeners".

Interestingly, and perhaps thankfully, *Teachers* were mentioned only once during the interviews with regards

to the student preparations' audience. The context in which teachers were referred to was not to receive a grade because it had been understood that there would be no grade at the end of this research, but to assist with teachers' research.

Students' Audience Focus at the During-task Stage

The further interview data partially supports the students' overwhelming focus on themselves when preparing for presentations (Table 2).

Table 2

Students' Audience Focus in the During-Task Phase

Audience Theme	No. of Times Mentioned
Presentations	
My interests	8
Team members	5
Teachers	3
Audience	2
Listeners	1
My notes	1
Conversations	
Team members	11
Listeners	2
My notes	1

The data from Table 2 highlights that the presenting student themselves remained the focus of that student's presentation. However, having proceeded to the conversations, the students shifted their attention towards the other side, hence the dominating *Team members* or the *Listeners*.

Teachers emerged as unintentional (or perhaps, intentional) audience during at least one student's, Kaname's, presentation (Excerpt 1):

Excerpt 1

I thought you and Teacher, Teacher A, can understand my information, but I thought it will be difficult for them [other students] to understand in details because they need to explain their opinions too. So it is difficult to focus on my opinion.

Again though, the focus was on this student's information and their desire to transmit *my information*, whereas the teachers were seemingly perceived as those who, unlike other students presenting later, were able to receive such information. The teachers did not present and did not participate in conversations, and so they were construed as being able to fully concentrate on this student's message but were not expected to noticeably react to it, or converse about it.

The transcripts of student presentations and conversations were also analyzed for the *entertain* subcategory of engagement, as being more internally than externally informed, to establish whether the students were indeed offering the other participants the floor to self-nominate, thus expanding their conversations (Table 3).

Table 3

Student-Used Resources of Entertain Category of Engagement

Lexicogrammatical Group Representative	No. of Times Used
Modal Auxiliaries	
can	17
should	6
must	2
may	2
might	1
could	1

Lexicogrammatical Group Representative	No. of Times Used
Modal Adjuncts	
maybe	1
usually	1
Modal Attributes	
it's likely	1
In my view Group	
in my opinion	1
Mental Verbs	
I think	25
Evidence/Appearance-based Postulations	
it seems, apparently, etc.	0

The analysis revealed that the students mostly tapped into their knowledge of modal auxiliaries, with *can* prevailing, and mental verbs represented by *I think* (Table 3). The former dominated in presentations and then semi-structured interviews with the teachers, while the latter was mostly observed in student-led conversations and follow-up teacher-led interviews. In addition, there were no episodes of evidence-based postulations.

Discussion

The results of the current study highlight little mismatch in the student perception and performance of presentations as predominantly monoglossic, or monologic, endeavors. Although the general presentation guidelines offered choice among specific SDGs, each student was free to choose what information to include in the topic (i.e. whether to focus mostly on their interests within the suggested topics or consider the audiences' interests too). This finding is consistent with Gray's (2021) and Ducasse's (2023) observations. It appears that in the pre-task phase, the presentation notes were crafted with solely the notes author's interests in mind (within the topics suggested). During the presentations, the audience was mostly perceived as a passive receiver of the information that is in the orbit of the current speaker's interests. The speakers in the study sought to convey prepared information to either other students or the teachers present, with little to no regard as to whether the audience is interested in conversing about the content of the presentation. Such an approach was chosen by the students even though they had been made aware that the presentations would be followed by conversations, and, unlike in Gray's (2021) research, although partially in line with Ellis's (2006) TBLT methodological suggestions, the post-presentation conversation move was obligatory in this study.

Unlike the presentation move, conversations elicited more heteroglossic (i.e. dialogic) episodes, in agreement with the pre-task students' perceptions of their post-presentation conversations and with Gray's (2021) findings. Although the speaker's voice did entertain some dialogic alternatives, such entertainment was mostly realized using a formulaic "I think". This finding corroborates the observations in Yeldham (2020) who concluded that the ease of processing stimulates the better comprehensibility of such expressions. However, it should be further investigated whether the students used low intensity modals such as "can" and the mental verb phrase "I think" to convey uncertainty, or modesty, or to express a stance and authority in conversations. Japanese EFL students may be reluctant to openly express their opinions if their conversation partners' opinions were delivered authoritatively, and thus the conversation space may be narrowed.

Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for the university EFL learners' communicative engagement and TBLT research, as well as for the EFL teachers in general and the educators who follow the TBLT approach in particular. As it was discovered, the implementation of TBLT may not uniformly result in an anticipated significant expansion of the dialogic space in student communication. This discovery to a certain extent contradicts Long's (2014) assertion that TBLT stimulates cooperative learning, as this cooperation might be absent at certain stages of the task. The engagement with issues proposed by East (2024) may potentially not be as strong as previously thought due to the student choice to project only their voice at the presentation stage. Reinforced by previous experiences, the EFL students seem to create mostly monoglossic environments during their presentations and to perceive and realize them and the follow-up conversations as separate, loosely connected contexts. The single-voice authoritative delivery of the information during the presentation as taken-for-granted has the potential to severely restrict the dialogic opportunities. Therefore, at the task-set-up stage students should be more explicitly advised to give space to dialogically alternative positions and voices and to utilize a wider range of dialogically expanding lexicogrammatical resources. It may also be necessary to ensure that the course syllabus endorses such allowances.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, the predominantly qualitative nature of the exploration might have led to some research biases. In addition, the inclusion of the question prompt might have signaled to the audience that this section requires heightened attention, and so the former sections of the presentation might have been deemed less important. Next, the study explored student interactions with a familiar audience only, which might have contributed to the higher frequency of heteroglossic episodes during conversations. The small sample size also calls for caution when interpreting the results. The analyzed lexicogrammatical units themselves were too viewed mostly separately from the longer utterances, restricting the depth of the results' interpretation. Finally, the investigation of the engagement category of the appraisal framework, and more specifically its more internally subjective "entertain" subcategory, left out other language resources represented by the more externally driven "attribute" subcategory, as well as by the categories of "attitude" and "graduation".

To address the limitations, future research may choose to strengthen the methodology by comparing the results of the qualitative investigations with the data collected via such instruments as questionnaires, which would help to verify the results (Mackey & Gass, 2022), and by increasing the student sample size. Exploration of the presentation structure's role in them being perceived and performed in monoglossic or heteroglossic contexts could also be advised. Future research can also consider looking into other appraisal systems. The inclusion of other types of lexicogrammatical resources would assist in understanding how the strength and the focus of the internal and external voices entertained by a speaker expand the conversation floor for dialogue. Finally, as Ohashi's (2021) findings pointed out, some Japanese are not good at conversing with strangers in principle. Therefore, future research may also choose to corroborate the current findings by exploring the primarily monoglossic or heteroglossic foci of EFL student interactions with an unfamiliar audience.

Conclusion

This study explored the EFL learner engagement in presentations and subsequent conversations and the lexicogrammatical ways chosen by the first-year university EFL learners in Japan to expand their post-presentation conversations with a familiar audience of their peers in the TBLT-informed environment. The findings revealed similarities between the student perceptions of their audience in the pre-task and during-task phases and their realization. A shift from highly monoglossic to mainly heteroglossic communicative environments was observed between the presentation move and the conversation move. Consistent with previous research, the use of mostly formulaic lexicogrammatical instances of engagement was identified.

The implications of this study are of significance for both EFL researchers and educators, particularly in TBLT-informed pedagogy. It was observed that a student as one of the main conversation interlocutors may opt for establishing their own single-voice driven presentation and conversation contexts, which in turn may lead to restricted dialogic spaces.

The study has several limitations, including a potential research bias due to its primarily qualitative nature, the separation of single- and multiword expressions from the contexts of the longer utterances, and the research focus on mostly internally subjective appraisal resources, as well as the structure of student presentations, the inclusion of a familiar audience only, and the small sample size.

Future research can consider supplementing the qualitative design with quantitative instruments, ensuring a more well-rounded approach. It may also be beneficial to investigate other appraisal systems in the context of interlocutors' longer utterances for deeper understanding. Additionally, both researchers and educators could explore the communicative benefits allowed by adjusting the TBLT-driven syllabus and the structure of undergraduate EFL learners' presentations towards offering more dialogic opportunities for the familiar and unfamiliar larger audiences to entertain, such as peer-to-peer feedback sessions or role-play activities.

In conclusion, although university EFL learners' lexicogrammatical realizations of presentation-supported conversations arguably illustrate the monogloss-heterogloss divide between their presentations and conversations even in the communicative-pedagogy informed conditions, the potential for expanding the learners' conversations does indeed exist. Addressing the limitations of this study and expanding its findings, future research would contribute to deeper understandings of student conversations and audience awareness, further enhancing their in-class and out-of-class communication skills. This could facilitate students' real-world interactions by preparing them to be more open to dialogues in their further studies and professional situations.

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How to cite the article:

Neff, J., Arciaga, K. & Burri, M. (2024). The impact of EFL teachers' demographic backgrounds on the perceptions of ethical AI use. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 60–66. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-8>

Research Article

The Impact of EFL Teachers' Demographic Backgrounds on the Perceptions of Ethical AI Use

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Abstract

Exploring teacher perceptions of AI tools is essential for understanding practices in the classroom. This study investigates EFL teachers' views on the ethical use of AI in education and examines how these views relate to demographic factors such as country of origin, gender, age, and teaching experience. Sixteen teachers from a Japanese national university participated in a survey exploring these aspects. The findings reveal that demographic variables notably influence teachers' perceptions of AI ethics. Non-Japanese teachers generally found AI tools to be more ethically acceptable than Japanese teachers, though with some reservations. Additionally, male teachers showed slightly higher acceptance of AI use compared to female teachers. Younger teachers also perceived AI use as more ethical than their older counterparts, despite a generally positive attitude towards AI across all age groups. These results suggest that educational institutions should consider teachers' varying perceptions when implementing AI to enhance educational practices.

教員のAIツールに対する認識を調査することは、学習者のニーズを理解するために重要だ。本研究では、AIを教育に使用することの倫理性について、EFL教員の意見を調査し、それらの意見が出身国、性別、年齢、教育経験などの人口統計的要因とどのように関連しているかを分析した。日本の国立大学に所属する16人のEFL教員が、これらの側面に関する調査に参加した。調査結果によると、人口統計的要因がAIの倫理に対する認識に大きな影響を与えていることが明らかになった。非日本国籍の教員は、AIツールを倫理的に受け入れやすいと考える傾向がみられたが、懸念も示した。また、男性は女性よりもAIに対してやや高い受け入れ度を示した。さらに、若い教員は年配の教員よりもAIの使用を倫理的と見なす傾向がみられた。これらの結果は、教育機関がAIを導入する際に、これらの認識を考慮する必要があることを示唆している。

There is little doubt that artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral aspect of modern life. Lyu and Wu (2023) postulate that the presence of AI holds “tremendous opportunities to unleash human creativity and catalyze economic growth” (p.1). This, however, signifies the need for research on the use of AI to truly understand its implications in all areas of society, including education. Prior to 2022, AI use in education was limited to specific roles like grammar and spelling, but the introduction of ChatGPT in November 2022 has revolutionized the application of AI in the classroom and beyond (Hong, 2023). Within a short period, the term AI, as well as branded examples of AI like ChatGPT, have become part of the fabric of education (Moorhouse et. al., 2023). This rapid development has caused uncertainty among teachers and their students as to what implies acceptable use of these tools (Luo, 2024).

As for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and learning, AI offers both benefits and drawbacks. EFL teachers may, for example, use AI to prepare lesson plans, generate materials and images, and provide feedback, including scoring students' written work (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2024). However, the use of AI also has profound ethical implications, especially with regard to how language learners use AI to complete their assessments (Lu, 2024).

It is important to recognize that ethical issues surrounding the use of AI are frequently emphasized in education (Cotton et al., 2023). Among the principles defined and synthesized, for instance, by the EU, ‘human autonomy’ stands out, highlighting the necessity for users to retain decision-making power (European Commission, 2022). Despite the crucial role of human autonomy in AI ethics, few studies have explored EFL teachers' perceptions of the ethical use of AI tools. An exploration of this area is essential because the primary stakeholders of AI in language teaching tend to be teachers with different backgrounds, perceptions, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences situated within the contexts in which they teach. It is, therefore, vital to not only understand teachers' views that inform their teaching practices, but also foreground their voices to inform guidelines and policies on the ethical use of AI in English language programs.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines how EFL teachers employing AI in their university English classes perceive its ethical use. Of particular interest is the potential relationship between their perceptions and their country of origin, gender, age, and number of years teaching. By analyzing these aspects, the study will contribute to an understanding of the possibilities and the role that AI may take within EFL contexts. The results of this research

may also inform existing and assist with creating future educational policies and practices. Ethics and ethical behavior are equally unique to the individual but also recognized as an integral part of a functioning society, be that a nation or a single classroom. Thus, ensuring that both the teacher and the students are aware of and in agreement as to what constitutes ethical behavior regarding AI tool use is necessary to ensure an environment conducive to learning.

This paper is part of a larger research project which examines the perceptions of both students and teachers. However, in the present study, only the teachers' perceptions are examined to obtain an in-depth understanding of teachers' unique backgrounds in relation to how they perceive ethics in AI usage. The study is guided by the following research question: To what extent do EFL teachers' countries of origin, gender expression, and age/teaching experience impact their perceptions of ethical AI use?

Literature Review

Studies examining teacher's perceptions of AI in educational contexts are just beginning to emerge. STEM Teachers in the United States participating in Kim and Kim's (2022) study, for example, showed that teachers' perceptions of integrating AI in learning situations were shaped considerably by the amount of exposure to AI the teachers received. This meant that targeted professional development and hands-on experience with AI played a crucial role in shaping teachers' positive attitudes and effective integration of AI. The study also revealed an increase in teachers' enthusiasm to adopt AI tools as practitioners become more comfortable with using the technology. Similarly, Ulla et al.'s (2023) research demonstrated that Thai EFL teachers felt that AI was useful for lesson planning and that AI tools made up an important part of their teaching tool kit. Teachers also noted that instead of students solely relying on AI, they should use AI tools in combination with other sources, including books and web resources, to maximize their learning.

Demographic variables appear to play a crucial role in shaping teachers' perceptions of AI. Viberg et al.'s (2023) study, for instance, showed that K-12 teachers in more masculine societies (e.g., US or Japan) tended to be more comfortable with potential outcomes of AI use in educational settings. Alharbi and Khalil (2023), on the other hand, suggest that practitioners' age contributes to their perceptions of AI use. Their research conducted in Pakistan showed that teachers younger than 35 years of age had a more positive attitude toward the use of AI than their older colleagues. More specifically, younger teachers were willing to adopt new technologies and incorporate innovative concepts into their teaching repertoires, while teachers aged 36 to 45 were more skeptical toward these issues. The more mature group of teachers seemed to be aware of the positive nature of AI use but expressed concerns about AI reducing a teacher's significance in the classroom and the impact of technology on their students, especially the reliance on technology comprising their students' acquisition of problem-solving abilities.

It seems that younger teachers tend to be more aware of the potential of AI use in their classroom while more seasoned practitioners prefer a somewhat simpler – less technology-driven – approach to teaching and learning (Al-khreshah, 2024). However, the same study also showed that practitioners holding higher qualifications are also likely to be frequent AI users. Such diverse usage postulates the importance of examining the exact relationship between teachers' backgrounds and their perceptions of AI use.

Further highlighting the need to explore and, ultimately, understand the relationship between teachers' backgrounds and their perceptions is the fact that few studies have focused on EFL teachers in Japan. To the best of our knowledge, our research (Neff et al., 2024) is one of the few studies that has demonstrated that although EFL university teachers in Japan and their Japanese undergraduate students were generally aware of AI tools, their perceptions of the ethical use of AI in an English language program varied among and within the two groups. For example, students considered using AI to complete an assignment as acceptable, but their EFL teachers thought this was unfair and unethical because they expected students to complete homework without using AI.

Importantly, our research suggests that while there are differences in the perception of AI tools amongst EFL teachers, these are often subtle differences in opinion rather than disparate points of view. However, the study did not take specific demographic factors into account, and therefore drawing on the same data set (a survey), this paper examines the teachers' ethnic backgrounds, stated genders, ages, and breadth of experience (i.e., length of time they had been working in the field) in relation to their perceptions of the ethical use of AI in an English language program in Japan. There has been little research in this particular area and so this paper makes a crucial and timely contribution to the field of English language teaching.

Methodology

The research presented in this paper is part of a larger, ongoing study in which we compare EFL teacher and student perceptions of the ethical use of AI tools. With the aim of providing additional understanding of an area that our previous paper (Neff et al., 2024) was unable to address, this paper examines the relationship between participating teachers' backgrounds and their perceptions of the ethical use of AI.

Teacher Participants

In the larger study, 16 teachers and 543 first-year students at a Japanese national university took part in a

survey designed to assess their perceptions of AI tools. In this present paper, however, the focus is only on the teachers who were a mix of full-time and part-time employees at the university and tasked with teaching English to first and second-year students in the university's English program. All teachers were highly proficient English speakers irrespective of their country of origin. As depicted in Table 1, the participating teachers came from several different countries, including Japan. Six of the teachers were female with the remaining 10 teachers being male. The teachers reported having broad teaching experience with most of them having taught English in Japan between 10 to 15 years.

Table 1

Demographic Background of EFL Teachers

	Stated Gender	Country of Origin	Age
Teacher 1	Female	Japan	Prefer not to say
Teacher 2	Female	Japan	Between 25 - 35
Teacher 3	Female	The United States	Between 35 - 45
Teacher 4	Female	Outside Japan	Between 25 - 35
Teacher 5	Female	Japan	Between 35 - 45
Teacher 6	Female	Malaysia	Between 25 - 35
Teacher 7	Male	Philippines	Between 25 - 35
Teacher 8	Male	Japan	Between 25 - 35
Teacher 9	Male	Japan	Between 25 - 35
Teacher 10	Male	Japan	Between 35 - 45
Teacher 11	Male	Japan	Between 35 - 45
Teacher 12	Male	Japan	Between 35 - 45
Teacher 13	Male	The United States	Between 45 - 55
Teacher 14	Male	Australia	Between 45 - 55
Teacher 15	Male	The United Kingdom	Between 45 - 55
Teacher 16	Male	Indonesia	Between 25 - 35

Research Design

Surveys are often used for efficiently obtaining large amounts of quantifiable data in a cost-effective and controlled method (Dörnyei, 2010) with modern survey tools (e.g. Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics etc.) being versatile enough to allow for efficient distribution and effective online data collection. The research tool used in this study was developed to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of AI tools, including their ethical (or unethical) application. The students' and the teachers' survey tool consisted of four parts. The first section asked for participants' demographic data (e.g., country of origin, gender, age) while the second section asked for their familiarity with AI tools. In the third part, participants were asked about their experience with AI tools, and in the final section, participants were asked to read six short, fictional scenarios in which an English language learner used a specific AI tool. Research participants were asked to rate each scenario on a Likert scale where 1 was equivalent to the learner's tool usage being completely unethical and a 4 meant the usage was completely ethical. The survey tool also included an additional short qualitative component consisting of an open question that asked participants to share their experiences regarding AI tool use in the university setting and specifically in their classrooms. Finally, all scenarios were translated into Japanese to avoid any errors in comprehension and to ensure that the participants had a good understanding of the term "ethical."

The survey for the teachers was modified slightly to allow them to add their thoughts with their personal experiences with AI and comments to scenarios provided in the survey. The survey was sent to the teachers at the same time it was distributed to students. The student and teacher version of the survey was approved by the university's ethics committee. Each participant had to indicate that they understood what data would be collected and how it would be used before being allowed to complete the survey. The results presented in this paper are derived from the teachers' responses to the survey tool.

Data Collection and Analysis

The survey was conducted in November of 2023. The tool itself was designed in Google Forms and sent by the first two authors to all eligible teachers through email.

Due to the relatively small number of teacher participants ($N = 16$), the authors decided to examine the teachers'

survey data more holistically by creating a scoring system that placed each participant in a category of 'Mostly Ethical' (ME) or 'Mostly Unethical' (MU). To do so, the survey results were downloaded to a spreadsheet. For each scenario, the Likert-scale answers of 1 and 2 (i.e., 'completely unethical' and 'unethical') were combined into the MU category while answers of 3 and 4 (i.e., 'ethical' and 'completely ethical') were combined into the ME category. The results were organized into categories (see Table 2) to separate the demographic and experiential data from the scenario results, as well as providing valuable visual cues that facilitated the interpretation of the data. This enabled the researchers to identify, for example, whether a Japanese male teacher with 5-10 years of teaching experience considered AI use to be ethical or whether a non-Japanese female teacher with less than five years of teaching experience perceived using AI to be unethical. To supplement this data and aid the discussion, the qualitative answers to the open-ended questions were also included in the data analysis.

Table 2

Teacher Demographics and Ethical Perceptions

Teacher ID	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Ethical Perception (ME/MU/NA)
1	2	2	3	1	4	3	NA
2	1	2	4	1	4	3	ME
3	1	3	3	1	4	4	ME
4	1	3	4	3	4	3	ME
5	3	3	4	1	4	2	ME
6	2	2	4	1	4	2	ME
7	1	2	4	2	2	4	ME
8	2	1	4	2	4	2	ME
9	1	2	3	1	4	3	ME
10	3	3	3	1	3	4	MU
11	4	4	4	1	4	4	MU
12	2	3	4	3	4	4	MU
13	1	4	4	1	4	4	ME
14	1	3	4	3	3	4	ME
15	2	4	4	4	4	4	ME
16	1	3	3	1	3	3	NA

Note. S = scenario; respondents were assigned a value of either MU – Mostly Unethical – or ME – Mostly Ethical – based on the number of positive (a numerical score of 3 or 4) or negative (a numerical score of 1 or 2) results. Participants whose positive and negative values were equal were assigned NA (Not Applicable). The table format organizes the data into clear categories, facilitating interpretation.

Results

The analysis of the survey data demonstrated that the demographic backgrounds of the teachers had some impact on their perception of the ethical use of AI tools. Younger, male, and non-Japanese teachers appeared to react more favorably to the hypothetical uses of AI presented in the scenarios.

Ethnic Background of Participating EFL Teachers

As can be seen in Table 3, the data showed that teachers from outside Japan (85.7%; $n = 6$;) viewed AI use as more ethical than their Japanese colleagues (44.4%; $n = 4$). Also, no teachers from outside Japan thought this was mostly unethical, while three Japanese teachers (33.3%) considered the use of AI to be mostly unethical. Optional comments provided by the non-Japanese teachers provide some insights. One teacher stated that "My answers would change depending on the type of class, goals of the course, and most importantly, how the use of such tools was prescribed/prohibited in the syllabus" (T13), while a second comment mentioned that "In many cases, determining whether AI is ethical depends on the type of course, objectives and teacher instructions" (T14). While both teachers fall into the 'ME' category, they seem to be aware of the contextual nature of education and AI use, perhaps suggesting that the foreign teachers with their broad range of teaching experience were more receptive toward the idea of using AI to facilitate their students' English language learning process. Different scenarios would have likely elicited different responses, but our data indicated that teachers' ethnic backgrounds quite possibly influence their perceptions of the ethical use of AI.

Table 3

Ethnic Background of EFL Teachers

	Japan (<i>n</i> = 9)	Outside Japan (<i>n</i> = 7)
ME	4 (44.4%)	6 (85.7%)
MU	3 (33.3%)	0 (0%)
NA	2 (22.2%)	1 (14.3%)

Note. ME = mostly ethical; MU = mostly unethical; NA = not applicable.

Gender

Data also suggested that male EFL teachers viewed the use of AI slightly more ethical than their female counterparts. While 70% (*n* = 7) of the male teachers perceived the use of AI to be ethical, only 50% of the female EFL teachers (*n* = 3) shared the same view on this issue (see Table 4).

Table 4

Gender of EFL Teachers

	Female (<i>n</i> = 6)	Male (<i>n</i> = 10)
ME	3 (50.0%)	7 (70%)
MU	1 (16.7%)	2 (20%)
NA	2 (33.3%)	1 (10%)

Age

In terms of age, 85.7% (*n* = 6) of the teachers belonging to the age group 25-35 viewed students using AI tools to be ethical. While this group reported having no unethical views on AI tools, the 36-45 age group showed a slight split between the ethical (40%; *n* = 2) and unethical categories (60%; *n* = 3). Meanwhile, the age group 46-55 (*n* = 3) viewed AI use as ethical with a ratio of 2:1 in the ME and NA categories, respectively (see Table 5).

Table 5

Age of EFL Teachers

	25-35 y/o (<i>n</i> = 7)	36-45 y/o (<i>n</i> = 5)	46-55 y/o (<i>n</i> = 3)
ME	6 (85.7%)	2 (40%)	2 (66.7%)
MU	0 (0.0%)	3 (60%)	0 (0.0%)
NA	1 (14.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (33.3%)

Note. One of the participants chose not to share their age and therefore they were excluded from this part of the analysis.

Discussion

It is evident from this study and others like Moorhouse et. al. (2023), that it is necessary to adopt and acknowledge multiple filters in determining the ethical use of artificial intelligence in education. This contrasts with Viberg et al (2023)'s claim that demographic influence is negligible when it comes to views on AI ethics. More specifically, it shows that, indeed, demographic factors including the country of origin, gender expression, and age can influence teachers' views regarding ethical use of AI.

EFL teachers from outside Japan were more likely to consider AI as ethically reasonable. This is, of course, speculative, but this group may be more receptive to AI and its ethical implementation because they tend to teach in varied settings, culturally, organizationally, and disciplinarily. Gender provides additional emphasis on ethical controversies in the use of AI in educational activities. Exploring the perception of learners regarding AI, Stöhr et al. (2024) observed that male learners expressed a more favorable attitude towards AI compared to female learners who were more concerned about ethical issues. As such, the present study also found that the perceived ethicality of AI was higher among male participants than the female ones. This highlights a potential gendered approach to AI ethics; male teachers may consider the technological potential of AI whereas female teachers may consider the ethical, fairness, and welfare aspects of AI as educators and caregivers. This divergence reinforces the need for institutions to foster a culture where ethical issues are viewed from different lenses, and where AI is used appropriately and fairly.

The ethical views towards the use of AI seem to be also affected by age. The mixed perceptions observed in

the 36-45 age range, where the opinions were more polarized, points to a thoughtful assessment of the value of AI in education. On the other hand, the greater acceptance of AI as being ethical by the 46-55 age group might suggest that this particular practitioner demographic is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to deal with ethical questions arising from new technologies due to their diverse and extensive experiences with education technology. The more seasoned academics, who have likely observed several technological and educational changes, might have a better idea of how to ethically integrate AI into educational processes, including the advantages and drawbacks of these systems.

The results have implications for EFL programs concerned about ethical AI use. First, demographic differences suggest that a universal approach to the utilization of AI should not be taken. Rather, institutions should engage in discussion with educators from diverse backgrounds and experiences when making program, curriculum, and policy-specific decisions, especially concerning ethical considerations. Thus, the observed differences in perceptions by teachers with various backgrounds suggest that all teachers in a program need to be included in the discussion about the ethical use of AI inside and outside the language classroom.

These differences also imply that the younger generation of teachers, already demonstrating a higher level of AI appreciation, could potentially act as pioneers or mentors among those less inclined to accept AI technology in the classroom. Such a mentorship approach may help in increasing the chances of an easier transition towards the use of artificial intelligence among all ages. Furthermore, the higher acceptance of AI by teachers aged 46-55 is an indication that this group could potentially help young and old teachers with harnessing their years of experience to ensure that the implementation of AI is done wisely.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that the study included responses from only 16 teachers working at one Japanese national university, and therefore the results may not be generalizable to broader groups of EFL teachers. Drawing on a larger and more diverse population in a future study will enhance the overall understanding of EFL teacher's perception of ethical AI use. Also, adding a qualitative element, such as interviews or focus groups, will likely reveal additional insights into the relationship between EFL teachers' demographic backgrounds and their perceptions of the ethical use of AI tools.

Conclusion

AI remains a fast-changing and challenging landscape for EFL teachers. To ensure that teachers and their students have an understanding of what constitutes acceptable, ethical use of AI tools, much more research is needed. More comparisons of not only demographic and experiential information but also of nuanced situational use of AI tools is recommended for institutions and educational staff. A further study is scheduled to take place in the latter half of 2024 with the aim of gathering more data on EFL teachers' and their students' perceptions of AI use.

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How to cite the article:

Takase, N., & Arai, K. (2024). Text-based corrective feedback for improving speaking skills. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 67–72. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-9>

Practice Article

Text-Based Corrective Feedback for Improving Speaking Skills

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Abstract

Traditional oral corrective feedback (CF), although effective, can disrupt communication and may not be fully processed by language learners, particularly during real-time speech activities. By leveraging the familiarity and immediacy of texting, this teaching practice aims to improve learner awareness of tense errors. This study explores the use of texting as an innovative teaching practice for providing CF in language learning, specifically focusing on its application in improving speaking accuracy among learners at the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A2 to B2 levels. This study outlines the implementation process, evaluates the outcomes, and reflects on the benefits and challenges of this approach. The results show that texting serves as a valuable tool for delivering focused CF, providing a less intimidating alternative to oral interactions. The study concludes with recommendations for educators and further research on the broader applications of texting in language education.

本論文は、文字によるテキストチャットを利用して、スピーキング時の修正フィードバック(CF)の提供を試みた実践研究である。従来の口頭によるCFは効果的ではあるものの、コミュニケーションを妨げたり、特にリアルタイムのスピーチ活動中には言語学習者に十分に理解されなかったりすることがある。この教育手法は、テキストメッセージの親しみやすさと即時性を活用することで、文字によって注意を向け、時制の誤りを意識し、修正することを目的としている。本実践では、特にCEFR A2からB2レベルの学習者におけるスピーキングの正確さ向上に焦点を当てている。本実践は、テキストメッセージがCFを提供するための貴重なツールとなり、口頭でのCFの代替手段となることを示す。

Corrective feedback (CF) is a key aspect of second language acquisition, with research demonstrating its importance in helping learners notice and correct linguistic errors (Kobayashi, 2018; Shintani et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2022). Although immediate feedback, especially on grammar, is often effective, it can interrupt communication. Some studies argue that CF should occur after the learner's utterance is complete to avoid this issue, while others believe that CF should be abandoned altogether, as it may hinder natural language acquisition (Truscott, 1996, 1999). Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that CF plays a role in enhancing learners' accuracy and supporting language learning (Kobayashi, 2018; Shintani et al., 2014; Zhang, et al., 2022).

Despite teachers' best efforts to provide feedback in the classroom, learners often fail to notice or fully comprehend the provided guidance, leaving it unprocessed, particularly for learners at the basic and intermediate stages of language learning. This issue is particularly evident in speaking, where feedback typically occurs immediately after a learner makes an error, potentially interrupting the flow of communication or diverting attention from content. This study addresses this gap by exploring the alternative approach of using texting to provide CF and improve speaking skills.

Texting is a common communication method used daily by teachers and learners. It combines the immediacy of spoken communication with the clarity and readability of written text. We propose that providing CF through texts can enhance understanding and help learners correct their errors more effectively.

This paper discusses a practice implemented in a Japanese university language course with learners at Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels A2 to B2. The target proficiency level was chosen to enable a comparison with Kobayashi's (2018) study on Japanese English learners and their use of CF. To this end, it outlines the teaching strategy, covering its implementation, resources employed, and reflections on its impact. It also provides educators with useful perspectives on alternative ways to deliver CF and incorporate technology into their instruction.

The native language of the students was Japanese. The course emphasized communication skills and aims to prepare students for real-world English-speaking environments relevant to their future careers. The activities were task-based and followed a meaning-focused approach, including oral CF when necessary. The class was conducted once a week for 15 weeks and the activity was conducted once every week.

Some students felt less confident when speaking English because they worried about making mistakes. For learners at the CEFR A2 to B2 levels, while there may be some significant errors in their speech, most mistakes

do not hinder communication. However, to improve speaking skills, it is essential to provide them with clear and understandable feedback that they can use to achieve mastery. This teaching practice focuses on providing feedback, specifically on tense errors. Although tenses are taught in the early stages of the English curriculum in Japan, achieving full mastery is challenging due to differences in linguistic structures (Shirahata, 2015). This difficulty may be partly due to the differences between tense and aspect in Japanese.

This practice can be integrated with other learning tools such as voice recording and multimedia resources to enhance the visual saliency of texting. Variations and applications would further extend the utility of texting-based CF and could be tested in different contexts to explore their effectiveness in improving language learning outcomes and allowing learners to practice in authentic contexts

Background

The impact of corrective feedback (CF) has been widely studied. Research suggests that direct CF can have a longer-lasting effect on learners compared to metalinguistic explanations, depending on the grammatical item targeted (Shintani et al., 2014). Another key aspect of CF is its scope, or the number of items addressed. Truscott (1996, 1999) argued that addressing multiple items simultaneously may hinder learners from effectively recognizing and internalizing the feedback. In contrast, Sheen (2007) advocated for a more focused approach to CF, emphasizing that concentrating on specific items tends to yield better results. Supporting this view, Li (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of 34 intervention studies on CF and morphosyntactic learning. The results revealed that CF had a moderate positive impact on learners' performance, especially when it consistently targeted specific grammatical errors.

Focused and unfocused CF have also been compared in studies involving Japanese learners. For instance, Kobayashi (2018) examined the effectiveness of focused CF using transcribed texts to enhance speaking accuracy. The study involved 48 Japanese university students divided into three groups: one received CF on past tense errors, another on various items without restriction, and the third received no CF. Pre- and post-speaking tests were conducted to assess accuracy. While the groups receiving CF showed a reduction in errors, the differences were not statistically significant. Kobayashi noted that the time lag between learners' speech and the delivery of written CF may have reduced its effectiveness, as learners struggled to link the feedback to their original utterances. Nonetheless, the study highlighted the potential of focused CF in improving speaking accuracy when targeting specific errors, such as past tense usage.

The current study builds on Kobayashi's findings by hypothesizing that texting-based CF can overcome the limitations of delayed written feedback. Texting offers immediate, focused, and visible corrections, enabling learners to connect the feedback to their errors and better retain the information.

Timing is another critical factor in CF. Shintani and Aubrey (2016) found that learners who received immediate CF during writing tasks—via Google Docs—improved their accuracy more than those who received delayed feedback after task completion. Interviews revealed that immediate feedback helped learners identify and understand their errors more clearly. Their study demonstrated the benefits of delivering CF immediately, as it enhances learners' ability to notice and process mistakes. Applying this principle to a speaking context, the current study hypothesizes that texting-based CF, similar to written feedback in timing and clarity, can offer similar benefits for improving speaking accuracy. By providing instant, visible feedback, texting enables learners to review and internalize corrections effectively.

Drawing from Kobayashi (2018) and Shintani and Aubrey (2016), the current study hypothesizes that immediate texting-based CF will be more effective than traditional oral CF in improving speaking accuracy. This approach addresses the challenge of delayed feedback highlighted by Kobayashi and utilizes the advantages of immediacy demonstrated by Shintani and Aubrey.

This foundation underscores the rationale for exploring texting as a novel medium for CF delivery in language learning. By addressing gaps in CF timing and modality, the study aims to enhance speaking skills and contribute to innovative teaching practices for second language learners.

Benefits of Texting

Based on the findings of Kobayashi (2018) and Shintani and Aubrey (2016), we hypothesize that providing immediate CF through texting would be more effective than oral feedback. The effectiveness of texting depends on its visibility. While it can be delivered as quickly as spoken feedback, the text is visible, eliminating issues with inaudibility and allowing learners to review the feedback later. Texting can also enhance recognition of target language features (Smith, 2004). In a study by Kawaguchi (2016), Japanese and Australian students communicated online in their second language, discussing specific topics and providing feedback on each other's writing. This method improved grammar and vocabulary. Based on previous findings, this teaching method uses text to provide instant CF, making it an effective tool for teaching speaking skills.

Description of the Teaching Practice

In this teaching practice, 31 English learners participated in a 10-minute speaking activity. The main activity was receiving CF through texting while the learners described a cartoon strip. After the first speech, the learners were asked to describe the cartoon strip again and modify their speech, if necessary. The duration was determined

based on a pilot test. Initially, this was a 5-minute activity, but some students needed more time to understand the picture prompts. The time spent speaking varied slightly between learners. However, the maximum duration for each speaking activity was 90 seconds. Providing CF via text took only a few seconds and did not significantly affect the overall duration of the activity. In addition to the teacher, a native English-speaking teaching assistant also provided feedback. To ensure consistency with the teacher, the teaching assistant was instructed on how to provide CF beforehand.

Implementation

The process began with the selection of appropriate materials for the task. In this teaching practice, the learning objective focuses on the past tense. To facilitate practice in terms of both tense and aspect, a sequence of box cartoons was chosen to narrate the story, which encouraged narrative development. Before the actual practice session, it was recommended that the level of difficulty of the learners be assessed. The speaking section of the Eiken test, a widely used practical English language test in Japan, provided valuable resources for creating this material. The sample topic card from the second stage of Grade 2 was used for the current practice (Eiken Foundation of Japan, 2024).

It was necessary to arrange the space and set up an activity space. This teaching practice was conducted in one-on-one sessions rather than in groups or classes. The teacher and learner could be in the same room but seated in such a way that they do not face each other. This may be less intimidating for the learner. Both participants logged into Zoom on their computers and set up a meeting room. The CF provided through chat was reviewed later.

The next step was to invite the learner to the room and provide instructions to the learner. Table 1 describes the procedures. Before speaking, the learners were allowed time to understand the picture and organize their thoughts before speaking. Then, an introductory sentence was provided to help them start speaking. As they described the picture, CF is given as needed. The students were instructed to pay attention to the feedback. Sufficient time was allowed for reading the feedback—usually 1.5 to 2 times longer than an oral session. After completing the speaking task with feedback, a short break (30 seconds) was taken. During this time, the learner could review the feedback. In the second speaking practice, no CF was provided, allowing the learner to notice and self-correct errors.

Table 1

Procedures

Steps	Chat CF group	Oral CF group	No CF group	Time on task(s)
1	Instructions			120
2	Read the cartoon strip silently			90
3	Narrate the story while receiving chat CF	Narrate the story while receiving oral CF	Narrate the story without any CF	90
4	Break			30
5	Narrate the same story without any CF			90

Materials and Resources Needed

- Images/pictures to assist in speaking content: Find resources that help students generate content ideas. The current study used the speaking section of the Eiken test.
- Computer with a texting application installed: Any type of synchronous texting application can be used, ensuring minimal lag time for receiving messages. The current study used the chat feature of the Zoom application.

Outcomes and Observations

To measure the effectiveness of the teaching practice, traditional oral CF was implemented, as well as a method without providing any CF. To compare the results for each group, 11 out of the 31 participants who received CF via texting were randomly selected, and their first speaking recordings and second speaking recordings were analyzed. Additionally, to determine the effectiveness of this teaching practice, new groups with oral CF (Oral CF group) and without CF (No CF group) were formed. Different learners at the CEFR A2 to B2 levels were recruited for the comparison groups. The verb tense errors for the 11 randomly selected participants and each of the other groups were counted. The results indicated that the group that participated in the teaching practice via texting made fewer tense errors than the other two groups. Moreover, despite performing the same task, the total word count differed between groups. Word count reflects how feedback influenced engagement with the task, with increased word count indicating more participation or elaboration, and decreased word count suggesting hesitation or avoidance. The resulting word counts increased during the second task for the text group and the no-CF group but slightly decreased for the oral CF group, suggesting differences in task engagement or feedback processing.

Student Feedback

A post-survey was conducted with learners who provided first- and second-speaking data, revealing interesting findings in the groups that received CF via text and orally. When asked whether they believed CF was more effective through texting or orally, 7 out of 18 learners in the texting group and 11 in the oral group indicated that they thought texting feedback would be more effective. Interestingly, fewer learners in the text group believed that CF was ineffective, while more learners in the oral group agreed with this view. Although it is difficult to make direct comparisons because the learners did not experience the other mode, many, despite showing reductions in their errors, did not find texting to be an effective method for delivering CF.

On one hand, in terms of feedback on the texting method, learners offered positive comments such as, "It was helpful to receive feedback in proper English for what I wanted to say," "I noticed grammatical mistakes," and "I realized I needed to use the past tense." However, there were also some critical remarks such as "Receiving written feedback suddenly during speech made it hard to concentrate," "It was difficult to read while speaking," and "It was hard to notice the feedback." Additionally, some learners mentioned emotional aspects, stating: "I didn't feel nervous, but the time seemed to pass slowly" and "I was able to calmly understand the feedback."

On the other hand, regarding oral CF, some learners found oral feedback to be effective, with comments such as: "I appreciated being able to notice mistakes immediately" and "I was able to remember the mistakes that I made, so I could correct them properly the second time." However, other learners pointed out issues they had not noticed despite regularly receiving oral CF in class. For example, "I heard the feedback, but I felt a bit anxious while speaking" and "There were too many corrections, so I could only remember a few." Among the learners who preferred oral feedback, some mentioned: "If the feedback is repeated, it seems easier to remember orally" and "I can just speak as I hear it." Although some learners had never received written CF before, they commented on its potential advantages: "Those who aren't very good at English might not catch the feedback if it's only spoken" and "I could only remember the important words and sometimes forgot the grammar." The issue of speed also emerged, with comments such as: "The rapid pace made it hard to prepare myself mentally."

Teacher's Observations and Reflections

From the teacher's perspective, students seemed more relaxed when receiving CF through texts. The teacher and students maintained a comfortable distance while speaking, which may have contributed to a noticeable increase in errors. By contrast, during the oral feedback, although students were able to identify areas that required correction, they often continued to speak without fully understanding the feedback, resulting in inaccuracies. Therefore, delivering CF orally and directly to students might add pressure to the challenge of speaking in English.

In classroom settings, CF is often provided in front of other students, which can increase pressure. However, I suspect that individual feedback, as in this teaching practice, may reduce student stress.

Discussion

Three advantages are highlighted when using texting for corrective feedback. The first advantage is that texting allows learners to focus on specific parts of their speech by emphasizing them through written text. Even if learners do not notice the feedback during their speech, they can review it immediately after pausing or completing it. Additionally, because feedback is provided through text rather than orally, it offers a sense of security for learners who may feel nervous, allowing them to continue speaking with confidence.

In this teaching practice, CF was applied only to tense errors. As noted by Shirahata (2015), many errors were observed in all three groups during the first speech task. However, when CF was presented through texting, the number of tense errors decreased. This suggests that, if learners become aware of how to correct tense errors, they are more likely to make the necessary corrections. As Shintani and Aubrey (2016) pointed out, the timing of the CF is also crucial. Presenting the feedback in text form at the moment speech is made, and the learner's linguistic awareness is focused has proven to be more effective, as demonstrated by this teaching practice. Moreover, presenting feedback in written form, rather than orally, contributed to better comprehension. However, providing oral feedback might not always be effective for all proficiencies, as this teaching practice only investigates learners at the basic level.

The second advantage is that CF provided by texting creates a record for the learner. With oral CF, if the learner does not understand the feedback or if there is a lot of it, they may become confused. Being able to review the feedback after pausing or completing a speech is particularly helpful for learners who struggle with auditory feedback. If oral CF is presented but the participants cannot understand whether the mistake was in grammar, pronunciation, or something else, the effectiveness of the feedback may be diminished. This approach may thus be particularly effective for learners with difficulties in listening comprehension.

The third advantage is the emotional impact of using texting for CF. When feedback is given orally, it can cause learners to be hesitant or anxious about speaking. As texting allows feedback to be communicated from a distance, learners are less likely to feel nervous during their speech. This was also reflected in learners' comments.

Comparison with Existing Teaching Methods or Practices

Drawing on previous research (Smith, 2004; Kawaguchi, 2016), this teaching practice focused on providing CF for grammatical items, particularly tense use, and found that texting was especially effective in improving accuracy. Unlike Kobayashi's (2018) approach, which aims to provide CF after a speech, this practice allows learners to receive immediate feedback through texting, which may have influenced the results. However, because this study did not include unfocused CF, it remains unclear whether texting is more effective than unfocused CF. Given the challenges associated with mastering tense use, it is possible that CF might be more effective for other grammatical aspects, or that certain elements may be more easily learned through oral feedback. Future research should explore this issue further.

Text-based Corrective Feedback and its Impact

While the overall number of tense errors decreased with the use of texting compared to the oral group and the group that did not receive feedback, it is still unclear how often tense errors occurred compared to other errors throughout speech. Further analyses are thus needed to assess the effectiveness of CF by considering factors such as word and sentence complexity and speech fluency.

Individual differences among learners should also be considered when providing CF through texting. Texting might be particularly effective for students who struggle to understand spoken language due to their lower proficiency levels. However, some may find it easier to understand feedback when presented orally. Conversely, for more advanced learners, written feedback may be unnecessary, and oral feedback may prove more beneficial.

Moreover, reading a text during speech can potentially lead to a high cognitive load. Depending on how CF is presented, it is likely that when learners focus on speaking, incorporating simple text into their speech can be challenging.

Familiarity with texting also plays a significant role. Although many students regularly use texting in their daily lives, its use in learning environments is limited. Because these learners may not have experienced CF through texting, they may have struggled to use it effectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, integrating texting as a method for providing CF in language learning is a promising alternative to traditional oral feedback methods. This practice offers distinct advantages, including the ability to reduce tense errors, maintain a feedback record that students can review at their own pace, and create a less intimidating environment for learners who may feel anxious during oral interactions. The results of this practice show that texting can be particularly effective for learners at the basic and intermediate proficiency levels (CEFR A2 to B2), who may struggle with both the immediacy of oral feedback and the cognitive load associated with processing spoken corrections.

This approach not only addresses the limitations of oral feedback, such as the potential for miscommunication or speech flow interruptions but also leverages the familiarity of many students with texting in their daily lives. Despite these advantages, it is important to acknowledge that texting-based CF may not be equally effective for all learners. For instance, more advanced students may not require written feedback and might benefit more from oral feedback, which allows for real-time corrections and adjustments during speech.

Educators considering the implementation of texting for CF should consider the diverse needs and learning styles of students. It is thus advisable to introduce this method in conjunction with traditional feedback strategies to assess its impact on different aspects of language acquisition gradually. This blended approach allows for a more personalized and adaptable learning experience that addresses the unique challenges faced by each learner.

To further enhance the effectiveness of texting-based CF, educators should consider conducting preliminary assessments to identify the grammatical structures or language features most responsive to this method. Additionally, training learners to efficiently manage and respond to feedback received via texting can help mitigate the potential cognitive load and ensure that feedback is effectively integrated into their language practice.

Future research should focus on expanding the scope of this teaching practice to include a broader range of linguistic features, such as complex sentence structures, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage. Investigating the long-term effects of texting-based feedback on language fluency and accuracy will provide valuable insights into its sustainability as a CF method. Moreover, comparative studies examining the efficacy of texting versus oral feedback across different learner proficiency levels and educational contexts are crucial for determining the most effective strategies for various learning environments.

In conclusion, while texting-based CF shows significant potential as a language development tool, it is essential to continue exploring its applications and refine its implementation to maximize the benefits for learners. In doing so, educators can create a more inclusive and supportive language-learning experience that accommodates the evolving needs of students in the digital age.

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How to cite the article:

Barr, M., Dennisson, J., & Newbury, D. (2024). Instructor and student perspectives of ChatGPT-assisted writing tasks. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 73–82. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-10>

Research Article

Instructor and Student Perspectives of ChatGPT-Assisted Writing Tasks

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Abstract

This study analyzed the feasibility of ChatGPT-assisted writing tasks for lower level Japanese EFL learners in university English writing courses. Participants were given the same writing prompts and asked to revise their writing based on ChatGPT assistance. The study involved a before-and-after analysis of the writing samples and student feedback surveys. The findings showed a positive perception towards ChatGPT as a writing assistant but not as an independent writing instructor. With only three weeks of usage, students gained more confidence and better perception of ChatGPT as a writing assistant. Students with prior experience with ChatGPT were more likely to have a higher confidence and perception. However, naïve ChatGPT users showed a higher gain in perception after experiencing ChatGPT in a class setting. Considering these findings, experience with ChatGPT and other chatbots by both instructors and students is key to achieving the highest potential for them to become effective learning assistants.

本研究は、大学の英語ライティングコースを受講する初級レベルの日本人EFL学習者を対象に、ChatGPT支援によるライティングタスクの実現可能性を検討した。被験者は同じライティングプロンプトを与えられ、ChatGPTのアドバイスにより文章を修正するよう求められた。この研究では、文章のビフォー・アフター分析と学生からのフィードバック調査を行った。その結果、ChatGPT+講師の指導に対しては好意的だったが、ChatGPT単独使用には好意的ではなかった。わずか3週間の使用の後、ChatGPT+講師の指導に対する信頼とより良好な認識を持つようになった。ChatGPTの使用経験がある学生は、より高い信頼と良好な認識を持つ傾向があった。一方、ChatGPTの利用経験が浅い学生ほど、授業でChatGPTを使用した後に、より高い認識を得た。これらの結果から、ChatGPTや他のチャットボットを効果的な学習アシスタントとして使用することの可能性を最大化するためには、講師と学生の双方による使用経験が重要と考えられた。

Large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT are potentially transformative tools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. However, to unlock their capabilities, best practices must be created and documented, along with development of usage policy at different institutional and governmental levels (Vajjala, 2024). The use of LLMs in EFL learning is increasing, though the rate of uptake may vary depending on the teaching objective. This was anticipated in a study that found at the time just following ChatGPT's initial release in November of 2022, EFL educators saw great potential of LLMs for creation of teaching materials, such as worksheets and other study aids, but less so for assessment and feedback, primarily due to a lack of usage training and ethical ambiguity surrounding its use (Alm and Ohashi, 2024). In other words, EFL educators may have confidence in using LLMs to support auxiliary tasks but are less inclined to rely on them in managing those critical roles that assessment and learner-directed feedback play in the general context of language teaching. Giving ChatGPT even limited responsibility for these teacher-centered tasks will require further development of processes that effectively integrate the tool into EFL teaching.

LLMs are trained on text-based content, making them a potential tool for supporting EFL writing instruction. As Barrot (2023) points out, ChatGPT lacks the emotional depth and perspective that comes with experience of writing—a distinctly human process. As such, he recommends for ChatGPT to be used primarily in the revision stages when teaching writing in EFL contexts (2023). In a study exploring learners' perspectives on ChatGPT usage in an EFL writing class, Yan (2023) found that while learners appreciated the potential idea generation and editing capabilities of ChatGPT as part of the writing process, they were apprehensive in using it for such purposes. Furthermore, the participants in Yan's study voiced concerns about how its inclusion in the learning process may impact equity between those learners using ChatGPT and those who were not. An underlying premise in these studies elucidates the shared principle that using AI should be done in a way that does not remove the student's role as creator in the writing process and developing usage policies which safeguard this principle may be a generally accepted way forward.

Given the limited research in using ChatGPT for providing feedback in EFL writing instruction, teachers' reservations are understandable. However, previous research on automated feedback for student writing has shown

promising results. In a pre-ChatGPT study, Zhang and Hyland (2018) analyzed automated writing evaluation (AWE) feedback and measured the level of learner engagement with both AWE feedback and conventional instructor feedback. The highly engaged learner reported unique benefits to each kind of feedback. One particular benefit of AWE feedback was the opportunity to do multiple revisions on their work in response to the AWE feedback potentially allowing for an increase in learner autonomy due to the relative freedom in the timing of revisions. On the other hand, the moderately engaged learner found the provision of feedback from both the instructor and the automated system overwhelming, resulting in minimal feedback-driven revisions. To address the less engaged learner, it may be beneficial to implement a methodology in which computer-generated feedback is followed up with in-class instructor support, including instructions on how to act on the feedback within the writing process.

The current study analyzed the technical feasibility (implementation) and pedagogical feasibility (student engagement and learning) of this teaching methodology through implementation of ChatGPT as a writing assistant within a class setting; how to use ChatGPT as a teaching assistant and why it needs to be done. The ChatGPT-supported EFL writing process was analyzed based on results from surveys designed to capture learners' perspectives on the use of in-class conventional and AI-generated feedback of their writing. Furthermore, we measured through prompt engineering how effective ChatGPT was at giving individualized feedback at the revision stages for lower-level EFL students. Targeted outcomes of this study were pedagogically scaffolded writing practices and methods for integrating ChatGPT in the writing-instruction process.

Methodology

Participants and Educational Environment

Two cohorts of students from different Japanese universities were recruited for this pilot study between April and May 2024 (Table 1). The first cohort comprised 26 first-year undergraduate medical students at a Japanese university enrolled in the first-semester compulsory English writing course. The second cohort comprised 14 third-year undergraduate English majors at a Japanese university enrolled in the fifth-semester compulsory English writing course. The English ability of the medical cohort was more dispersed than that of the English cohort due to differences in student placement procedures. Gender ratios were relatively equal.

Table 1

Participant Information

	Medical Cohort	English Cohort
No.	26	14
Department	Medicine	English
Academic year	1st	3rd
Writing course	Compulsory (1st semester in program)	Compulsory (5th semester in program)
English proficiency	CEFR B1 to B2 (440~600 TOEFL itp)	CEFR B1 (550~650 TOEIC)
Streaming	No (mixed levels)	Yes (by standardized tests)
Male/Female ratio	2 / 3	2 / 3

Teaching Objectives, Materials and Intervention

This study was a 3-week intervention at the beginning of the term to introduce the use of ChatGPT as a writing assistant. The study was limited to three weeks due to the fact that ChatGPT was incorporated after the curricula at the universities were set. We evaluated how students handled the tasks through collection of student works and a feedback survey and how instructors were able to achieve the set curricular goals. This study's methodology was based on the hypothesis that ChatGPT should be able to effectively assist lower-level writing students with improving their sentence-level fluency and paragraph-level organization. Specifically, this includes the use of a variety of complex sentence structures, transition signals, clear thesis sentences, and conclusions. To this end, the initial phase of the study utilized the same three-week ChatGPT intervention in the two English writing courses (see Table 1). The intervention was uniformly implemented for both courses. Materials included writing tasks, slides containing writing technique instruction and pre-designed ChatGPT prompts available in a shared Google Drive folder accessible by all students. In addition, instructors created videos explaining the technical aspects of the project, including how to use ChatGPT. These videos were placed in the shared Google Drive to support the students when they were working both in class and elsewhere. The writing technique instruction slides contained customized ChatGPT prompts created by the instructors to use for self-analysis activity assigned as homework (see Appendix B). These prompts comprised instructions to 1) evaluate the student's writing activity and 2) provide technique-specific feedback.

ChatGPT's role in this process was not to write for the students, but rather provide suggestions on how to make sentence-level improvements. ChatGPT was chosen as it was familiar to all instructors. The version of ChatGPT

used by students was either ChatGPT 3.5 or 4.0. Before intervention, instructors ensured that all students had identical access to the same technology. Using their institutional email account, students accessed Google Drive and Google Docs; a document file shared with the instructor was set up for each student, enabling direct access to instructor feedback both during and outside class times. Once the students were set up, the pre-ChatGPT intervention survey was implemented, followed by three weeks of instruction and writing tasks with a ChatGPT homework task component. After the three weeks of activities, a post-ChatGPT intervention survey was implemented. The intervention process is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Three-Week ChatGPT Intervention

Process	Activities
Pre survey	
Week 1	<p>Google Drive & ChatGPT usage instructions</p> <p>Timed free writing activity #1 (draft 1)</p> <p>Writing Technique 1 instruction (in class)</p> <p>Self-analysis of writing activity #1 (create draft 2)</p> <p>Revision of draft 2 based on ChatGPT assistance with Technique 1 (Prompt 1) (homework)</p>
Week 2	<p>Peer-analysis of revisions of writing activity #1</p> <p>Timed free writing activity #2 (draft 1)</p> <p>Self-analysis of writing activity #2 (create draft 2)</p> <p>Revision of draft 2 based on ChatGPT assistance with Technique 2 (Prompt 2) (homework)</p>
Week 3	<p>Writing Technique 2 instruction (in class)</p> <p>Peer-analysis of revisions of writing activity #2</p>
Post survey	

In Week 1, students were introduced to the first ten-minute in-class free writing activity (with a target output of at least 100 words). This was to be completed without the support of teaching materials, dictionaries, or other assistance. First, students wrote draft 1 of Writing Task #1 (Topic: My favorite restaurant) in their Google Doc. A simple self-analysis of this draft was done immediately in class using two criteria: word count and number of sentences. Students were then instructed on ways to improve only their topic sentence based on Writing Technique 1 Instruction. The students revised their topic sentences of draft 2 in the Google Doc based on these instructions. As homework, they were given the Technique 1 prompt (improving topic sentences) which presented suggestions for different styles of topic sentences (observation, generalization, or setting the scene) and evaluated their topic sentences on these styles.

In Week 2, students shared their draft 2 with peers for analysis. Then they were assigned the second ten-minute in-class free writing activity (Writing Task #2; Topic: My favorite place to shop) in the same Google Doc. The writing assignment was self-analyzed in class using the same criteria as Week 1. Then, for homework students used the Technique 2 prompt (giving details and examples) which gave suggestions on how to include more details for supporting ideas. Students were instructed to make changes to draft 1 written in class based on suggestions by ChatGPT and create draft 2.

In Week 3, students self- and peer-analyzed draft 2 of Writing Task #2. In class, the instructor then gave writing technique 2 instructions about how to improve supporting ideas through examples and details. Following the self- and peer-analysis in class, students were asked to complete the post-ChatGPT intervention survey.

Pre- and Post-ChatGPT Intervention Surveys

Prior to the three-week ChatGPT intervention, students' levels of general experience with AI technology were evaluated via a survey delivered through Google Forms. In addition, before and after the three-week ChatGPT intervention, students were asked about their experiences using ChatGPT and perceptions about its possible efficacy as a learning assistant for general activities, general coursework, and English coursework; their comfort level with using ChatGPT; and their confidence in writing in English if provided various levels of support (no support, support from the instructor, support from ChatGPT, or support from the instructor and ChatGPT). Additionally, the post-intervention survey inquired about the usefulness of ChatGPT feedback and their future preferences of ChatGPT as a teaching assistant. All questions on the pre- and post-ChatGPT intervention surveys are shown in Appendix A.

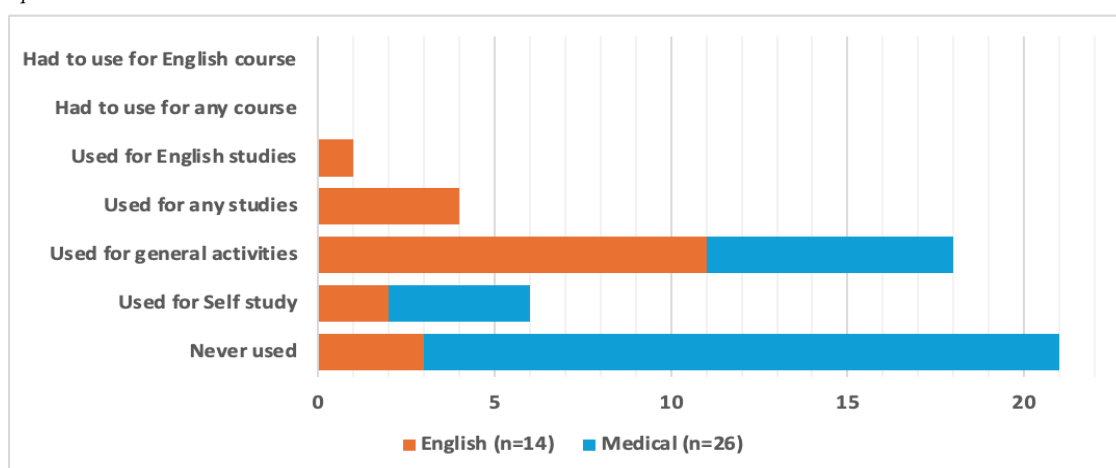
Results

Pre-Intervention ChatGPT Experience

Initial self-reporting of the medical ($n = 26$) and English ($n = 14$) majors prior to use of ChatGPT in the writing courses (pre-ChatGPT intervention) indicated that 18 students (45%; 11 English majors [78.6%] and 7 Medical majors [26.9%]) had used ChatGPT for “general activities”, four English majors (10% of total; 26.9% of English majors) had previously used it for English coursework, and only one English major (2.5% of total; 7% of English majors) was required to use it for a class activity; no medical majors had used it for any coursework previously (Figure 1; Question No. 8 in Appendix A). Prior uses of ChatGPT included the following tasks: translation, brainstorming for homework/ in class activities, assistance with report writing and presentation content, practicing for a medical school entrance interview, and checking word count for assignments. About half of the participants (21/40; 52.5%) had never used ChatGPT before. This indicates that, as of the beginning of the 2024 academic year, Japanese college students were still relatively unfamiliar with the potential use of ChatGPT for assisting in their academic coursework, despite its growing use. This result also suggests that neither secondary nor tertiary educators have yet to implement ChatGPT (or other AI tools) to a significant extent in their classrooms.

Figure 1

ChatGPT Experience Pre-ChatGPT Intervention



Note. The figure above shows student responses to Question No. 8 in Appendix A (experience of using ChatGPT or other AI tool before the three-week ChatGPT intervention in the writing course). Orange is the responses of English majors and blue is the responses of medical majors. Students were allowed to choose more than one option.

Students' Ability to Use ChatGPT as a Writing Assistant

All students except one (97.5%) reported that they were able to complete the two ChatGPT homework tasks for the two writing techniques: how to write a topic sentence (technique 1) and how to write supporting idea statements with appropriate details (technique 2). All students except one (97.5%) found ChatGPT to provide “useful support”, while 70% found it very useful (28 students reported 4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert scale). Only two students reported having difficulty understanding the homework instructions (5%).

English Writing Support Needs

All students indicated a need for English writing support in all the following areas with little change observed before and after ChatGPT intervention: vocabulary use (avg. 3.58 vs. 3.32 on a 5-point scale where 3 is equal to “a little support”), grammatical structure (3.65 vs. 3.59) and paragraph writing (3.65 vs. 3.47) (Question No. 4 in Appendix A).

After the intervention, 26 students (65%) wanted more ChatGPT support for writing tasks and 25 (62.5%) wanted more ChatGPT support for general coursework (‘4’ or ‘5’ response on a 5-point Likert scale). There were only two medical majors who did not indicate a desire for more ChatGPT support tasks for either writing or in general (‘2’ response).

Perception of ChatGPT Before and After ChatGPT Intervention

As shown in Table 3, there was a clear trend toward improvement in participants' perceptions of ChatGPT as a learning assistant, particularly in terms of its ability to support English coursework. The English majors had a higher positive initial perception for all levels of ChatGPT support and were more comfortable with using ChatGPT compared to the medical majors, which may be due to their higher level of prior experience of ChatGPT for coursework.

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Moreover, students believed ChatGPT was less challenging to use after ChatGPT intervention (change of 0.66 [from 2.93 to 2.27] on 5-point Likert scale), especially for the less experienced medical majors (change of 0.85 [from 3.35 to 2.50]) (Question No. 5). Furthermore, more students expressed a slightly greater desire (change of 0.41 on 5-point Likert scale) for a ChatGPT writing assistant after the ChatGPT intervention (avg. 3.81) compared to before the intervention (avg 3.40) (Question No. 6). Fewer students believe ChatGPT should not be required for coursework after the ChatGPT intervention compared to before the intervention (change of 0.45 [from 2.63 to 2.18]); the medical cohort showed the biggest change but had a stronger initial belief that ChatGPT should not be required before the course (change of 0.56 [from 2.92 to 2.36]) (Question No. 7). These results suggest that with ChatGPT training, students' positive perception of ChatGPT as a writing assistant increased.

Table 3

ChatGPT Support and Comfort Levels Pre- and Post-ChatGPT Intervention

Activity Type	Medical			English			Total		
	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change
ChatGPT support level (Question No. 1)									
For general activities	2.71	3.08	0.37	3.29	3.46	0.17	2.92	3.21	0.29
For self-study	2.80	3.32	0.52	3.57	3.69	0.12	3.08	3.45	0.37
For general coursework	2.84	3.40	0.56	3.29	4.00	0.71	3.00	3.61	0.61
For English coursework	3.00	3.60	0.60	3.21	4.00	0.79	3.05	3.60	0.55
ChatGPT comfort level (Question No. 2)									
For general activities	2.46	3.04	0.58	3.57	3.85	0.28	2.85	3.32	0.47
For self-study	2.35	2.96	0.61	3.64	3.85	0.21	2.80	3.26	0.46
For general coursework	2.35	2.84	0.49	3.36	3.92	0.56	2.70	3.21	0.51
For English coursework	2.38	2.88	0.50	3.29	3.92	0.63	2.70	3.24	0.54

Note. Pre: Pre-ChatGPT intervention survey results; Post: Post-ChatGPT intervention survey results; Change: Difference between the Post and Pre values.

English Writing Confidence

In general, students were not confident in writing on a topic in English without teacher or ChatGPT support (1.65 and 2.23 on a 5-point confidence scale for medical and English majors, respectively; Table 4). However, the pre- and post-intervention confidence with the combined support of both teacher and ChatGPT showed a consistently high level, indicating that students with or without ChatGPT experience remain confident in their writing when they are provided with multiple sources of support.

Table 4

English Writing Confidence Pre- and Post-ChatGPT Intervention

Support Type	Medical			English		
	Pre	Post T1	Post T2	Pre	Post T1	Post T2
by myself	1.65	2.00	1.92	2.23	2.00	1.92
with teacher	2.72	2.96	2.92	3.38	3.54	3.54
with ChatGPT	2.32	2.84	2.76	3.08	3.46	3.61
with teacher + ChatGPT	3.20	3.40	3.26	4.14	4.15	4.23

Note. Pre: Pre-ChatGPT intervention survey results; Post T1: Post-ChatGPT intervention survey results for Technique 1; Post T2: Post-ChatGPT intervention survey results for Technique 2.

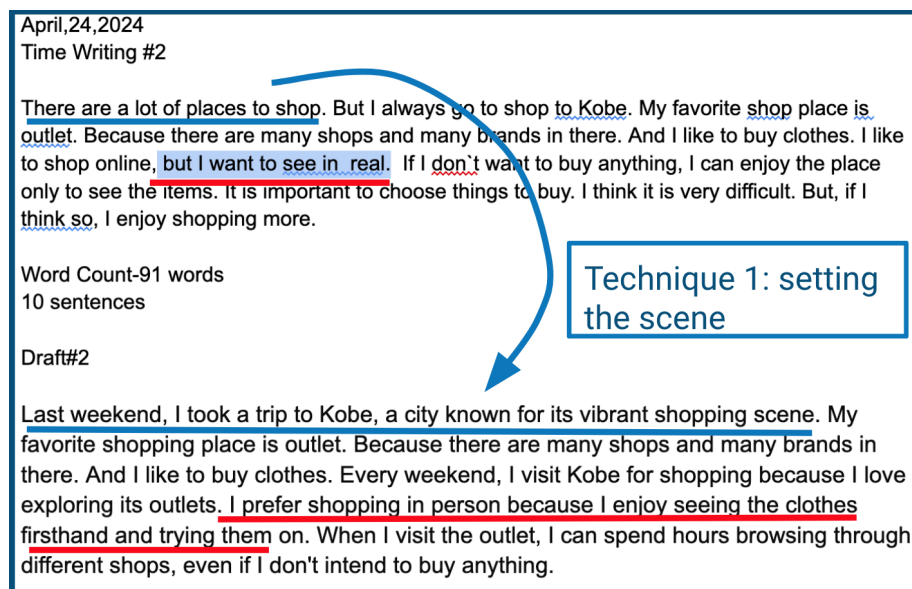
While the English majors showed more confidence than medical majors in writing by themselves and with teacher or ChatGPT support before the intervention, medical majors gained more confidence with teacher and/or ChatGPT support compared to the English majors after the intervention. This larger gain may be due to the “learning curve” effect as medical majors were experiencing their first university-level English writing course while English majors were in their fifth English writing course. There were minor differences in confidence level for the writing tasks of Techniques 1 and 2 in both cohorts.

Qualitative Observations

ChatGPT succeeded in supplying more appropriate sentence fluency options (e.g., clarity and length). It assisted students in elaborating on ideas and supplying reasons. Figure 2 shows an actual excerpt of writing activity #2 drafts 1 and 2 from one English major student. This example shows how students could effectively improve a short essay about their favorite place to shop. ChatGPT provided new phrasing (“I prefer shopping in person because I enjoy seeing clothes firsthand”) for the student’s sentence (“I want to see it in real”). Figure 2 also shows revisions from ChatGPT for Technique 1, where the student revised their topic sentence to “set the scene”. It is important to note that students were coached in class on how to cut/paste specific sentences in their original work into ChatGPT to achieve sentence-specific feedback.

Figure 2

Sample of Student’s Revisions After Usage of ChatGPT as a Writing Assistant



Note. The figure above shows an actual excerpt from one English major students’ Google Doc for draft 1 and draft 2 for Writing Activity #2. The red underlined text is one major revision between the two drafts.

Discussion

This pilot study involved two cohorts of students with differing backgrounds, but all were undergraduate students taking part in an EFL academic writing course. The ChatGPT intervention was implemented at the beginning of the courses for both cohorts, so students did not have any prior history of instruction with the respective instructor.

With proper guidance through a combination of in-class instruction and instructor-created resources, students could use ChatGPT for support with revising in-class writing tasks. That is, with proper guidance they can acquire the technical know-how to 1) input teacher-crafted prompts and 2) edit their own work with ChatGPT output. At the time of concept of this pilot study, there was limited research published regarding the efficacy of ChatGPT as a writing assistant for lower-level EFL students despite the need by both instructor and student for more individualistic feedback methods. It has already been observed that students may respond better to customized feedback and support (Zhang & Hyland, 2018). Therefore, we began to develop an effective teaching methodology for EFL academic writing and protocols for “ethically” using ChatGPT for both teaching and learning. In this study, we could achieve some level of feasibility of ChatGPT in providing individualistic writing feedback to students through adequate instructor guidance on how to appropriately utilize the writing feedback from ChatGPT.

In the spirit of maintaining a student-centered learning process, ChatGPT was relegated to the revision processes in this three-week activity. Students have been shown to be cognizant of the fact that ChatGPT can be used in all phases of writing from ideation to proofreading, but due to scholastic fairness, clearly demarking where it is actually deployed in a particular learning context should be done early in the class or activity-planning phase (Yan, 2023). This said, even when ChatGPT is used in the revision stages, it is not an automatic fix-all. In our experience, students

need a fair amount of guidance in how to interact with and use its output effectively.

Usefulness of ChatGPT as a homework support system may be level dependent. Beginner-level students may lack the language skills required to use ChatGPT for effective improvement of their writing skills. This was confirmed when some students in this study were found blindly copying/pasting all suggestions from ChatGPT irrelevant whether it reflected the students' intent or their own experience. It is also noteworthy that higher-level students sometimes produced a high quality of writing and ChatGPT feedback was not able to provide a "better" suggestion. The instructors in these cases gave personal advice to these students to be critical of any suggestions provided by ChatGPT and emphasized the importance of not incorporating revisions that do not reflect their intent. If we can teach students to properly accept or deny feedback, we may be able to achieve another timesaving process (in this case for giving writing individual feedback) as previously reported (Koraishi, 2023).

The critical analysis of suggestions from ChatGPT is a difficult process for lower-level students as they usually accept feedback from the instructor without question, and therefore appear to similarly accept the advice from ChatGPT. It may be useful in future instructions to provide multiple versions of feedback, thereby encouraging students to select one version (or none) that best reflects them. This method is one aspect of the teaching and learning process which can be encouraged to achieve better writing practices with AI assistance.

As attention is turning from *if* AI will be used in EFL settings to *how* it will be used, empirical research is needed to support the development of best practices and investigate AI's efficacy in different teaching processes (Vajjala, 2024). This study shows the promise of ChatGPT as a writing assistant as most students did not find it to be a significant challenge to learn how to use for English writing assistance, albeit with continued support from the writing instructor. To achieve the most effective assistance from both instructor and ChatGPT, there is a necessary learning curve to be experienced by students through scaffolded tasks implemented by the instructor. We recommend that instructors first show how ChatGPT works and how it can be altered by defining its "persona" for lower-level EFL students in the *Customize ChatGPT* settings. One persona we introduced to students was:

- What would you like ChatGPT to know about you to provide better responses?
"I am using this as a classroom aid for organizing short paragraphs and essays. Teachers and students are working together for this project."
- How would you like ChatGPT to respond?
"Please use CEFR A1 level language in your responses."

As this was only a short introduction to how ChatGPT could be used for writing assistance, it is expected that students will gain even more confidence in independently using ChatGPT and other AI tools to improve their writing outside the classroom. Improvement and continued use of ChatGPT by instructor and student will only lead to improved output and useful feedback. Writing instructors also need to collaborate to overcome one hindrance of incorporating ChatGPT into teaching processes: lack of training (Alm & Ohashi, 2024).

There are different time points of using ChatGPT to help in the writing process. Here, we presented support for sentence-level revision on a draft but it also could be beneficial at the initial stage of brainstorming ideas to incorporate in your writing. ChatGPT supports ideation and brainstorming, which are tasks that consume time more suitable for instruction on how to use language (Xiao & Zhi, 2023).

This study was a 3-week intervention and therefore it does not look at the long-term outcomes of ChatGPT implementation. We found several challenges associated with implementing a ChatGPT-based task in the classroom, some of them unanticipated. Firstly, students had limited computer literacy even as university students. Many new undergraduates of the smartphone generation have had limited experience with the use of physical keyboards and PCs, as they have used handheld devices for much of their personal and academic lives. Additional issues include age verification or institutional firewalls, language of technical instructions for ChatGPT or Google, abilities to use multiple windows simultaneously, and lack of knowledge of simple keyboard shortcuts (e.g., copy/paste text). Alongside the technical support needed for use of ChatGPT for writing assistance, support for general computer literacy may also be required by the EFL instructors. Future studies on the use of ChatGPT in EFL-writing contexts could extend on research currently associated with teacher feedback, such as investigating the efficacy of direct and indirect feedback (Lim & Renandya, 2020).

Conclusion

As AI technology advances, EFL instructors are continually being challenged to find innovative and effective ways to support their students' needs. ChatGPT represents a new era of technical support for EFL academic writing purposes. The current research highlighted one way that lower-level users of English and their instructors benefited from its use. Their main instructional goal should be to provide students the most effective resources and skills to promote self-directed learning of English writing. Despite obvious limitations or issues, the current iteration of ChatGPT represents a significant change in the toolbox of both learners and instructors.

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Appendix A

Questions from the Pre- and Post-ChatGPT Intervention Surveys

Pre	Post	Item	Type of Response
1	1	How well do you think ChatGPT is for supporting the following? [For general activities / For self-study /For general coursework / For English coursework]	5=absolutely supportive, 4=very supportive, 3=supportive, 2=minimally supportive, 1=not at all supportive
2	2	How comfortable are you at using ChatGPT for the following? [For general activities / For self-study /For general coursework / For English coursework]	5=absolutely comfortable, 4=very comfortable, 3=comfortable, 2=minimally comfortable, 1=not at all comfortable
-	3A	I am confident in writing on a topic in English with the following guidance. [by myself / with teacher support / with ChatGPT support / with combination of teacher and ChatGPT support]	5=absolutely confident, 4=very confident, 3=confident, 2=minimally confident, 1=not at all confident
3B	-	I am confident in writing a TOPIC SENTENCE (Technique 1) in English with the following guidance. [by myself / with teacher support / with ChatGPT support / with combination of teacher and ChatGPT support]	5=absolutely confident, 4=very confident, 3=confident, 2=minimally confident, 1=not at all confident
3C	-	I am confident in writing a GENERAL STATEMENT followed by DETAIL STATEMENT (Technique 2) [by myself / with teacher support / with ChatGPT support / with combination of teacher and ChatGPT support]	5=absolutely confident, 4=very confident, 3=confident, 2=minimally confident, 1=not at all confident
4	4	What level of English writing support do you need for the following? [vocabulary use / grammatical structure / paragraph writing]	5=lots of support, 4=some support, 3=a little support, 2=minimal support, 1=no support at all
5	5	I feel ChatGPT is a challenge to use for English writing coursework.	5=strongly agree/1=strongly disagree
6	6	I feel ChatGPT should be used to support English writing tasks.	5=strongly agree/1=strongly disagree
7	7	I feel ChatGPT should NOT be required to use for coursework.	5=strongly agree/1=strongly disagree
-	8	What experience, if any, have you had using ChatGPT (or other AI tool)?	Multiple selection: [Never used / Self study / Used for general activities / Used for general activities and self study / Used for any studies / Used for English studies / Had to use for any / course / Had to use for English course]
-	9	Explain which tools you used and the task you used it for in detail here.	Open response
8	-	I want more ChatGPT writing support tasks.	5=strongly agree/1=strongly disagree
9	-	I want more ChatGPT support tasks in general.	5=strongly agree/1=strongly disagree
10	-	For the HOMEWORK task, I understood the instructions by ChatGPT.	5=strongly agree/1=strongly disagree
11	-	For the HOMEWORK task, ChatGPT provided useful support.	5=strongly agree/1=strongly disagree
12	-	I could complete the ChatGPT homework task.	5=strongly agree/1=strongly disagree

Appendix B

Sample ChatGPT Prompt

This prompt first checks the writing sample of a student based on Technique 1 (improving topic sentences) and then “teaches” Technique 2 (giving details and examples). The student must paste their writing sample into ChatGPT once prompted. Make revisions based on feedback and then paste the revised sample for further feedback. Thus, the feedback process occurs twice with one prompt. Instructions and feedback to the user can be adjusted to the English level of the user and can be provided in their native language.

<Includes PERSONA of ChatGPT, PURPOSE of ChatGPT, INSTRUCTIONS for user, DETAILS of purpose. MODE of feedback>

Here is one student example using the following prompt: <https://chatgpt.com/share/14070e30-407c-409f-a61a-4d523d2ff552>

<<<You will be my writing assistant for my [Q1] class. I want you to check the writing sample that I share with you. The topic of the writing task is: [Q2]. As my assistant, please say “I will assist you with your writing task. Please copy your writing task response here and I will give you feedback.ライティングをサポートします。「Q2」の回答をここにコピーしてください” I want you to check the first sentence (topic) sentence based on the following criteria: [Q3]. If I did not follow these criteria, provide a suggestion to improve my first sentence. After giving feedback about the first criteria, say “Let’s learn [Technique 2]. Say “OK” when you are ready to learn about this technique. When I say “OK”, please teach me about the following technique: [Q4] Please use language that is appropriate for CEFR level A1 in the improved example sentences. After sharing advice, ask me to revise my writing and share it again for further feedback. Please give instructions and feedback in Japanese and simple English. >>>

Q1: [course information] <English level, type of writing>. Example: [CEFR B1 level English language writing]

Q2: [TOPIC of writing task] <What was the topic of the task> Example: [my favorite shop]

Q3: [Writing Criteria for Evaluation] <Description of how ChatGPT should evaluate the writing sample> Example: Did your first sentence start with the word “I”? Try starting sentences in other ways, such as the examples below. Your first sentence is the introduction. Here are some types and examples of introduction sentences for short paragraphs: Observation: “There are a lot of inexpensive restaurants near the university.” Generalization: “Most university students go to convenient and easy restaurants near where they live.” Setting the scene: “A few days ago, after my last class, I went to one of my favorite restaurants near the university.”

Q4: [Technique 2 criteria] <Describe the next writing technique you want ChatGPT to introduce and thus give feedback on> Example [Did you include “When, Why, and How” information in your paragraph? Did you follow a “generalization sentence” with a “detail/example sentence”?]

How to cite the article:

Wong, A., Head, P., Nakagawa, H., Hakone, K., Matte, B., Swenson, T. & Sponseller, A. C. (2024). A longitudinal survey of LMS preference: Google Classroom vs. Moodle. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 83-90. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-11>

Research Article

A Longitudinal Survey of LMS Preference: Google Classroom vs. Moodle

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Abstract

This study investigates student preferences for Learning Management Systems (LMS) in a private women's university in Japan, comparing Google Classroom and Moodle through a longitudinal survey conducted in July 2022 and July 2023. The transition from Moodle to a dual-use scenario with Google Classroom for one year, primarily driven by the need to reduce external maintenance costs, prompted an evaluation of student attitudes towards each platform. Results reveal a notable preference for Google Classroom due to its user-friendly interface, integration with Google Suite, and effective notification system. Despite this shift, Moodle remained preferred by some students for its familiarity and robust features. These findings provide insights into how LMS preferences evolve with increased exposure and shifting educational contexts, offering valuable guidance for future technological integrations in higher education.

本研究は、日本の私立女子大学における学習管理システム(LMS)に対する学生の志向を調査したものである。2022年7月と2023年7月に実施した縦断的調査を通して、Google ClassroomとMoodleを比較した。外部メンテナンスコストを削減する必要性から、1年をかけてMoodleとGoogle Classroomの併用体制へと移行され、各プラットフォームに対する学生の意識を評価した結果、使いやすいインターフェイス、Google Suiteとの統合、効果的な通知システムにより、Google Classroomが好まれることが判明した。この変化にもかかわらず、Moodleはその親しみやすさと充実した特徴により、一部の学生から選択される傾向があった。これらの調査結果は、LMSの利用が増加し教育的背景が変化するにつれ、高等教育における将来の技術的統合に対する貴重な指針を提供するものである。

Technology integration into education has traditionally been a gradual process, particularly in Japan where many English education programs at universities have historically relied on paper-based materials and face-to-face interactions. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of technological tools in these programs was minimal, and classes were predominantly conducted without leveraging modern digital technologies. However, the pandemic necessitated a rapid shift towards digital solutions, highlighting the crucial role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) in contemporary education (Butler, 2022; Gabarre & Gabarre, 2010; Matte et al., 2024; Sabiri, 2020; Swenson et al., 2023).

Our institution, a private women's university in Japan, has a long history of embracing technological advancements. Computer laboratories, currently consisting of five PC rooms and one Mac room, were installed in 1991. The university pioneered an initiative where students were provided with iPods to access digital textbooks and other learning resources. In 2012, iPads became the primary learning device for students and the university has been an Apple Distinguished School since 2017. The use of the Moodle LMS was adopted in 2004 and Google Classroom was introduced in 2015. Prior to the pandemic, Moodle was the designated LMS, serving as the primary platform for course management and student engagement.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered the educational landscape, as remote learning became a necessity. During this period, the university encouraged all faculty members, including those unfamiliar with an LMS, to integrate Google Classroom into their teaching practices and transfer content from Moodle if they were using it during a transition year. Google Classroom was chosen to supplement and eventually replace Moodle because of its integration with other Google Workspace applications already in use. As a result, students found themselves using both Google Classroom and Moodle (version 3.5.1+) simultaneously. This dual-LMS environment provided a unique opportunity to directly compare two platforms under real-world conditions, uncommon in LMS studies, through a comprehensive evaluation of student preferences and experiences with each platform. This was evaluated through a longitudinal survey of student LMS preferences, conducted over two time points: July 2022 and July 2023. The primary goal was to assess how student attitudes towards each LMS evolved and to identify the reasons behind their preferences.

Both Google Classroom and Moodle offer distinct functionalities that impact the learning experience,

including communication, collaboration, assignment submission, and progress tracking. Understanding student preferences is critical, as it provides insights into how the choice of LMS influences student satisfaction and educational outcomes.

Literature Review

The integration of Learning Management Systems (LMS) into educational settings has been a topic of significant research, particularly in terms of their impact on student learning experiences and outcomes. This literature review explores the evolution of LMS platforms, their role in higher education, and the factors influencing student preferences, with a particular focus on Google Classroom and Moodle.

Evolution and Impact of LMS Platforms

The use of LMS in education has grown substantially over the past two decades, driven by advancements in technology and the increasing need for digital tools in learning environments. Early LMS platforms like Blackboard and Moodle laid the foundation for online learning management by offering basic functionalities such as course materials distribution, communication tools, and assignment submission (Gabarre & Gabarre, 2010). The first version of Moodle was released in 2002 and became popular due to its open-source nature and customization capabilities, allowing institutions to tailor the platform to their needs (Moodle, 2023).

The release of Google Classroom in 2014 marked a significant shift towards more integrated and user-friendly LMS solutions. Google Classroom, part of Google's suite of educational tools, was designed to streamline workflow and enhance collaboration by integrating seamlessly with Google Drive and other Google applications. This integration aimed to simplify managing assignments and communications, addressing some limitations associated with earlier LMS platforms like Moodle (Butler, 2022).

While LMS platforms offer numerous benefits, there are several drawbacks including the inherent risk of technological issues regarding software, connectivity, and privacy. Additionally, there are associated costs with the initial setup and ongoing maintenance of any LMS, which can require significant time and resource commitments, including training for faculty, staff, and students.

Student Attitudes Towards LMS

Research has shown that student attitudes towards LMS are influenced by various factors, including usability, accessibility, and functionality. For instance, students appreciate LMS platforms that facilitate easy communication, collaboration, and access to course materials (Swenson et al., 2023). The ease of use and intuitive design of Google Classroom have been highlighted as key factors in its rapid adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic. Google Classroom's integration with Google's ecosystem of tools allows for a more seamless experience in assignment submission and document management. Kassim et al. (2024) highlighted that Malaysian university students also have positive attitudes towards Google Classroom, valuing the ease of use and educational benefits, emphasizing its simplicity and intuitive interface as key benefits. Similarly, Moonma (2021) emphasized that second-year Thai EFL university students rated the ease of use highly, found it useful, and showed a strong intention to use it. (Similarly, these sentiments were echoed by Malaysian (Kassim et al., 2024) and second-year Thai EFL (Moonma, 2021) university students who reported positively regarding ease of use, simplicity, and its intuitive user interface.) In contrast, Moodle's more complex interface and features, while robust, have been critiqued for their steeper learning curve and less user-friendly design (Matte et al., 2024).

Comparison of Google Classroom and Moodle

Comparative studies of LMS platforms often highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each system. Research comparing Google Classroom and Moodle indicates that while Google Classroom is favored for its simplicity and ease of integration with other Google services, Moodle offers greater flexibility and customization options for institutions (Sabiri, 2020). Google Classroom's intuitive interface and efficient notification system have been identified as significant advantages, particularly in scenarios requiring rapid adaptation to remote learning (Swenson et al., 2023).

On the other hand, Moodle's robust set of features, including advanced tracking and reporting tools, make it a preferred choice for institutions with specific needs for detailed course management and assessment (Gabarre & Gabarre, 2010). The platform's ability to support various pedagogical approaches and integrate with different educational technologies provides depth that some educators and institutions find valuable (Butler, 2022).

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically accelerated the adoption and utilization of LMS platforms as institutions worldwide shifted to remote learning. The transition to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) highlighted the importance of LMS in maintaining educational continuity. Erlam (2021) emphasized that educators need to quickly adapt to new

tools and manage teaching processes effectively, emphasizing how the introduction of LMS supported the quality of education. Studies during this period found that platforms like Google Classroom saw increased usage due to their user-friendly design and integration with other digital tools (Matte et al., 2024). Conversely, Moodle's established presence and customization options continued to support institutions that had already invested in its infrastructure.

The pandemic underscored the need for flexible and effective LMS solutions, revealing both the strengths and limitations of different platforms. As institutions adapted to new modes of teaching, the choice of LMS became increasingly critical in ensuring effective communication, assignment management, and overall student engagement (Sabiri, 2020; Swenson et al., 2023).

Gaps

While there is considerable research on the general effectiveness of LMS platforms, studies specifically comparing Google Classroom and Moodle in the context of Japanese higher education remain limited, especially in contexts where multiple platforms are used simultaneously. Additionally, there is a need for more longitudinal studies to understand how student preferences evolve over time, especially in response to technological changes and institutional shifts.

This literature review highlights the evolution and impact of LMS platforms, with a specific focus on Google Classroom and Moodle. It emphasizes the factors influencing student preferences and the significant role of LMS in adapting to remote learning challenges. The findings from this study will inform the subsequent analysis of student preferences at the private women's university, contributing to a deeper understanding of how LMS choices affect educational experiences and outcomes.

Methodology

This study employed a longitudinal research design to investigate changes in student preferences for Learning Management Systems (LMS) over time and to explore the qualitative reasons behind these preferences. The research was conducted at a private women's university in Western Japan, focusing on the comparison between Google Classroom (Google Workspace for Education Fundamentals version) and Moodle (version 3.5.1+). Data were collected through two surveys administered at different time points to capture shifts in preferences and attitudes.

Participants

The study participants consisted of undergraduate students enrolled at the university. All the participants were first, second, third, or fourth year students enrolled in the university's Department of International & English Interdisciplinary Studies and demonstrated mixed levels of familiarity with technology in classes. Data were collected at two points: Time 1 (T1) in July 2022 ($n = 174$), and Time 2 (T2) in July 2023 ($n = 120$). The sample included students who had experience using both Google Classroom and Moodle, providing a comprehensive view of their preferences and experiences with each platform.

Survey Instrument

The primary data collection tool was a structured survey designed to assess student preferences for Google Classroom and Moodle. The survey included both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative questions were designed to gather data on overall preferences for each LMS. Responses were recorded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The qualitative questions asked students to provide open-ended responses explaining their preferences for one LMS over the other. These responses were intended to capture detailed insights into their experiences and the specific features they valued or found lacking in each platform.

Data Collection Procedure

Surveys were distributed electronically to students via the university's email system. The surveys were administered with an interval of one year to track changes in LMS preferences over time.

At T1, students were asked to rate their current experiences with Moodle and Google Classroom and provide reasons for their preferences. At T2, the survey was repeated with similar questions to assess any changes in preferences and to explore if the increased use of Google Classroom during the pandemic influenced their attitudes. As the survey was available to all students, some participants in the T2 survey may also have participated in the T1 survey, but this was not tracked. This did not significantly affect the data because the surveys represented a snapshot of the student population in each year. Therefore, the data collected were about overall trends rather than about changes in a specific group of students over time.

Data Analysis

Data from the quantitative survey responses were analyzed to determine overall satisfaction levels and

preferences for each LMS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data to identify changes in preferences between T1 and T2.

Open-ended responses to the qualitative questions were analyzed using an inductive coding approach (Saldana, 2021). Responses could be submitted in either English or Japanese according to the respondents' preferences. Japanese responses were translated into English using Google Translate and were checked by a native Japanese speaking researcher. Two researchers independently coded the English versions of responses to identify common themes and patterns related to LMS preference. Multiple codes could be applied to each response depending on how many themes were identified. The codes were then compared and reconciled by the two researchers to ensure consistency and accuracy in the analysis. This process involved identifying key reasons for preferences, such as usability, integration with other tools, and notification systems.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the survey instrument, the survey questions were reviewed and piloted with a small group of native English-speaking and native Japanese-speaking teachers at the university ($N = 7$) before the main data collection. Feedback from the pilot testing was used to refine the survey questions and improve clarity. Additionally, to enhance reliability in qualitative data analysis, multiple researchers were involved in coding and thematic analysis, and any discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussion. Spreadsheets were used for organizing coding and the creation of figures.

Results

The results of the survey include both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data relates to the percentage of respondents who prefer each LMS at each time point, separated by school year. The qualitative data consists of coded comments with illustrative quotations.

Quantitative Results

Table 1 shows the number of responses to the question "Given the choice, which LMS would you prefer?" for each time period, broken down by year in school. The results show a much greater preference for Google Classroom over Moodle at both time periods, with the number of people preferring Moodle much less at T2 than at T1 (Figure 1).

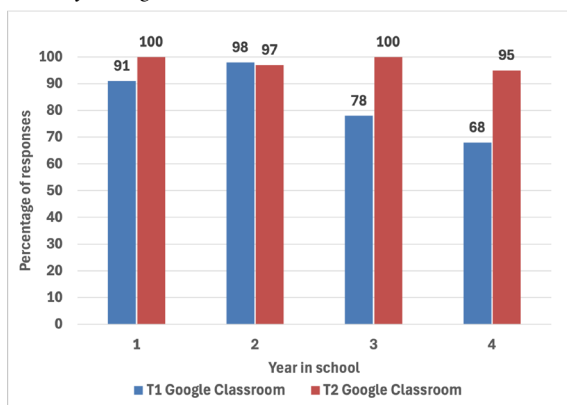
Table 1

Responses to the Question "Given the choice, which LMS would you prefer?" at Time 1 and Time 2

Year in school	Number of respondents at T1	Number of respondents who prefer Google Classroom at T1	Number of respondents who prefer Moodle at T1	Number of respondents at T2	Number of respondents who prefer Google Classroom at T2	Number of respondents who prefer Moodle at T2
1	57	52	5	31	31	0
2	43	42	1	33	32	1
3	36	28	8	19	19	0
4	38	26	12	37	35	2
Total	174	148	26	120	117	3

Figure 1

Percentage of Respondents by Year in School who Prefer Google Classroom at Time 1 and Time 2



Qualitative Results

Each response was coded inductively, and ten categories emerged, as summarized in Table 2. As a single response may include more than one of the categories, the total number of coded responses is higher than the number of respondents. The percentages were calculated by taking the total coded responses for each category and dividing them by the total number of coded responses for each LMS preference at each time period. One thing to note is that due to the small number of people who preferred Moodle to Google Classroom, there were not as many reasons given for Moodle preference (particularly at T2), which can result in a single response resulting in a large percentage of total coded responses.

Table 2

A Summary of Coded Written Responses to the Question "What is the reason for your LMS preference?" at Time 1 and Time 2

Code	Google % T1	Google % T2	Moodle % T1	Moodle % T2
Easy to find/see information	29.3	21.7	31.0	25.0
User friendly	19.5	18.3	20.7	25.0
Easy login	19.0	11.7	0.0	0.0
Easy to submit assignments	14.6	12.2	6.9	0.0
Email notifications of assignments and deadlines	10.7	15.0	0.0	0.0
Familiarity	0.5	8.3	13.8	50.0
Platform stability	1.0	2.8	10.3	0.0
Course/schedule information available	0.0	0.0	17.2	0.0
Communicate easily with the teacher	3.9	3.9	0.0	0.0
Mobile friendly	1.5	6.1	0.0	0.0

In order to better understand the information presented in Table 2, below are some illustrative quotes for each code, with the respondent code provided.

First, Table 2 shows that the most common reason given for LMS preference for both Google Classroom and Moodle involved the ease of finding information. For example, respondent 85 wrote "Google Classroom is simpler and easier to see. There is no extraneous information and I feel it works better with Google Docs and Drive." Meanwhile, respondent 154 wrote "I'm used to it from the beginning. Because dashboards and topics are easy to see." This shows that both LMS can be good ways to find information, but some individuals prefer one layout over the other.

The next most common theme was user-friendliness, with similar percentages of respondents responding that they preferred Moodle and Google. Respondent 175 preferred Moodle because of the layout "It was easy to use because the items for each subject were arranged in an easy-to-understand order." However, others found the Google experience smoother. "Submitting assignments and getting notified about pending works is easier whereas we have to keep a reminder or frequently check for deadlines on Moodle. Uploading an assignment through Classroom is much easier when compared to Moodle (respondent 123)."

One major factor regarding preferences for Google Classroom over Moodle was the ease of logging in. Many respondents mentioned the inconvenience of logging in to Moodle which at this institution required first logging in through the institution's website. Conversely, Google Classroom has a mobile app and can also be easily accessed when logged into Google Suite services like Gmail. Likewise, Google Classroom emailed notifications of assignments and deadlines were appreciated by many respondents, while none mentioned Moodle notifications being convenient. As respondent 78 wrote "Moodle requires a login, so I can work more quickly in Google Classroom. It's also hard to respond to Moodle notifications and chats."

Another important consideration was ease of submitting assignments. Here we see preferences for, and problems with, both Moodle and Google Classroom. For example, respondent 162 wrote about software compatibility issues "In Google Classroom, when working on a computer, you cannot submit a Word file. The work was troublesome because it was necessary to download it as a document." Meanwhile, another respondent (236) wrote "When it comes to submitting assignments, Moodle limits the number of files that can be submitted depending on the settings, and when you want to submit multiple assignments, you have to send an e-mail to the teachers, which takes a lot of time. On the other hand, Classroom allows multiple submissions at once, which I appreciate."

In people who prefer Moodle, terms mentioned more often included familiarity, platform stability, and schedule information were important. In terms of familiarity, it is interesting that this, rather than a specific feature or advantage, was mentioned for Moodle more than for Google. This inertia may explain why third- and fourth-year students who may not have been using Google Classroom prior to ERT during the pandemic would prefer Moodle more than first- or second-year students (see Figure 1). For platform stability, respondent 158 mentioned "There was a lag in Google Classroom, and even if the tests started at the same time, they could not start at the same time." Finally, at

this institution Moodle was the primary source for school administration information for students, so, unsurprisingly, Moodle users such as 152 mentioned this feature “There are various functions such as viewing schedules and class information.”

Lastly, Google Classroom was preferred over Moodle for its ease of communication with teachers and the availability of mobile-friendly features such as an app. An example of ease of communication is “I prefer Google Classroom because I get instant notifications from teachers and homework assignments. I also like Google Classroom because I can use the comments section to ask questions to the teachers and it is very easy to submit assignments.” (respondent 225). Regarding being mobile-friendly, the Classroom app feature may be particularly important at this institution where iPads running iOS rather than regular operating systems were used, with respondent 266 writing “I can see the comment from teachers and it is more convenient on iPad and smartphone.”

Discussion

This study sought to identify student preferences regarding the two LMS systems being concurrently used at a private women's university in Japan, Moodle and Google Classroom. This dual-LMS evaluation presented a unique opportunity for comparison and offered richer insights than studies focusing on a single platform.

Results of two surveys indicate that Google Classroom is the overwhelming favorite amongst students, and that this preference increased over time. The fact that students in third and fourth years, who may not have used Google Classroom prior to ERT during the pandemic, were the most likely to prefer Moodle suggests that a great deal of the preference for Moodle may be simply due to familiarity with the platform rather than specific features of the platform.

Shift Towards Google Classroom

The significant increase in preference for Google Classroom can be attributed to four main factors: user-friendliness, integration with Google Suite, its notification system, and mobile accessibility. Google Classroom's simplicity and intuitive design were frequently cited as reasons for its popularity. Students appreciated the streamlined interface and ease of navigation, which contrasts with Moodle's more complex setup. The platform's user-centric design likely facilitated a smoother transition for students and instructors adapting to remote learning environments.

Furthermore, the seamless integration with Google Drive and other Google applications was a major advantage. This integration allowed for easier document management and assignment submission, which was particularly beneficial during a period of rapid adjustment to online learning. The ability to work within a cohesive ecosystem likely enhanced students' overall experience.

In addition, the effective notification system in Google Classroom played a crucial role in managing assignments and deadlines. Timely reminders and notifications helped students stay organized and on top of their work, contributing to the platform's favorable reception.

Finally, the availability and functionality of Google Classroom's mobile app made it more accessible for students using smartphones and tablets. This flexibility in accessing course materials and managing assignments was a significant advantage in the remote learning context.

Continued Preference for Moodle

Despite the overall shift towards Google Classroom, some students continued to prefer Moodle mainly due to familiarity with the LMS. For many students, Moodle's long-term use contributed to a sense of comfort and ease. Those who had used Moodle since their early years at the university valued its familiarity, which likely outweighed the perceived benefits of switching to a new platform.

Moreover, Moodle's comprehensive dashboard and organizational tools were appreciated by students who preferred its structure for managing course materials and deadlines. The platform's depth of features may cater to students who value detailed course management capabilities.

Similarly, some students noted that Moodle's specific features, such as detailed tracking and reporting tools, offered advantages in managing assignments and assessing progress, despite the more user-friendly nature of Google Classroom.

Implications for LMS Selection

The findings suggest that while user-friendly platforms like Google Classroom are increasingly favored, institutions should consider the diverse needs and preferences of their faculty as well as their student populations. The shift towards Google Classroom underscores the importance of a streamlined and integrated LMS experience, particularly in a remote or hybrid learning environment. However, the continued preference for Moodle among some students highlights the need for a robust feature-set, flexibility and the importance of accommodating different user needs.

Institutional Considerations

For educational institutions, choosing an LMS involves balancing ease of use with the depth of functionality. Moodle is a standalone system that can operate independently. This presents its own challenges in that a member of staff or faculty is required to administer the server and troubleshoot any problems that arise. However, that arguably makes it less of a privacy concern for university administrators and students. Google Classroom is designed to integrate with the larger Google ecosystem, which includes services such as Gmail, Google Drive, Calendar, Maps, and YouTube, which may make stakeholders wary. If the institution already subscribes to Google Suite, this level of integration justifies the adoption of Google Classroom as their primary or sole LMS. Many universities use other services such as Microsoft 365, Blackboard, or use their own in-house-developed LMS. As a result, switching to Google Classroom may not be feasible or practical.

LMS selection also has implications regarding its potential impact on learning outcomes. Google Classroom, with its emphasis on real-time collaboration and direct feedback within Google Docs, fosters enhanced student engagement and deeper learning. Students benefit from immediate access to resources, streamlined workflows, and personalized feedback, which can lead to improved critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. While Moodle offers robust features for course creation and assessment, its interface can sometimes feel less intuitive, potentially hindering student engagement and leading to a less streamlined learning experience. Ultimately, the choice between Google Classroom and Moodle depends on the specific learning objectives and the desired learning environment.

Regardless of the LMS used, institutions should consider providing training and support to ensure that all students and instructors can effectively utilize the tools available. Additionally, institutions might explore hybrid approaches or phased transitions to address the needs of users accustomed to different LMS environments. Ultimately, the question of which LMS to use depends on whether the choice is available. Some institutions are not in the position to switch or choose where others are. The findings of this study show that students will adapt to whatever LMS they are told to use.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample was drawn from a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Future research should consider incorporating a broader range of institutions and using mixed-methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of LMS preferences. Also needed is a detailed comparative analysis of user experiences with these platforms, including longitudinal studies that track changes in individual preferences and usage patterns over extended periods. Additionally, different versions of Moodle used at other institutions may provide a different user experience.

Conclusion

This study examined student LMS preferences over a two-year period in which both Moodle and Google Classroom were being used at the institution. The results show a very strong preference for Google Classroom over Moodle, particularly for students with less prior exposure to Moodle. The results also showed that the preference for Google Classroom increased over time. An examination of student written comments indicates that the main reasons for preferring a particular LMS were related to the ease of finding information on the platforms as well as the general user-friendliness of the LMS. However, Google Classroom seemed to offer many advantages in terms of ease of logging in, submitting assignments, receiving notifications of due dates, communicating with the instructor, as well as the availability of a mobile app. Meanwhile, Moodle was more likely to be preferred due to simple familiarity with the LMS and the fact that the administration posted important information exclusively on Moodle.

With thoughtful implementation, LMS platforms can break down geographical barriers, making education more accessible to students in remote areas or those with limited mobility. In addition, the development of digital skills and knowledge via the use of such platforms can help prepare students with the tools needed to succeed in the 21st-century workforce. Ultimately, students will be able to adapt to whichever system is chosen, but based on these findings, institutions that are considering switching LMS or are in the position of selecting their primary LMS should consider the student user experience with the LMS in addition to other factors when making their decision.

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How to cite the article:

Fujii, N. & Hook, I. (2024). ChatGPT and academic writing: A study of Japanese EFL undergraduates. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 91–98. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-12>

Research Article

ChatGPT and Academic Writing: A Study of Japanese EFL Undergraduates

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Abstract

This study presents findings from a survey of 117 EFL undergraduate students across three universities in Kansai. The objective was to assess students' ease of use, familiarity, and willingness to adopt AI translation and writing generation tools for task completion and assignments. The survey findings indicated that while most respondents were already familiar with and have a favorable view of ChatGPT, its utilization in academic tasks is not as widespread as compared to translation tools. Gaining insights from the survey, we conducted a one-shot, three-week case study to train eight students on the effective use of ChatGPT to enhance their writing skills. The results provided evidence that ChatGPT was effective in improving students' essay quality. These findings contribute to the discussion regarding the evolving landscape of English learning, where technology can serve as a complementary tool to support learning outcomes, provided it is used judiciously and ethically.

本研究は、関西の3大学のEFL学部生117名を対象に行った調査結果を発表するものである。その目的は、AI翻訳ツールや文章生成ツールの使いやすさ、親近感、タスクの完成や課題への導入意欲を評価することであった。調査結果によると、ほとんどの回答者がChatGPTをすでに知っており、好意的な見方をしている一方で、学術的な課題での利用は翻訳ツールに比べてそれほど普及していないことがわかった。調査の結果から得られた知見をもとに、8人の学生にChatGPTの正しい使い方をトレーニングし、ライティング能力を効果的に向上させるためのケーススタディを3週間で実施した。その結果、ChatGPTが学生のエッセイの質を向上させるのに有効であるということが分かった。

With the rapid progress of OpenAI, applications that support learning are becoming increasingly available to university students. While the modern language learning paradigm in Japan underscores the role of an immersive approach and natural language acquisition, the pragmatic reality often leads to students prioritizing completing class tasks and assignments to earn credits, even if the accomplished goals do not truly reflect genuine learning outcomes (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008; Toyoshima & Yamanaka, 2023). Despite the widespread use of translation tools like Google Translate and DeepL for completing class tasks and assignments—as well as individual differences in usage among Japanese learners—there is little open discussion among teachers on how to effectively incorporate these tools into the classroom (Fukunaga & Yip, 2023). Students' reliance on these tools is often downplayed or even overlooked in academia.

Even more concerning for some is the advent of ChatGPT, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot as a distinct model from other AI tools. ChatGPT, capable of diverse applications and tasks, including generating contextually relevant responses in a conversational style, increases the likelihood of students becoming overly dependent on AI for their academic work. This raises concern that students may cease to develop higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and advanced writing skills.

Despite the considerable research on AI across diverse domains, understanding ChatGPT's influence on academic writing is still in its early stages (Sullivan et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). Research on the implementation of ChatGPT in EFL contexts has only recently begun. This highlights the need for a nuanced discussion on the evolving landscape of English learning, where technology can serve as a complementary aid to support learning outcomes, provided it is used judiciously and ethically (Hong, 2023; Bin-Hady et al., 2023; Sullivan et al. 2023). This study aims to understand EFL undergraduate students' familiarity with and attitudes toward AI-driven writing tools as a baseline for evaluating their current use in academic contexts. Building on this understanding, it examines how a structured three-week training program focusing on the effective use of ChatGPT impacts students' essay writing performance.

Literature Review

AI has emerged as a powerful and versatile self-learning tool, revolutionizing the way individuals acquire

knowledge and skills in an increasingly digital and interconnected world (Puaschunder, 2022; Hockly, 2023). AI can adapt to individual student needs, analyzing their performance and tailor exercises and content accordingly. This personalization can help students progress at their speed and address their specific weaknesses (Seo et al., 2021). Others also highlight AI's capacity to predict learning outcomes, offering educators ample opportunities to design materials based on learners' specific needs and current achievements (Pane et al. 2017; Kaminskiene & DeUrza, 2020).

AI in Language Learning

The accessibility of various AI-powered apps enhances language practice by providing EFL students with opportunities to practice English in a controlled and supportive environment. Students can engage in conversations and receive instant feedback on pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, and improve their language skills at their own pace. In their study, Kazu and Kuvvetli (2023) discovered that Google's AI-powered speech recognition platform facilitated more enduring word retention.

The flexibility of such tools accommodates different learning schedules and preferences, including busy work or school commitments. In fact, AI apps can serve as virtual conversation partners. This is particularly beneficial for EFL students who may not have regular access to native English speakers for practice. Zuo, D (2023) explored the impact of AI-powered speech evaluation programs on speaking skills. Their findings demonstrated that AI-driven feedback significantly enhanced the learners' speaking abilities, as reported by the participants themselves and indicated by a notable difference in pre- and post-test mean scores.

A Generative Pre-Trained Transformer represents the most recent advancement in the realm of OpenAI. The NLP model adopted by the chatbot has an astonishing capacity to stimulate real-life and human-like conversations. It has been recognized as an effective tool for reducing the cognitive load required to perform a task by supporting both learning and instruction (Zhai 2022). In a study on the effectiveness of incorporating ChatGPT as a supplementary language learning tool, Kim et al., (2023) corroborated its capability to fulfill given prompts. Zhou et al. (2023) also studied the advantages and disadvantages of ChatGPT by comparing its writing performance with that of intermediate English learners. They concluded that while ChatGPT falls behind in terms of creating semantic relationships between ideas in the text, it excels in certain linguistic elements and referential cohesion. They emphasize the importance of ongoing research to enhance the performance of AI-powered tools.

Challenges and Ethical Concerns

Recently, concerns have been raised about the unethical use of ChatGPT in discourse and essays. With the launch of the chatbot in 2023, prominent Japanese universities proactively prohibited its use in academic and scientific papers, emphasizing the importance of writing in the educational process (The Japan News, 2023). However, they did not specify the actions and responsibilities of teachers required to oversee and possibly prevent the use of ChatGPT by students.

For example, without robust plagiarism detection tools for identifying ChatGPT-generated content in academic papers at teachers' disposal, determining whether and to what extent students' writing assignments are generated by ChatGPT remains challenging. Even when experienced teachers observe writing of a quality that surpasses the students' actual writing skills, proving AI involvement is difficult. Thus, completely banning the use of ChatGPT in writing assignments may appear impractical. As Eaton (2023) argues, the arrival of ChatGPT necessitates a redefinition of plagiarism in the modern era, necessitating the formulation of new regulatory policies and educational guidance to ensure its appropriate use.

From a different perspective, even if all students have an equitable access to ChatGPT for their writing, those who are more adept with technology tend to outperform their peers who excel in writing but are less proficient with digital tools (Gašević et al., 2023). EFL students with little or no hands-on experience with the tool may struggle to operate and benefit from it in the absence of proper training. This struggle may stem from various factors, including limited language proficiency in understanding the chatbot's output and difficulties in crafting effective prompts.

Due to students' varying levels of language and technological proficiency, teachers need to offer targeted training and support. This ensures that all students can benefit equally from AI tools and develop a proper understanding of ChatGPT's platform and capabilities. Similarly, Godwin-Jones (2022) and Zhai (2022) emphasize the need to teach students how to use AI writing tools effectively and responsibly. They underscore the role of educators in guiding students to critically assess AI-generated suggestions, recognize its limitations, and integrate its outputs meaningfully into their work.

Given the above, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study: what are EFL undergraduate students' levels of awareness, the extent of their utilization, and their perspective on AI-driven writing tools in their academic work? How does a three-week training program on the capabilities of ChatGPT impact EFL undergraduate students' essay writing performance?

The current study endeavors to put forth an argument for the integration of ChatGPT in English writing curriculum, reinforced by insights drawn from student survey responses as well as a case-study conducted on guiding students on how to incorporate this writing-generation AI tools in their essay composition.

Methodology

This study comprises two phases. To gain a deeper understanding of students' awareness, the extent to which they leverage AI tools in their academic work, and their perspectives on the utilization of AI-driven writing generation tools and related applications, the authors conducted a survey. The survey was administered in Spring 2023, when ChatGPT was still new. Even if students were aware of it, its use was not yet widespread.

Incorporating insights gleaned from the survey, a three-week training program was carried out to familiarize students with the capabilities of ChatGPT as a supplementary tool for composing five-paragraph essays and to guide them on its ethical use. Writing samples were collected both before and after the training to assess the effectiveness of the instruction.

Participants

The study included 117 EFL students from three universities in the Kansai region of Japan. These students were enrolled in either their first, second, or third year of study and ranged in age from 18 to 22. To maintain the authenticity of responses and encourage honesty, the survey was carried out anonymously. Emphasizing anonymity aimed to alleviate any apprehensions the students may have had over openly expressing their thoughts about ChatGPT.

Instrument

To collect data from students, an electronic survey using Google Forms was administered, and the link was shared with 117 EFL students across three universities. The survey was anonymous and structured into five distinct sections, with particular attention given to formulating Likert-scale items to maximize student engagement and elicit a high degree of responsiveness.

In the first section, students were asked about their comfort level with everyday technology usage, their familiarity with widely used translation tools such as Google, Line, and DeepL, and their awareness of AI-driven writing generation tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT. The second and third sections inquired about the frequency with which students used these tools when completing assignments and graded homework, and when preparing for tests. The fourth section of the survey prompted students to share their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of AI integration in the classroom. Finally, in the fifth section, students were asked about their willingness to develop ethical AI skills aimed at enhancing their language proficiency.

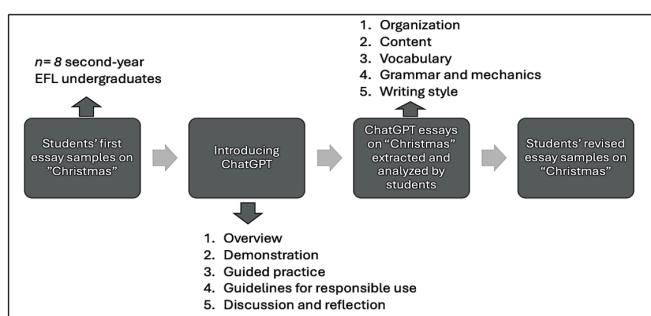
Three-Week Training Program on ChatGPT

In December 2023, a case study was conducted to implement a three-week training initiative. The primary goal was to familiarize students with the ChatGPT environment and its capabilities as a tool for generating essay samples. This approach aimed to provide students with exposure to multiple essays written on the same topic, a resource typically not included in a textbook. The selection of this time frame aligned with the end of the semester, coinciding with the conclusion of students' essay-writing instruction and the anticipated submission of their initial essays.

During the first week, eight students were instructed to create an essay outline on a given theme and, subsequently, use this outline to create an original version of an essay that they were expected to develop in subsequent weeks. The following week, students were introduced to ChatGPT, which included a basic overview of its functionalities. The explanation covered its dual role as both a writing assistant and a supplementary tool for enhancing learning and skill improvement. Using the essay outline from the previous week, students input their outlines into ChatGPT to generate sample essays. Following this, students scrutinized the essays generated by ChatGPT, carefully focusing on organization, content, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics, and writing style. During the final week, students were allocated time to revise their essay within the classroom setting, without the assistance from ChatGPT. A visual presentation of this is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

ChatGPT Training Program



Data Analysis

To analyze the survey data on students' awareness, the extent of their utilization of AI tools in academic assignments, and their perspectives on the matter, descriptive statistics were applied using Excel. Furthermore, to assess the impact of the multi-week training program, which introduced ChatGPT as a supplementary tool for generating guiding models to improve essay writing skills, comparisons were made between students' essays on the same topic submitted before and after the training. Both sets of essays were independently evaluated by three instructors using a standardized rubric for structure, coherence, grammar, and content development.

Prior to grading, a calibration session was conducted to align the instructors' understanding of the rubric and minimize variability in scoring. Any discrepancies in scores were resolved through discussion and consensus. To further enhance reliability, essay scores were averaged across the three instructors' assessments. Subsequently, a paired-sample t-test was conducted using the average scores to determine whether the training led to a statistically significant improvement in overall essay performance. Additionally, the three essay sets –those submitted before and after the training, as well as essays generated by ChatGPT–were thoroughly examined to identify significant similarities and differences among the samples.

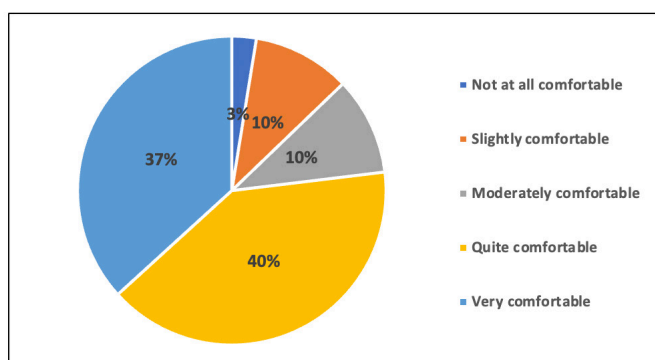
Results

Descriptive Analysis of Survey Responses

The results from the descriptive analysis of the survey responses indicated that 40% of the participants considered themselves very comfortable using technology in daily life (Figure 2). Only 3% expressed strong discomfort, while the remaining participants—57%—reported feeling “quite,” “moderately,” or “slightly” comfortable.

Figure 2

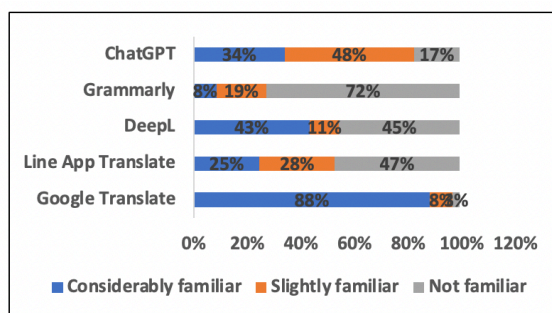
Comfort Level with Daily Technology Use



When respondents were asked about their familiarity with existing translation tools and AI-driven writing generation tools, Google Translate emerged as the most recognized, with 88% reporting they were either considerably or slightly familiar with it. ChatGPT followed closely, with 82% indicating familiarity at either level, while DeepL ranked third at 54%. Additionally, familiarity with LINE App Translate and Grammarly was reported at 53% and 27%, respectively (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Level of Familiarity with AI Tools



With regard to the frequency of using AI tools to complete homework assignments or to prepare for tests, more than 50% of participants reported that they always (approximately 13%) or often (almost 45%) use translation

tools such as Grammarly, Line App Translate, and DeepL (see Figures 4 & 5). However, this percentage dropped to 19% for writing generation tools such as Grammarly or ChatGPT.

Figure 4

Using AI for Homework Assignments

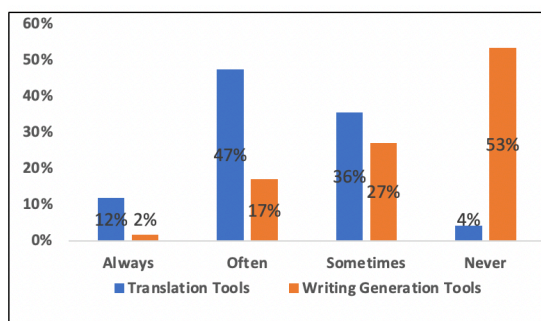


Figure 5

Using AI to Prepare for Tests

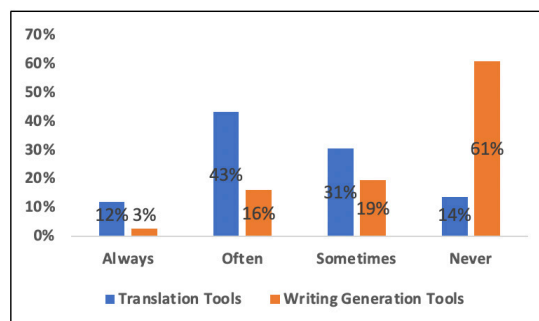
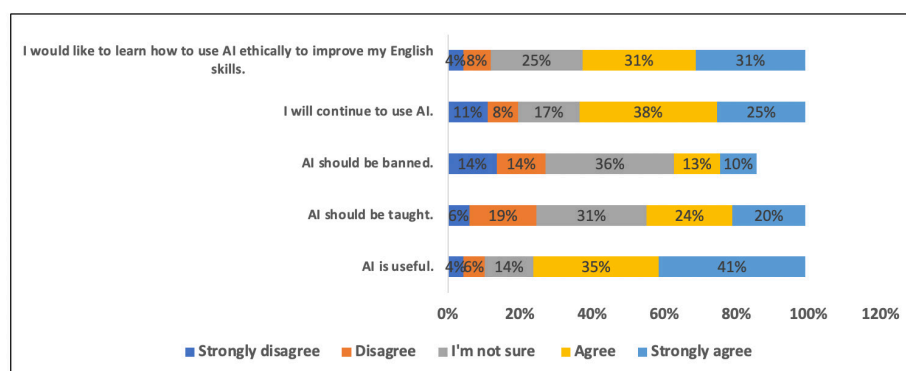


Figure 6 shows a diverse range of opinions among respondents regarding the acceptance level of AI. A significant number of respondents, comprising 76%, find AI to be useful, with 41% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing. Regarding AI instruction, 44% believe it should be included in education, while 31% remain uncertain about the necessity of such instruction. Interestingly, 34% express the belief that AI should be banned, and a comparable 31% are unsure about this stance. A majority of respondents (63%) reported planning to continue using AI, indicating a generally positive outlook. Moreover, a substantial 62% expressed an interest in learning how to use AI ethically to enhance their language skills. The findings underscore a varied landscape of attitudes and perceptions regarding AI, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing diverse perspectives in the context of AI education and adoption.

Figure 6

Acceptance Level of AI



Comparison of Students' Pre- and Post-Essays

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each scale of the rubric, as well as students' total grades both before and after instruction. Based on these findings, the total mean score before instruction was 46 ($SD=10.27$), while the mean score rose to 57.37 ($SD=13.5$) after instruction.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Students' Grades Before and After the Instruction

<i>n</i> = 8		Organization	Content	Vocabulary	Grammar & Mechanics	Style	Grade (100)
Pre-Instruction	Total	94	64	40	79	91	368
	Mean	11.75	8	5	9.875	11.375	46
	SD	2.22	2.39	1.32	1.89	3.07	10.27
Post-Instruction	Total	110	89	68	92	100	459
	Mean	13.75	11.12	8.5	11.5	12.5	57.37
	SD	2.86	3.4	3.42	2.23	2.95	13.5

The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess the normality of the pre-and post-intervention grades. The results indicated that both pre-intervention ($W = 0.94, p = 0.68 > 0.05$) and post-intervention grades ($W = 0.95, p = 0.8 > 0.05$) grades are normally distributed, as both p -values exceeded 0.05.

Although the paired t -test results indicated a statistically insignificant difference in various aspects of students' writing skills post-instruction, including organization, content, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics, and overall writing style ($t = 3.89, p < .01$), the mean scores increased notably. This suggests that the instructional program on using ChatGPT effectively enhanced students' essay writing abilities.

Discussion

The results of this study contribute to the rapidly growing research on the effectiveness of ChatGPT as a supplementary learning tool that can benefit both EFL teaching and learning. The fact that most respondents indicated a high familiarity with translation tools and ChatGPT suggests a strong baseline for the integration of more advanced AI-driven applications and tools into educational settings. This familiarity may also have a positive impact on students' readiness and engagement with such tools in the classroom. However, the lower percentage (19%) of participants frequently using writing generation tools like Grammarly or ChatGPT indicates potential areas for growth in understanding the applications and benefits of these tools for academic writing and preparation.

As per students' acceptance of AI, the survey results revealed a diverse range of students' opinions and feelings reflecting the complexity and challenges of adoption and acceptance for some learners. However, many students expressed interest in the continued use of AI and its ethical usage to improve their writing skills. This indicates a generally positive outlook on the use of technology.

Despite the statistically insignificant result from the paired t -test, there was a clear improvement in the mean scores across all assessed aspects of writing. For example, the overall mean score increased from 46 to 57.37, suggesting a notable improvement in students' essay writing abilities. This increase aligns with the objectives of the ChatGPT integrated instruction program to improve students' use of ChatGPT to support their essay writing. While not statistically significant, the practical improvement suggests the intervention was beneficial in a real-world classroom context. This finding is consistent with Godwin-Jones (2022) and Zhai (2022) who argue in favor of AI-driven tools and their integration into writing instruction and practice. They maintain that not only can such tools benefit both students and teachers, but teacher intervention can also facilitate students' acquisition of meta-linguistic competence.

Through a side-by-side comparison of essays generated by ChatGPT and those submitted by students after receiving instruction, several insights emerged. Firstly, we identified instances where students reused specific vocabulary from ChatGPT in their essays, including conceptual words like "festivity," "joy," and "gratitude," adjectives such as "magical," "merry," and "sparkling," and verbs like "decorate," "wrap," and "carol." These terms were notably absent in students' pre-instruction essays. Students also expressed their satisfaction, noting that they were able to learn various Christmas-related words to describe and write about the holiday from different perspectives—something they previously could only do in Japanese.

Furthermore, we observed notable improvements in formatting and style, areas that had previously shown little progress despite regular corrections. There was also a noticeable enhancement in grammar structure, with more precise paragraph organization and overall structure. This could imply that the student's writing was significantly influenced by the instruction that included ChatGPT. Students benefited by the language patterns and stylistic features presented by ChatGPT. This could also suggest that students may internalize and implement more advanced language and organizational skills in their own writing with exposure to well-structured, AI-generated content, which can serve as an effective learning tool. Similarly, Marzuki et al. (2023) found that AI writing tools had a positive impact on the writing quality of EFL students in Indonesia, particularly in content development and organizational structure.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the small sample size ($n = 8$) of the intervention, which likely limited the statistical power of the analysis. This may have made it challenging to detect statistically significant differences despite meaningful practical improvements reported earlier. Future studies should consider using larger and more diverse sample sizes to enhance the statistical power of the analysis and increase the generalizability of the findings. This approach would provide a more robust evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness and help detect statistically significant differences with greater confidence.

Another noteworthy limitation was the restricted duration of the training (three weeks), which may not have adequately reflected the long-term effects or sustainability of the intervention's outcomes. This study encourages conducting longer and more comprehensive experiments to further investigate the potential of integrating AI responsibly into classroom settings. This will allow for deeper engagement, more opportunities for practice, and potentially more substantial and lasting improvements in students' writing skills.

Additionally, the study used a quasi-experimental design without incorporating a control group which may have limited the ability to fully isolate the instructor's influence on students' grade improvements and attribute the changes exclusively to the intervention. A randomized controlled trial with both larger experimental and control

groups would help distinguish the effects of the intervention from other variables, such as the instructor's influence. Additionally, future studies could explore using multiple instructors to examine whether the outcomes are consistent across different teaching styles and contexts.

Moreover, the survey relied on students' self-reported familiarity, ease of use, and willingness to accept AI in English learning. Future studies could substantiate the findings by incorporating qualitative data, such as student interviews, to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives.

Conclusion

This study examined students' familiarity with, usage of, and acceptance levels toward AI-driven tools and applications in their academic work. It also explored the impact of ChatGPT-integrated instruction on enhancing students' essay-writing skills. The findings underscore the need to promote digital literacy among students. Despite their familiarity with translation tools, only a small percentage of participants frequently used AI writing tools, revealing opportunities for educational initiatives to enhance awareness of AI's diverse applications and ethical use. The findings also highlight varying levels of AI acceptance and adoption among students, suggesting the importance of gradually integrating these tools and providing personalized support to address resistance or challenges.

This study also demonstrated the pedagogical potential of integrating ChatGPT into English writing instruction for EFL learners. While the paired-sample t-test results did not reveal statistically significant improvements, the practical increase in students' mean scores across various writing aspects, such as organization, vocabulary, grammar, and content, indicates that the intervention had a meaningful impact in real-world classroom settings. For instance, the overall mean score rose from 46 to 57.37, highlighting students' progress in essay writing after receiving ChatGPT-supported instruction. This suggests that AI tools can effectively enhance writing abilities by providing models of well-structured content and stylistic features.

A key finding was students' adoption of advanced vocabulary and improved organizational skills, as they reused specific terms and structures from ChatGPT-generated content in their essays. This indicates that frequent exposure to high-quality AI-generated language can help learners internalize and apply advanced linguistic patterns in their own writing. Moreover, teacher intervention plays a critical role in guiding students to use AI tools effectively, ensuring the development of meta-linguistic competence rather than dependency on technology.

Despite the limitations cited earlier, the findings align with broader research advocating for AI integration in language learning, offering evidence on how tools like ChatGPT can enhance students' writing skills and engagement in EFL contexts, reinforcing the potential role of AI in supporting language development.

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How to cite the article:

Chang, T. (2024). Student perceptions of the ideal reading amount. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 99–103. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIG10.1-13>

Practice Article

Student Perceptions of the Ideal Reading Amount

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Abstract

Although studies have shown that extensive reading (ER) can improve English for junior high school students in Japan (Kanatani et al., 1994), one of the barriers to conducting ER is facilitating the total reading amount. Many classes focus primarily on grammar-translation, which tends to cover only 1-2 pages of text in a regular 50-minute class. This paper explains how an instructor can use a set of questions to measure the ideal reading amount using a modified version of the price sensitivity meter, a pricing research tool used to measure the ideal price for a product. This was used to measure the perceived ideal amount of weekly reading. The process can suggest guidelines on how to set initial goals for ER to make it easier for students to adapt to reading extensively.

多読(ER)が中学生の英語力を向上させることは、日本の研究でも明らかにされているが(Kanatani et al., 1994)、ERを実施する際の困難さのひとつは、総読書量の確保である。多くの授業では文法・訳読が中心であり、通常の50分の授業では1〜2ページしかカバーできない傾向にある。本稿では、ある商品の理想的な価格を測定するために使用される価格調査ツールである「価格感度分析」を改良したものを使用して、講師が一連の質問を使って理想的な読書量を測定する方法を説明する。これを用いて、一週間での理想的な読書量の認知度を測定した。このプロセスは、生徒が多読に適応しやすくなるために、ERの初期目標をどのように設定するかについてのガイドラインを示唆することができる。

Although studies have shown that extensive reading (ER) can improve English ability for junior high school students in Japan (Kanatani et al., 1994), one of the common barriers to conducting ER is determining the most efficacious yet tolerable amount of reading involved. With many teachers relying on grammar-translation, followed by teacher explanations in Japanese, how can a teacher possibly ask students to read one English book a week? The author was even told by some homeroom teachers who were from the same English department to not give reading homework outside of class since the students already have a lot of homework from other classes.

Therefore, since the author felt that improving reading skills in an EFL environment was important, he referred to a tool used in pricing research called the price sensitivity meter (PSM) to measure the perceived ideal weekly reading amount in a junior high school in Tokyo. The goal of this practice is to find the perceived ideal weekly amount of reading so students would not feel pressured with reading homework and gain the basic reading skills necessary in order to move to the next stage of reading fluency training, namely extensive reading.

The aforementioned teaching practice was implemented in a second-year junior high school student's class of $N = 64$ in an English conversation class. Since the author had found success in using ER in high school, he thought that it would be ideal to implement it at a younger age. However, ER was met with a lot of negative feedback since the students were only used to grammar translation classes where the teacher would cover 1-2 pages in a 50 minute class.

The objective of this teaching practice was to measure the ideal weekly reading amount in order to lower the barrier to reading extensively. The benefit of this practice is that by measuring the ideal weekly reading amount, students will not feel pressured by a weekly reading activity and in the end, instructors can potentially change their students into avid readers.

Background

When measuring amounts of ER in junior and senior high school, many studies measure the amount of reading and their effectiveness. For example, Kanatani et al. (1994) measured the effects of a 3-4 week ER program in junior high school. Students were given seven short passages at the high school and junior high school level. In a class of 43, it was found that three out of the top five students participated in the ER program.

Another aspect in ER research is overcoming the barriers to ER. Similar to the problems that the author had, the high stakes university entrance exams seem to deter students from conducting ER. For example, in Taiwan, although students felt that ER was beneficial, they still preferred to spend more time on studying for the university entrance exams (Huang, 2015).

However, the Scientific Education Group (SEG), a popular after-school program that conducts ER, has found success with the principles of SSS: start with short simple stories (Furukawa, 2024). This school bases its teaching on scientific principles and holds the view that, in the case of Japan, students should read short, simple stories from graded and leveled readers. Therefore, the author decided to measure the perceived ideal reading amount in order to see what a short simple story was in the eyes of his junior high school students.

Similar Practices

Although there haven't been any prior studies that measured the ideal reading amount in junior high school, one study that did measure the perceived ideal amount of weekly reading was conducted among Japanese high school students undertaking a science course. Chang & Dineros measured the ideal reading amount of science course high school students in their third year and found that the ideal amount of weekly extensive reading was 1200 words per week at the 500-word level (Chang & Dineros 2022, p. 116.) It was also found that although students should be reading at least 2000 words a week, 33% of the students felt that this was "too much" or "slightly too much".

Gaps and Opportunities

Since Chang & Dineros found success in measuring the ideal weekly reading amount among high school students, it was the perfect opportunity to test this practice among junior high school students. This paper attempts to address the problem of having no prior data among junior high school students to the ideal amount of weekly reading.

Description of the Teaching Practice

The practice of measuring the ideal amount of weekly reading was aimed at enhancing the weekly ER program so students could read in English without feeling the pressure of too much reading.

Implementation

Stages in Implementing the Practice

Prior to the practice, students had done weekly speed reading as a warm up activity in English conversation classes that were taught by the author in order to be able to interview the whole year group. At the beginning of the class, students would read a short 45-55 word passage from *Yomitore 50* (Jarrell et al., 2022), which is a short speeding course created for grade 7 Japanese learners of English. This study was conducted after the students had undergone seven sessions of timed ER. This was done in order to have students get an understanding of the reading amount measure that was used in the study. The question concerning volume was measured by the amount of weekly reading that was conducted in the English conversation class.

As per Chang & Dineros (2022), students were asked the following questions as follows:

1. At what amount of weekly reading would you consider the activity to be *a lot*?
2. At what amount of weekly reading would you consider the activity to be *too little*?
3. At what amount of weekly reading would you consider the activity to be *too much that you wouldn't want to do it*?
4. At what amount of weekly reading would you consider the activity to be *so little that it would have little effect*?

The results from the questionnaire showed that the perceived ideal weekly reading amount was 175 words/week. Also, the optimal range of weekly reading was found to be between 150-225 words/week.

Materials and Resources Needed

- A short set of readings of roughly the same length.
- Adapted questionnaire from Chang & Dineros (2022).
- Spreadsheet software to map your data onto a line graph.

After measuring the ideal amount of weekly reading, the instructor changed the amount of ER accordingly by setting the ideal amount as the goal, and starting at the bottom of the optimal range. The instructor proceeded to set the next goal at the maximum range, and by the end of the semester, students felt a lot less pressure to have weekly readings and some even became avid readers.

Adaptations and Modifications

To accommodate different learning styles and paces, various adaptations were made:

1. Use of Technology: Inputting data from the questionnaire took a lot of time. Since each student now has access to a tablet, the questionnaire was created online to make data processing easier.
2. Teaming up with other teachers: Since the practice was only implemented in the author's class, there was not a lot of support for the other classes. By getting the support of the other teachers in the year group, student ideal reading amounts can be calculated among the year group and all of the students can benefit from not being pressured to read too much.

Outcomes and Observations

The implementation of this practice has helped the instructor in many of his classes. After measuring the ideal reading amount, the author changed the weekly reading amount for future classes and there was less resistance to reading in English.

Student Feedback

Although there was not much feedback, some students actually came to the author and asked for recommendations on different material that they could read outside of the class. Also, some students stated that by having these short readings, it helped with the reading section on unit quizzes. Since the students were getting accustomed to reading in English, they gained a more positive attitude even in a testing situation.

Teacher's Observations and Reflections

From the teacher's perspective, by having students start weekly readings at the ideal amount for his school, he has found that more students enjoyed reading in English. Also, there were less complaints from both students and other teachers with the amount of reading that was given by the instructor. By setting achievable reading goals, each student was able to gain confidence in their reading ability as well.

In the future, since the level of students seems to be different each year, it may be a good practice to quickly implement the digitized version of the questionnaire at the beginning of the semester. This way, the students will feel less pressure to read and in the long run, it will be easier to ask students to do weekly ER inside or outside of the classroom.

Discussion

The implementation of measuring the perceived ideal amount of weekly reading was based on practice research and came up with substantial evidence for the instructor. The fact that students perceived such a low figure of 175 words per week as being optimal for extensive reading is not particularly surprising. The Yomitori 50 books, for example, have passage lengths of only 45-55 words. Considering that public junior high school students only have four classes a week, reading 3-4 passages of this length may be seen as an ideal amount. Furthermore, if we look at the word count for Pearson Disney Readers in Japan Extensive Reading Association (JERA)'s booklist, many of the level 1 books fall within 120-130 words (Jera 2024). The students in the study were only in their second year of English where reading was taught, so this amount simply reflects their class experience. The practice of measuring ideal reading amounts can only assist the teacher in making the English learning experience more pleasurable.

Potential Implications for Teaching and Learning

The findings have significant implications for EFL educators in junior and senior high schools in Japan, namely that it is possible and preferable to measure the ideal reading amount based on your school setting. Since student levels and expectations vary by city, there is never a one-size-fits-all standard on the amount of reading that one should assign. Each teacher adjusts the pace of his or her course depending on the level of their students. With the adaptation of PSM for measuring students' acceptable reading amounts (See Appendix), the reading program can be adjusted not only for each year group but also for each school. Furthermore, the ideal reading amount of 175 words per week is much lower than is usually recommended for extensive reading. By finding this value, instructors and curriculum planners can adapt the initial reading goals so that stress is not put on the students, and slowly increase the goals over time. For example, in the author's school, the initial reading amount could start at N=150 words or 3 short passages a week, with a goal of reaching the ideal reading amount of 175 words per week after an appropriate introductory period. After students are used to reading, the next goal could be set at the upper ideal limit in this study at 225 words/week, and then to slowly increase the total reading amount in the next semester. Since students' reading amount gradually increases without demotivating students, this will make it easier for teachers to have their students read one English book a week.

Conclusion

The implementation of measuring the perceived ideal amount of weekly reading amount came to 175 words a week with a range of 150 to 220 words a week. This indicates that they are daunted by the idea of reading enough

words to finish one A1-level graded reader in a week. English instructors need to be more sensitive in the amount of assigned reading since we will risk demotivating students at an early stage of their learning career. The results of this study suggested that for students in Japanese junior high schools, it would not be unreasonable to conduct a mini version of extensive reading with three to four 40- to 50-word passages in Yomitore 50, or one level one Pearson Disney reader or its equivalent per week.

Judging from the results of the study, at only 175 words per week, English instructors need to be careful when setting reading goals and assigning homework. By implementing an adapted version of PSM, the perceived ideal reading amount can be measured and reading curriculum designed so that student reading amount can be increased gradually without exerting too much pressure. Hopefully, this tool can help in your teaching situations and we can motivate our students to love to read.

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Appendix

Q6 to Q9 to Measure PSM

これから一週間の読む量に対しての質問です。

Cherry Blossom
My host family took me to Daigoji. This temple has many trees. The cherry trees were pink, and pink is my favorite color! I really liked the cherry blossom tunnel. We saw a historical parade. Men carried the daimyo. He wore a beautiful kimono. I want one too.
(50 単語)

各当てはまるものに○をつけてください。

6. 一週間の「英語を読む量」は、何単語から「多い」と思いますか。	7. 一週間の「英語を読む量」は、何単語から「少ない」と思いますか。	8. 一週間の「英語を読む量」は、何単語から「多すぎてやりたくない」と思いますか。	9. 一週間の「英語を読む量」は、何単語から「少なすぎて効果がない」と思いますか。
50 単語=1話	50 単語=1話	50 単語=1話	50 単語=1話
100 単語=2 話	100 単語=2 話	100 単語=2 話	100 単語=2 話
150 単語=3 話	150 単語=3 話	150 単語=3 話	150 単語=3 話
200 単語=4 話	200 単語=4 話	200 単語=4 話	200 単語=4 話
250 単語=5 話	250 単語=5 話	250 単語=5 話	250 単語=5 話
300 単語=6 話	300 単語=6 話	300 単語=6 話	300 単語=6 話
350 単語=7 話	350 単語=7 話	350 単語=7 話	350 単語=7 話
400 単語=8 話	400 単語=8 話	400 単語=8 話	400 単語=8 話
450 単語=9 話	450 単語=9 話	450 単語=9 話	450 単語=9 話
500 単語=10 話	500 単語=10 話	500 単語=10 話	500 単語=10 話
550 単語=11 話	550 単語=11 話	550 単語=11 話	550 単語=11 話
600 単語=12 話	600 単語=12 話	600 単語=12 話	600 単語=12 話
650 単語=13 話	650 単語=13 話	650 単語=13 話	650 単語=13 話
700 単語=14 話	700 単語=14 話	700 単語=14 話	700 単語=14 話
750 単語=15 話	750 単語=15 話	750 単語=15 話	750 単語=15 話
750 単語以上=15 話以上	750 単語以上=15 話以上	750 単語以上=15 話以上	750 単語以上=15 話以上

English Version:

6. From how many words or stories do you think that weekly reading is a lot ?	7. From how many words or stories do you think that weekly reading is too little ?	8. From how many words or stories do you think that weekly reading is too much that you wouldn't want to do it ?	9. From how many words or stories do you think that weekly reading is too little that it would have little effect ?
50 words = 1 story	50 words = 1 story	50 words = 1 story	50 words = 1 story
...
750 word and above =15 + stories	750 word and above =15 + stories	750 word and above =15 + stories	750 word and above =15 + stories

How to cite the article:

Mack, J. C. & Ishii, A. (2024). Conducting a graded reader program at a Japanese private junior high school. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 104–111. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-14>

Research Article

Conducting a Graded Reader Program at a Japanese Private Junior High School

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Abstract

This study looked at the rates of student vocabulary acquisition with regards to the first and second thousand words of high frequency used English words as reflected in the New General Service List (NGSL) list. This study was conducted at a private Japanese junior high school with first year students. The students read graded readers from the Oxford Reading Tree and Oxford Bookworm Series. Students took a pre, mid, and post-test using a computer-generated test from the vocabulary levels test website (vocabularylevels.org). The results were then analyzed by two different raters. The results from the student's levels test shows that after one 50-minute class a week for eleven weeks, students' results reflected findings found at the university level. This paper adds to the limited amount of research done with younger learners at the junior high school level.

本研究は、新総合業務単語リストに反映されている高頻度使用英単語の1,000語目と2,000語目について、生徒の語彙習得率を調べたものである。この研究は、日本の私立中学校で中学1年生を対象に行われた。生徒たちはオックスフォード・グレーデッド・リーディング・ツリーとオックスフォード・ブックワーム・シリーズのグレーデッド・リーダーを読んだ。生徒たちは、語彙レベルテストのウェブサイト (vocabularylevels.org) からコンピューターで作成したテストを使って、事前・中間・事後テストを受けた。その結果を2人の異なる評価者が分析した。生徒のレベルテストの結果は、学年度の11週間後、生徒の結果は大学レベルの所見を反映したものであった。この論文は、中学生レベルの低学年学習者を対象とした限られた量の研究に新たな一歩を踏み出すものである。

Much of the research done for extensive reading in Japan has been done at the university level. This includes students who have already studied English for six or more years beginning in elementary school through high school, students who want to take English classes at the university level, and during a university course which typically is around 15 weeks. However, there are few studies conducted at the junior high school or high school level in Japan. Some reasons for the difficulty of implementing a graded reader program at these school levels are due to insufficient resources, not enough space for books, uninformed teachers, a lack of time, and the Japanese school system maintaining a *yakudoku* direct-translation method of education for the acquisition of a second language despite changes to the MEXT curriculum. With all these factors having a major impact on English classes with younger learners, many researchers might feel that trying to implement a graded reader program in junior high will be met with fierce resistance.

During this study, the researchers learned how to begin a modified extensive reader program with the goal of increasing student's vocabulary knowledge of the first and second one-thousand high frequency words of English. Most of the words in the simplified texts can be found in the NGSL. These words are essential for students to understand and use if they are going to become fluent speakers and users of English in their future employment and lives. We, therefore, asked the following research questions when performing our research: Did the student's vocabulary test results reflect pre-existing literature findings regarding the effectiveness of ER? What gains of vocabulary knowledge did the students make during the shortened eleven weeks of a graded reader program?

This paper will conclude with why implementing a graded reader program during an earlier stage of English education is beneficial for students to acquire their L2 over the course of their academic careers. Japanese teachers may be nervous or unaware of how to initiate an extensive reading program as it does not follow a teacher-centered, *yakudoku* direct-translation style that they learn as students in university. Japanese teachers are encouraged to continue a *yakudoku* style of teaching when they enter the classroom as teachers after the conclusion of their education, to repeat the same process where they learned their L2. This cycle, unfortunately, does not produce efficient and effective use of time, energy, and resources for all students to acquire their second language. The gains of having an extensive reading program might offset the inefficient and ineffectiveness of the current approach, and instead change the environment to a more student-centered learning environment, where students can acquire vast amounts of vocabulary and increase their reading fluency.

Literature Review

When Nation introduced his Four Strands, he created a specific strand for meaning-focused input (Nation, 2007). This strand is established for students to acquire new vocabulary words and terms while reading simplified texts from their L2. The meaning-focused input strand was put forth to complement the language-focused learning strand, which involves explicit instruction of grammar, intensive reading, text translation, and other various explicit learning methods that draw attention to specific language factors (Nation, 2007; Nation, 2009; Nation and Macalister, 2020). In an L2 language learning setting where there is either limited access to the target language or there is limited time available to receive instruction and practice an L2 language, deliberate learning of language features and explicit instruction are necessary. Deliberate language learning can benefit learners by building their knowledge of language features, improving their reading strategies, expanding their vocabulary knowledge, and increasing their comprehension (Nation, 2009; Nation, 2022).

Language focused learning is essential to EFL/ESL learners, however, there is also a need to heavily supplement deliberate learning with incidental learning, where learners have access to copious amounts of level appropriate meaning-focused input. Nation suggests that an extensive reading program is one option for effectively accommodating the meaning focused input strand (Nation, 2007; Nation & Macalister, 2020). He also suggests that having an extensive reading program is an alternative method to supersede the *yakudoku* direct-translation methods that is prevalent in the Japanese school system (Nation, 2007). Nation further suggests a *yakudoku* direct-translation method is not an efficient or effective method of vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2007). The *yakudoku* style consists of the following parts: first is directly-translating every word in an L2 given sentence, then reordering the sentence into the L1 grammar structure, and finally adding any functional words or grammar forms to create an approximate L1 sentence equivalent (Hino, 1988).

ER, when executed properly, is known to show various benefits for learners (Beglar et al., 2012; Beglar & Hunt, 2014; Nakanishi, 2015; Nation & Waring, 2019). ER falls in the category of the meaning-focused input strand and thus, as mentioned previously, requires that the learners know approximately 98% of the vocabulary of the text (Nation, 2007; Nation, 2022; Nation & Waring, 2019). This is to lessen the burden the learners feel while reading in their L2 (Schmitt et al., 2011; Waring & McLean, 2015), and allows them to enjoy the text without needing to translate or look up the meaning of the words. Especially when there is a vast difference in reading systems from their L1 to their L2 that the learner must overcome, ER is an effective method to cater to low proficiency learners and provide appropriate reading material that is thoroughly comprehensible (Nakanishi & Ueda, 2011). ER will not only lessen the burden for learners when reading, it will also nurture their motivation towards reading and learning English.

As learners are provided level appropriate reading material, and experience constant reading success, they are able to ascribe their progress and success to their capabilities (Weiner, 1992), thus strengthening their self efficacy (Bandura, 1993), resulting in sustained motivation of the learners towards reading and learning English (Dörnyei, 2001). This is especially crucial for EFL classrooms in Japan, as many of the factors which cause demotivation in English learning are linked to the lack of confidence of the learners, and their experience of receiving low test scores on English tests and low grades in English (Kikuchi, 2015; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009). Kikuchi (2009) further found that learners of English in Japan found factors such as the need to rote learn vocabulary and the overuse of the translation method in class demotivating.

Implementation of ER could solve many of the issues that are mentioned above by providing learners with more positive experiences in learning English, build their confidence, and sustain their motivation. Further, because learners are able to choose the books they want to read for ER, learners have a sense of autonomy which brings about additional motivation in their English learning experience (Dörnyei, 2001). Through ER, learners can build their background knowledge, also known as their 'schema', by getting them exposed to new ideas and concepts (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). The learners could then utilize their schema to maximize their reading comprehension (Nassaji, 2002). Moreover, ER can facilitate reading fluency without affecting comprehension (Beglar et al., 2012; Beglar & Hunt, 2014).

Methodology

Participants

The students in the program were first year junior high school students ($N = 38$). However, only data collected from 35 students was used in the study. Three student's scores were not used because they did not finish all three tests due to absences. The students in this study were in the "advanced" class. These students are different from the "standard" class in that they came from the affiliated elementary school of Green Valley. The students in the "standard" class came from other elementary schools, either public or private. Because the students came from the associated elementary school, the junior high school teachers are aware of the English taught in the elementary classrooms. The teachers then felt that placing these students into their own class was beneficial for the students because their English exposure has been observed and tested by the educational institution.

The Setting

The extensive reading program that was examined during this study took place at the Green Valley Junior and Senior High School in the Kansai area. The original schedule for the graded reader program was estimated at the beginning of the year to consist of about 16 weeks of reading, which was a goal of about one book per week. The students were going to read one book in a 50-minute class every week. After three weeks the students would have

“book presentation” day. The speaking student’s goal was to try to get other students to read their selected book when other students reached the level. The listening students would provide feedback about the presentation including their opinion about if they wanted to try to read the selected book in the future. The students would repeat this cycle two times (read three books, one presentation, read three books, one presentation) before graduating to the next upper level of the graded readers. Nation (2022) suggests that students read five books in one level before moving to the next. We decided on six graded readers before allowing the students to graduate to give the students more exposure to the words in the graded readers. Additionally, this allowed the students to maintain a consistent reading and presentation schedule throughout the entirety of the course.

The Green Valley Junior and Senior High School has a large selection of graded readers in their library. These books range from the Oxford Graded Readers, Oxford Bookworm series, and Penguin Readers. Students were encouraged to begin with the Oxford Graded Readers before graduating to the Bookworm or Penguin series. Most students, when given the choice, decided to begin with Oxford books rather than start with the Penguin or Bookworm books when selecting their level to read. One student began with the Bookworm series and two students graduated to this series during the course.

Procedure

During the first class the students were given one book from the 3, 4, 5 and 6 level of the Oxford Reading Tree series (See Appendix A). They were then asked to read two pages and count how many words they did not know on each page (Hiebert & Reutzel, 2010). If the students did not find any new words or only one word, then the book was deemed too easy. If the student found two to three new words, then the book was a match for the students reading fluency. With four unknown words, the book might be a challenge for the student to read. If five or more new words were on each page the book was considered to be too difficult for fluent reading. Once a student found a book from an appropriate level that matched this criterion, they were then allowed to select a book from this level to begin reading during the first designated class. Books in the 0, 1, and 2 levels were deemed too easy and may be suitable for elementary students’ level of English. Most students began at level 3 with headwords of about 1,000 words.

Data collected from the participants

During the first class of the course, students were given a vocabulary levels test, which was a computer-generated test found at vocableveltest.org. There were forty questions in total and there were ten questions from the four 500-word bands. The words were randomly selected for the test and are based on the vocabulary from the NSWL (Browne, 2014). The first one and second thousand words of the NSWL are high frequency words used in daily English. There is a built-in timer for the students to answer the questions and the students were told that if they did not know the answer, they could skip it and move onto the next question. The test was a productive form recall test, in which the students are given an English sentence with the target vocabulary word translated into English (McLean & Raine, 2019). The learners were instructed to write an English word as an answer, to match the translation of the word initially provided to complete the sentence. The computer software marked a correctly spelled word as one point. However, since this was not a spelling test, many students did write English words phonetically. Therefore, we sifted through the answers for correct answers not based on the spelling criteria.

Results

The overall results of the average can be seen in Figure 1. The results from the pre-test (Figure 2) show the students’ knowledge of words given the use of government approved materials as they are all using “New Horizon” as their English textbook. The results in the 1,500 - 2,000-word band show that the students knew a disproportionate amount of low frequency words in relation to words in the 1–500-word bands.

Figure 1

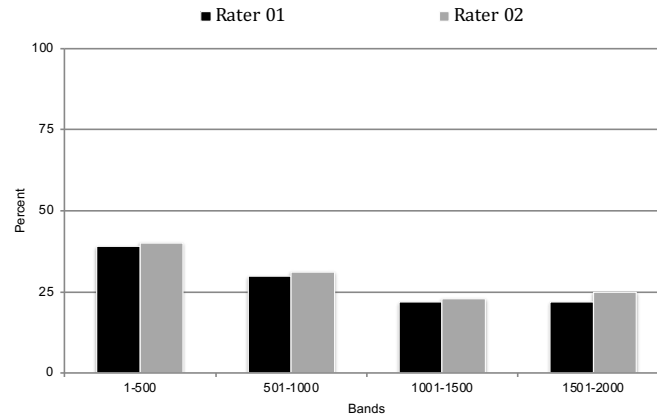
Average of the All-Vocabulary Tests



This suggests that students are learning words and their translations that are easy to translate as opposed to the first one hundred words of the NGSL which are function words, and cannot be easily translated or have multiple usages depending on how they are translated.

Figure 2

Pre-Test Scores for 35 Participants with Two Raters



The results of the mid-test (Figure 3) show that within the first six weeks of reading, and two presentations, the students' results had increased from a pre-test average of 40% to a mid-test average of 52% for the 1–500-word band. These results beginning to reflect research found at the university level (Beglar & Hunt, 1999; Elgort, 2013; McLean et al., 2014). The mid-test shows that at the junior high school learning level, an ER program can produce similar results found at the university level. The results of the final test (Figure 4) also suggest that there were gains but these gains were incremental compared to the increase from the pre to the mid-test.

Figure 3

Mid-Test Scores for 35 Participants with Two Raters

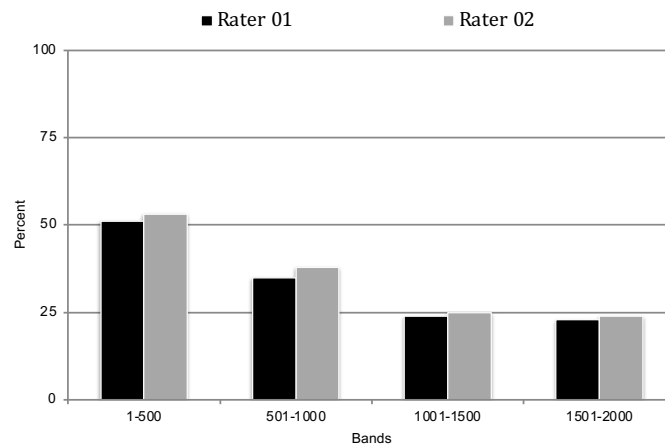
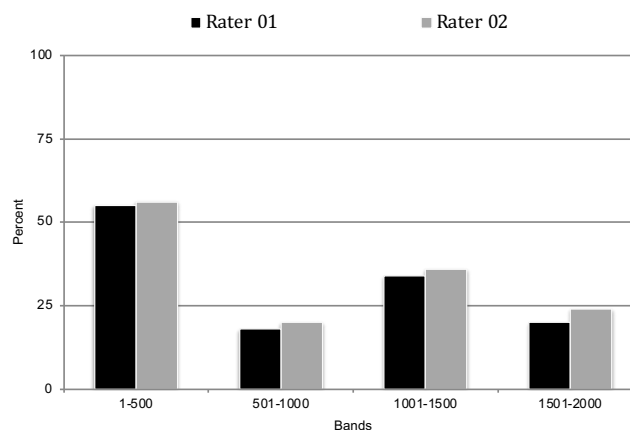


Figure 4

Post-Test Scores for 35 Participants with Two Raters



The results from the pre, mid and post-test (except for the 501–1000-word bands in the post-test) reflect the gains suggested to in the research done at the university level (Beglar & Hunt, 1999; Elgort, 2013; McLean et al., 2014). According to our findings, the students had an average of a 16% increase in vocabulary accuracy in the 1-500 words bands and was the largest gain throughout the course. This reflects the research results conducted at the university level (Beglar & Hunt, 1999; Elgort, 2013; McLean et al., 2014). These results show that a graded reader program conducted at the junior high school level can accomplish similar results with younger learners.

The exception that can be found in the post-test (the 501-1000 band declined by 17%) might have been formed from two factors. The first factor is that the words the website's algorithm chose to place in the test might be unknown to the students. If this is the case then, students may not have been exposed to these words either in their graded readers. In this situation, the teacher might need to pre-approve the words that are going to be tested as this is a feature the website allows the teachers to do. The second reason might be that the students were tired and skipped the questions and moved on to the next prompt. Looking at the students' results, many students skipped some questions as they either did not know the answer, were tired, or felt peer pressure, when others finished earlier, to complete the test and answer only the questions they knew.

The mid-test results show that the students had the largest increase from the pre-test to the mid-test. There was an average of 12% increase between the pretest and mid-test. These results suggest that within a short amount of time, their exposure to simplified text assisted in this increase.

The results show that even though the students had a shortened reading time schedule (One 50-minute class a week for 11 weeks instead of 16 weeks), their vocabulary knowledge still reflected results at the university level (Beglar & Hunt, 1999; Elgort, 2013; McLean et. al, 2014). The results between the post and mid test were not as dramatic as the between the pre and mid test, but students still showed an incremental increase of about 4% (removing the 501-1000 band) in vocabulary knowledge.

There were various complicated factors when implementing a graded reader program at the Green Valley Junior High School and many of these factors can be experienced by other Japanese English teachers if they choose to begin a graded reader program at their educational institutions. One example was the closure due to illness which shortened the original plan of having a 16-week ER program into 11 weeks. Therefore, teachers might need to establish a flexible mindset before they need to adopt, adapt, and develop if unexpected situations arise (Wajima & Luyten, 1997).

Discussion

Test validity

In terms of test validity, as we were measuring gains from reading and not writing, we should have opted for receptive form recall, as opposed to productive form recall. This was due to the emphasis and priority placed on the learner's understanding of vocabulary meaning and not form. The productive recall test was used in hopes of preventing students from guessing the answer (McLean et al., 2015; Nguyen & Nation, 2011).

Computer based testing

The provision of digital tests could have affected learners' vocabulary test scores as learners are not familiar with the test style and the use of computers, compared to tablets or phones. Most tests in junior high school are still paper based. Our test also had a time limit for each question which could have added unnecessary pressure to the learners (Ohata, 2005). This could have produced additional test anxiety or performance anxiety, affecting students' performance and test stamina. Students were confused and slightly frustrated during the pre-test as they had never experienced a productive recall test before on a digital platform. Even though the test used five example questions with instructions about how the test was to be conducted, many students had difficulty in using the software during the test.

Human Raters verses Computer Correction

We chose to use human raters instead of the computer software as the computer software marked answers based on spelling accuracy. The tests were computer software generated however we thought the students should not be penalized for incorrect spelling. Instead, we went through the individual answers to determine which answers fit our criteria for correct and incorrect answers.

Monitoring student's progress

As the ER program was done with physical books, and handouts to monitor their progress, there was no way of closely monitoring the learners to check if they had in fact done ER consistently or effectively. One possible solution to this is by using an online reading application and resources such as Xreading, Mreader or other ER services.

Future Research

For teachers willing to try this kind of ER research in their schools, we suggest increasing the time period from the suggested 16 weeks or more (Matsui & Noro, 2010). Teachers can implement a 10-minute reading period in the morning during the school day instead of reading during class time. If teachers can increase the time for reading, then they can also add more testing throughout the course to monitor students gains with more accuracy. This data can be valuable for other teachers and researchers monitoring student vocabulary gains during an ER program.

Word Frequency

We chose to measure word frequency over increasing test scores or increasing reading rates and speeds because increasing word frequency knowledge can have a ripple effect in student L2 acquisition. This ripple effect is similar to the "Matthew Effect" (Stanovich, 1986) where students who read more increase their vocabulary knowledge, which then allows them to understand more of their L2, which then motivates them to read more and increase their L2 vocabulary knowledge. With a direct-translation style learning method, the goal is more linear with little room for review or recycling of vocabulary or grammatical forms with the primary purpose of passing tests.

Functional words are required to create accurate written and spoken output. For Japanese students, their written output is prioritized over spoken output during testing as testing is required for entrance into higher levels of education. Therefore, students need exposure of functional words and their usage to create accurate output during testing. The yakudoku direct-translation style might not be sufficient to accomplish this objective. According to our results the ER program can help student gain knowledge in increasing their exposure to functional English words in order to create accurate output.

Conclusion

This study investigated the results of conducting a modified extensive reading program over the course of 11 weeks at a private Japanese junior high school. The results from the pre, mid, and pos-tests suggest that given the shortened time frame (11 weeks instead of 16 weeks), student's gains in vocabulary acquisition can reflect the results of extensive reading programs conducted at the university level (Beglar & Hunt, 1999; Elgort, 2013; McLean et al., 2014). The largest gains were in the 1–500-word band of the NGSL with an increase of an average of 16%. The results in this study adds to the limited research done in Asian countries with younger learners with extensive reading (Nakanishi, 2015).

If more schools begin implementing graded reader programs at earlier years rather than high school and university, students' gains in vocabulary knowledge and usage can exceed current trends in the Japanese English classroom (Sparks et al., 2013). By allowing students multiple exposures to old and new words, students will be able to build a stronger foundation of L2 knowledge than what the current methods of education are providing (Stanovich, 1986). However, more schools need to participate in this movement to a more student-centered way of teaching and they need to commit to this new course of action (Brown & Lee, 2015). Our research shows that an ER program can increase student vocabulary knowledge within a shortened time frame.

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Appendix A

Excerpt from Oxford Graded Reader book series

“By the Stream” (Stage 3) by Roderich Hunt and Alex Brychta 2003.

1. Mum and Dad sat on the rug.
2. The children played by the stream.
3. Biff went to the bridge.
4. They dropped sticks in the water.
5. Kipper couldn't see.
6. Kipper climbed up.

How to cite the article:

McTaggart, F. (2024). Dialogue: Evaluating the impact of video examples of successful L2 English use. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 112–119. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIG10.1-15>

Research Article

Evaluating the Impact of Video Examples of Successful L2 English Use

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Abstract

Despite the English language being spoken around the world in an array of varieties, a broad range of research has revealed that learners of the English language often idealise what Kachru termed inner-circle Englishes, particularly Standard American English and Standard British English. This has led to the emergence of the idea of 'Native-Speakerism', meaning that the native speaker is considered a model and ideal for English. Previous research suggests this can lead to L2 learners having negative perceptions of their own English. This study aimed to examine how using videos of real-life examples of English speakers from Kachru's outer and expanding circle countries communicating in English could change university students in Japan's perceptions of themselves as language learners, or even their perceptions of the English language itself. By analysing the opinions of a focus group who were exposed to these examples, and also using quantitative data to analyse the general populace's perceptions of the English language, the research suggests that Native-Speakerism is prevalent in Japanese universities, and that videos of successful L2 use are received very positively by learners of English.

世界には多様な種類の英語がありますが様々な研究によるとイギリス、アメリカ、オーストラリアなどの内円の英語種類が英語学習者に理想化されています。この現象からNative Speakerismという表現が生まれました。これは英語のネイティブスピーカーが理想的なモデルとして考えられています。先行研究に基づいてNative Speakerismは英語学習者の悩みに関係している可能性があります。この研究の目的は、英語学習者が英語で話している内円の英語種類でない人が作成された動画を見た場合に、英語の認識が変わるかどうかを調査することでした。この動画を見たフォーカスグループに参加した大学生の意見、または200人以上の大学生に配布した英語認識に関するアンケートの結果をまとめると日本人の大学生の中でNative Speakerismが存在することが分かりました。さらに、内円の英語種類でない人が作成した動画が英語学習者に歓迎されたという結果も得られました。

Due to the expansion of the English language, English exists in countless varieties throughout the world. As well as Kachru's analysis of the three circles of English-speaking countries, other scholars have identified and given reasons for the spread of English. Phillipson (1992) argues that as well as "core English-speaking countries", "periphery-English countries" also exist, and that the spread of English has come about due to several factors, including "countries which require English as an international link language (Scandinavia, Japan), and countries on which English was imposed in colonial times". There is a growing consensus that English language teaching must reflect this reality with all its complexities, rather than presenting limited varieties as models, leading to the advance of pedagogical disciplines, such as ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) and World Englishes. However, English language learners themselves, in many cases, still do not consider their own variety of English as legitimate, and romanticize some varieties of English, for instance British or American.

The idea that native speakers are the ideal in terms of language learning is troublesome. With English the mother tongue of people living in different countries around the world, the idea that learners must aspire to native-speaker standards is at best unrealistic, as the very notion of the native speaker is continuously changing (Hampton, 2013). Despite there being wide recognition that English is global, the idealization of inner-circle varieties of English (Kachru, 1985) persists among students, and according to some research persists among students who have a clear idea of English being a global language. As educators, instructors of the English language need to find a way to reflect the reality of English being global to overcome the problems posed by Native Speakerism.

This study uses mixed methods to answer two questions. The first is whether idealisation of native speakers is prevalent among university students in Japan, and whether students would be open to more classroom content featuring L2 speakers. The second question, directly following on from the latter part of the first question, is whether students react positively to English speaking content featuring L2 speakers when exposed to it. The results are relevant to all practitioners interested in incorporating more global examples of English into their classrooms.

Literature Review

Native speakerism is a topic that has received much attention globally over recent decades. Research has attempted to define and provide examples of native speakerism, a phenomenon described as “a persuasive ideology within ELT, characterized by the belief that ‘native speaker’ teachers represent a ‘western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (Holliday, 2006). However, when considering all speakers of English around the globe, native speakers of English are in the minority (Galloway and Rose, 2015). Emerging ideas and pedagogies, such as English as a Lingua Franca, World Englishes, Translanguaging, and EMI have emerged to attempt to represent this.

However, in many cases, more work is needed to be done to factor in differing levels of student proficiency, whether extra language support is needed in EMI, for example, and to what extent the use of L1 in the classroom can aid understanding (Galloway and Rose, 2019). This, therefore, needs to be represented in the classroom. Canagarajah (1999) suggests that the traditional Western dominance and focus of the ELT industry “raises questions about the relevance and appropriateness of the teaching material, curriculum, and pedagogies by the Anglo-American communities for periphery contexts.” More recent research has gone further to call into question competence and performative educational models originating in the “Global North” and the intrinsic biases existing in traditional language pedagogy. There are growing calls for alternative methods of instruction to encourage the decolonization of English language teaching methodology worldwide (Canagarajah, 2023; Imperial, 2024).

In Japan, there have been studies examining the impact of native speakerism on students. According to Bondoc (2020), a bias exists within official education policy towards inner-circle varieties of English. This leads to a perception that outer circle varieties and expanding circle varieties, of which Japan is included, are not perceived in the same way, and that they are even “inferior”. Further research adds to this by outlining how students feel that learning English from a native English speaker presents an “authentic setting” (Yamada, 2018), implying that varieties beyond the Inner Circle are therefore not authentic. This is supported by other research, whereby in some cases students “view American English and Near RP, which are thought to be “standard” models in Japanese English classrooms, more positively than other varieties” (Miura, 2009). Egitim and Garcia (2021) found that stereotypes of what an English teacher should look like, namely Caucasian and from an American/European background, often fuel student perceptions of the language itself. The research found that this not only comes from classroom experience, but also from media portrayal of English speakers. There is a clear need for more extensive and representative exposure to English varieties.

In terms of existing classroom implementation of Global Englishes, there are efforts underway in both secondary and tertiary education in various countries to emphasize the international nature of the language. However, there is criticism that this often is in intention only, and practically there is still bias towards inner-circle varieties of English (Jenkins, 2020; Lindqvist, 2022). According to Harris (2012), “The teaching of listening in Japan, as with other aspects of the language, has tended to use American and to a lesser extent, British models as a base.” In an effort to counter this, studies have used classroom contexts to gauge students’ reactions to different varieties of English. Research has, for instance, used videos to expose users to a variety of Englishes, and results “indicated the students came to view (outer and expanding circle) varieties of English as more acceptable” (Tsai-Hung Chen, 2022), while also having a positive impact on how students view themselves as English speakers. When students are presented with the reality of Global Englishes, it not only demythologises inner-circle varieties of English, but also leads to changes in students’ confidence levels when thinking of themselves as English language speakers.

To summarise, despite trends towards integration of Global Englishes and English as a lingua franca into courses and textbooks globally, there is still a lot of work to be done to fully represent the reality of the English language as it is used around the world in the classroom (Schildhauer et al. 2020). The lack of insight into English learner responses to exposure to L2 speaker listening content, especially through the medium of video, deserves exploration.

Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative approach to examining two research questions. The first method analyses participants’ reaction to L2 speaker video content. The choice of focus group methodology was deemed appropriate to get comprehensive responses. The focus group watched five short clips sourced from YouTube videos. These videos were either created by or featuring L2 English speakers speaking in English. The focus group then discussed comprehensibility, engagement, and interest compared to classroom content from their experience. The quantitative survey consisted of questions gauging student perceptions of English globally, themselves as English speakers, and openness to content sourced from outside inner-circle varieties. A survey method was chosen to get a wider scope of opinions.

Participants

The research involved four EFL students for a focus group, and 291 EFL students who responded to a survey. All participants were enrolled in compulsory EFL classes at the same university in Japan. The focus group participants were recruited through a request distributed to the entire student body at the university. The survey was administered to 1st- and 2nd-year students in compulsory English classes at the same institution and was selected using convenience

sampling. The final sample of 291 respondents exceeded the required 284 for a population of 1,073 students enrolled in compulsory English courses at the time of the research. There was no criterion in terms of language proficiency for either the focus group or the survey. The only criterion was that they should be learners of English and have experience of classroom taught English lessons.

Data Collection

Due to the mixed method nature of the study, there were two forms of data collection.

Focus Group Discussion

The first part of the research was the focus group, who were shown a series of videos in English produced by L2 English speakers and were asked to take part in a discussion based on five discussion questions (Appendix A). As a countermeasure to potential groupthink, brief information on Global Englishes, content creator profiles, and the focus group questions were distributed before the focus group to prepare participants. The focus group was recorded and a transcript created so that the discussion could be analyzed according to Krueger's (1994) method of data analyzing. The focus group participants have been anonymized as Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, and Participant D. Some months after the focus group, as another counter measure to groupthink, Participant A, C, and D were asked to rewatch the videos again and discuss the questions in one-on-one interviews. Participant B unfortunately could not be contacted, which will be mentioned in the limitations.

Survey

The second part of the research was the survey (Appendix B). To address the first question, a survey was distributed to the wider student body. It comprised 15 questions on a 5-point Likert scale, measuring opinions from 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree). Combined, the intention was to give both a broad and detailed representation of English learners' attitudes towards Global English and L2 speaker content.

Results

Focus Group Discussion

Generally, the focus group participants reacted very positively to the videos that they were shown. All members expressed how at least one of the videos was particularly appealing. The word "interesting" was repeated frequently by all participants throughout the discussion.

The first major theme that arose was participants' experiences as English learners in relation to the content makers. Participant A commented on how the main point of interest for them was how the L2 speakers in the videos spoke English as if they did not care about distinctions between native and non-native speakers, and that the most interesting clip was of some students in India speaking with pride about their own variety of English. This was confirmed in the follow up interview, in which Participant A expressed admiration for the speakers' "confidence". In the focus group, Participant A mentioned feeling hesitant when speaking English with native speakers, as they have seen native speakers "criticize" speakers from non-inner-circle countries. Other participants agreed with this, and Participant C used the word "hesitate" when describing an experience of talking to "foreigners" in an English-speaking café. The participants all expressed this awareness of the distinctions made between the different Englishes, and that they appreciated the L2 speakers in the videos showing confidence in their own English. Two participants said that they, like those in the videos, would like to speak English and "not care" about their accent.

Multiple participants expressed their admiration towards the video content makers as language learners. Participants B and D both spoke about a video which featured a language learner talking about working hard towards language proficiency. Participant B mentioned being "impressed" by the creator, while Participant D mentioned that the creator's English was "so beautiful". The other participants agreed, and the implication was that these kinds of videos feature potential role models for students. This was an interesting take away that should be explored further.

The second major theme that arose was the idea that students would prefer this kind of content in their classrooms to the type of content they have experience of in classrooms learning English. Three members explicitly expressed dissatisfaction with what they termed "traditional" English education in Japan. Participant A mentioned how formal education is not representative of English, saying that "junior high school student(s) in Japan only know about the British and American" varieties of English. Other members agreed, with Participant B expressing concern that despite there being "a lot of type(s) of English, this is not represented, and that learners need this kind of background and history". Multiple participants also expressed how traditional textbook content and teaching methods were not engaging. However, in a follow-up interview, Participant D stressed the importance of textbooks and said that the video content should be used in tandem with more traditional classroom resources.

A sub theme of the pedagogical discussion was the possible effect on classrooms of the interview style which featured in two of the videos. Participant D mentioned that through the street interview style, students can learn "the

natural voice” of English. Other participants echoed this sentiment, with Participant A repeating the word “natural” in relation to the videos’ language content. Participant B repeated the idea, saying that educators should show “actual English speaker” content in class, rather than what Participant A referred to as “a script” in traditional learning. Multiple participants mentioned that the content in the videos mirrored the style of content they like to watch in their free time, and that this could be translated into classroom activities. Therefore, examples of L2 speakers interviewing each other could provide a springboard to classroom fluency activities.

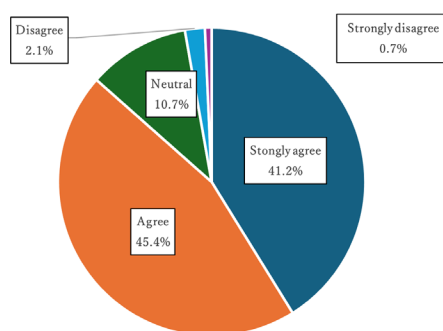
Survey Results

A survey was designed to collect data from the general student body. A method of convenience sampling was used for ease, and all respondents were or had been studying compulsory English courses at the same university as the participants in the focus group. These students did not have the benefit of exposure to the L2 content that the focus group received but were surveyed on their perceptions of the English language, and their views on content sourced from different varieties of English.

The fifteen questions in the survey went through thematic phases. Firstly, they sought to examine respondents’ perceptions on ownership of English and their perceptions of themselves as English learners. The results showed that the overwhelming majority of students see English as coming from inner-circle varieties (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Student Responses to: “English is a language from countries such as the UK, America and Australia”

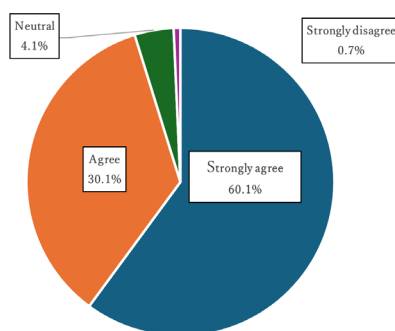


Note. $n = 291$.

A very small number of respondents see English as a language that is global in origin. One potential reason for this is that media representation of English speakers often presents them as Western and/or Caucasian (Egitim and Garcia, 2021). The survey later seems to show that students’ views of the language are shaped by historical perceptions, and that this changes when considering the English language in its current state (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Student Responses to: “English is a global language and belongs to anyone who speaks it”



Note. $n = 291$.

Most interestingly was the response to the wording of the question, implying that there is/should be a sense of belonging to English regardless of variety, background or nationality.

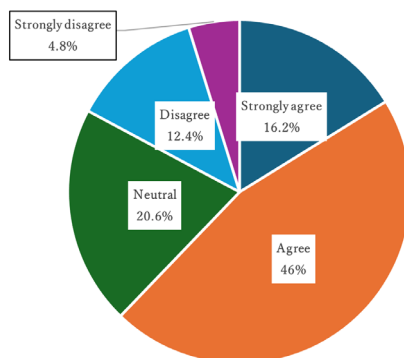
Questions that followed this focused more on respondents’ perceptions of themselves within this context. Despite recognizing that English belongs to anyone who speaks it, 67% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that when I speak English with “native speakers” of English, I feel confident. Also, 88.7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that if I visit a country where English is the main language, or used regularly in daily life, I will worry about my own English level. Both responses show that there still

is some barrier there on a personal level, and this could reveal that students view their own English in relation to competence and performance levels (Canagarajah, 2023).

The final group of questions focused on respondents' views on content used for learning English in the context of Global Englishes, which has direct implications for the focus group study. Results show that the majority of respondents still rely on content from inner-circle varieties of English when they want to study English (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Student Responses to: "When I want to watch an English video (e.g. drama, YouTube) to study English, I choose content from countries such as the UK, America and Australia"

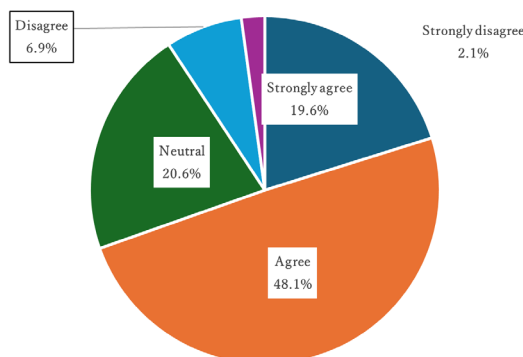


Note. $n = 291$.

A similar result was shown when respondents were asked about what content they choose for leisure watching as well. There could be many reasons for this, such as market domination of English-speaking media content by certain countries (mainly the U.S.A). However, results do show that the majority of respondents expressed a desire to have a broader pool of content from which to study English (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Student responses to: "I would like to watch more English videos (e.g. drama, YouTube) that are NOT from countries like the UK, America and Australia for study"



Note. $n = 291$.

For clarity, a final choice of "I already do" was added to this to which 2.7% ($n = 8$) of respondents answered. There may be several reasons why they don't seek outer and emerging circle varieties of English content already, but it can be reasonably assumed that lack of exposure and/or access could be one of the reasons behind this.

Discussion

The results of the research do seem to show a few unifying themes between the qualitative research and the quantitative research. Firstly, in response to the idea of native speakerism both the focus group and the survey respondents showed signs that they see a separation between themselves and speakers from inner-circle varieties of English even though there seems to be a general awareness of English being global, having many varieties and a wide range of different speakers.

In terms of using Global English content for learning English, the survey respondents showed a desire to see more Global English content, although they seem to have a lack of exposure and/or access to L2 speaker content. It might be inferred that the use of non-inner-circle content in English language education, be it in the classroom or not, is not widespread. The focus group participants mirrored this desire, and there was enthusiasm for the use of globally focused content in education, both in terms of representing the reality of English, as well as serving as inspiration for themselves as English language learners.

Implications

The results of both the qualitative and quantitative research suggest that there is a desire from learners of English to have more exposure to different varieties of English. This exposure not only represents the reality of their target language but also provides students with clear models of what they themselves could be as English speakers in a global context. The second reason for educators to start using this content in the classroom is that although students are aware of the global nature of English and do seem to want to know more about this reality through watching videos from expanding and outer circle English speaking countries, they lack direction. Educators are in the perfect position to provide this. Future research would benefit from exploring the extent to which varieties of English could be included in the classroom as learning material, and the effects on students' self-confidence.

Limitations

Given the small size of the focus group, there was potential for groupthink. Although counter measures were taken against this, which were outlined previously in the methodology, future research would benefit from more participants, and a more diverse group of participants. As there were few participants, shown specially selected videos, the views expressed may not be reflective of all English learners globally or even in Japan. As mentioned before, one participant could not be contacted for a follow-up interview, and this process of follow-up interviews would be extremely helpful in any future research on the subject using a focus group methodology.

In terms of the quantitative study results, the method of convenience sampling at one university may limit the findings to the survey to its specific context. Also, the questions may have been too broad and could have done with more detailed follow-up. Although many of the results seem to suggest strong majorities for certain opinions, the reasons behind the responses at times are not clear. The answers would have been better supported by a follow-up as to why this is the case. These disparities deserve their own research.

Conclusion

Despite the global nature of English, the language is often represented to learners as limited to inner-circle varieties, and this can result in idealizing the native speaker. There has been consensus for decades now that the native speaker of English needs to be demythologized (Kachru, 1987), and that a more accurate representation of global English should be represented in the classroom.

Results from both the qualitative and quantitative research show that learners of English are aware of the global scale of the language and express a desire to be exposed to more content from countries outside of the Inner Circle. This could boost students' confidence and sense of belonging when it comes to English. By seeing people who have gone through a similar learning process and who are interacting in English in a real setting, it could help overcome the alienation that some learners feel with the language.

The implications of the results of this research suggest that educators, course and curriculum developers need to more seriously think about the inclusion of authentic, varied English language content, and how it could be used and utilized in English language education.

In conclusion, given the global nature of English, language education needs to provide students with exposure to as many varieties of English as possible. The question now is how to effectively do this, how to utilize authentic, varied content from an educational standpoint and in terms of students' views of themselves as English speakers. Future research should focus on identifying the most appropriate content and determining how it can be used in an educational sense to provide learners with a well-rounded and effective learning experience.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Assessment Instruments

Discussion Questions

1. How interesting were the videos on a scale from 1 (meaning not so interesting) to 5 (very interesting)? Why?
2. How easy to understand were the videos on a scale from 1 (meaning difficult) to 5 (easy)? Why?
3. What do you think about the way they learn and use English? Is it different to yourself?
4. Do you think these videos are more or less helpful than traditional audio you have heard in textbooks at university or in school?
5. As an English learner, would you like to see more content like this in your language classes at university? Could it replace textbook audio? Would there be any problems with it?

Appendix B

Questionnaire Assessment Instruments

Likert Scale Items

1=Strongly agree 2=Agree 3=Neutral 4=Disagree 5=Strongly disagree

Questions for Survey

1. English is a language from countries such as the UK, America and Australia.
2. People from my home country are good English speakers.
3. English is a global language and belongs to anyone who speaks it.
4. Some varieties of English are more correct than others.
5. Some varieties of English sound nicer than others.
6. I think that the variety of English from my home country is a correct variety of English.
7. When I speak English with “native speakers” of English, I feel confident.
8. When I speak English with “non-native speakers” of English, I feel confident.
9. When I speak in English, I don’t think about being “native” or “non-native”.
10. If I visit a country where English is the main language, or used regularly in daily life, I will worry about my own English level.
11. If I study English for many years, I will become a proficient user of English.
12. When I want to watch an English video (e.g. drama, YouTube) to study English, I choose content from countries such as the UK, America and Australia.
13. When I want to watch an English video (e.g. drama, YouTube) for pleasure, I choose content from countries such as the UK, America and Australia.
14. I would like to watch more English videos (e.g. drama, YouTube) that are NOT from countries like the UK, America and Australia for study.
15. I would like to watch more English videos (e.g. drama, YouTube) that are NOT from countries like the UK, America and Australia for pleasure.

How to cite the article:

Yang, F., Mu, L., Zhang, T., Anisanto, R. A. W., & Dalsky, D. (2024). Technology-powered intercultural exchange: Implications for language learning. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 120–131. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-16>

Practice Article

Technology-Powered Intercultural Exchange: Implications for Language Learning

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Abstract

This paper describes a practitioner research project that incorporated the principles of Exploratory Practice (EP) and integrated several online tools into an intercultural understanding pedagogy methodology (Dalsky et al., in press) through two 14-week intercultural exchange projects at Kyoto University. The authors positioned themselves as intercultural “inclusive practitioner-researchers” and attempted to develop a mutual understanding of the Mandarin Chinese and Japanese cultural concepts using English as a lingua franca. We used Google Docs for synchronous collaboration, ChatGPT for seeking information and language assistance, and Vyond for creating animations about Japanese cultural concepts (e.g., エモい [emoi], いただきます [itadakimasu], and お疲れ様です [otsukaresamadesu]), which were posted on an Instagram account (@intercultural_word_sensei). Semi-structured interviews with two practitioners were conducted and analyzed following Byram’s (2000) assessment guidelines. Results demonstrate how technology facilitated intercultural communication and enhanced our intercultural and linguistic competencies. We elaborate on the implications of applying technology in EP-based language classrooms.

本稿では、京都大学での2つの14週間の異文化コミュニケーションプロジェクトの中で、探究的実践の原則を取り入れ、複数のオンラインツールを異文化理解教育法(Dalsky et al., in press)と組み合わせた実践研究を報告する。著者らは自らを「包括的実践研究者」と位置づけ、英語を共通語としつつ、中国語と日本語の文化概念の相互理解を試みた。GoogleDocsで同時に共同作業を行い、ChatGPTで情報収集と言語サポートを行った上で、Vyondで「エモい」「いただきます」「お疲れ様でした」など日本の文化的概念を動画化し、Instagramアカウント(@intercultural_word_sensei)に投稿した。また、2名の実践者に対して半構造化インタビューを行い、Byram(2000)の評価基準に基づいて分析した。その結果、技術が異文化コミュニケーションを手助けし、異文化のおよび言語的能力を向上させたことを示した。本稿では、EPを基盤とした言語教育における技術活用の示唆も詳述する。

In the context of intercultural communication in English as a lingua franca (ELF), key cultural concepts (or keywords), such as 甘え (*amae*) and 和 (*wa*) in Japanese, are particularly useful for intercultural contact. These key cultural concepts, which express the unique cultural values of a community, are thought to be organized around entire cultural domains (Wierzbicka, 1997). They have the potential to unlock significant insights into broader cultural backgrounds (Dalsky & Su, 2020).

To help intercultural practitioners better understand the concept of key cultural terms and to promote mutual understanding across cultures, Dalsky et al. (in press) propose an intercultural understanding pedagogy methodology based on extensive intercultural practice (Dalsky & Garant, 2016; Dalsky et al., 2022; Dalsky & Mattig, 2023; Dalsky and Su, 2024). This intercultural pedagogical methodology is grounded in the paradigm and principles of Exploratory Practice (EP) as described by Allwright and Hanks (2009). It establishes an environment of equality and mutual support by positioning practitioners as “inclusive practitioner-researchers,” encouraging them to engage in intercultural communication and actively selecting meaningful topics. Through this process, they interpret and reflect on their own culture through key cultural concepts, learn about others’ cultural values, and naturally enhance their language skills, cultural knowledge, and intercultural competence.

Advancements in technology have the potential to enhance concept-based intercultural pedagogical interventions. Therefore, integrating technology may help practitioners more effectively engage in intercultural communication activities and gain a clearer, more intuitive understanding of cultural concepts. This report demonstrates how technology—specifically the integration of ChatGPT, Vyond, and Google Docs—can be leveraged within intercultural pedagogical methodology to facilitate language development and intercultural competence during intercultural communication.

In the present study, we explore the impact of integrating Google Docs into teaching practice to enable flexible discussion participation, including the expression of viewpoints in a shared digital space. We integrate ChatGPT into

the practice to enable students to learn about linguistic, cultural, and historical knowledge, ensuring smoother and more informative interactions (Zhang, 2024; Zokirova, 2024). Additionally, we use Vyond, a web-based animation creation platform, to visualize abstract cultural concepts, such as the Japanese concept of *emoi* (エモい), demonstrating how these concepts are used in contextual conversations.

This pedagogical practice was implemented in a non-credit, discussion-centered seminar named *Soujin Zemi* (総合人間ゼミ), offered by the Faculty of Integrated Human Studies (総合人間学部) at Kyoto University, Japan. The purpose of the *Soujin Zemi* is to directly expose students to the laboratory activities of professors in the faculty. Eight students aged 18 to 26, including four Japanese, three Chinese, and one Malawian, joined our *Soujin Zemi* in the 2023 Academic Year. Regarding English proficiency, the four Japanese undergraduates were at the CEFR B2 level, while the three Chinese graduate students and the Malawian graduate student (who withdrew after three weeks due to a busy schedule) were at the C1 level.

This practitioner's report describes the seminar conducted throughout 2023 (spring and fall semesters) and elaborates on three specific cases using Google Docs, ChatGPT, and Vyond. These cases illustrate the potential benefits and implications of integrating technology into EP-based intercultural pedagogical practices and language learning programs.

Theoretical Framework

In this project, students took on the roles of inclusive practitioner-researchers under the pedagogical principles of EP (Allwright, 2003; Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Hanks, 2017, 2024). The seven principles of EP are as follows:

1. Focus on quality of life as the fundamental issue.
2. Work to understand quality of life before thinking about solving problems.
3. Involve everybody as practitioners developing their own understandings.
4. Work to bring people together in a common enterprise.
5. Work cooperatively for mutual development.
6. Make it a continuous enterprise.
7. Minimize the burden by integrating the work for understanding into normal pedagogic practice.

Initially proposed by Dick Allwright (2003), EP has evolved into a well-established set of guiding principles, primarily for language education. As Hanks (2017) highlights, EP views learners not merely as recipients of knowledge but as partners in research alongside teachers. This approach involves teachers and students collaboratively exploring and deepening their understanding of the teaching and learning processes.

EP integrates research with pedagogy, emphasizing collaboration, mutual learning, and the importance of well-being in the learning experience. EP encourages students to integrate language learning with their real-life experiences and personal interests by involving students as research partners, fostering meaningful self-expression. EP thus cultivates a supportive environment that promotes students' active engagement and contributes to their quality of life.

Furthermore, Yanase (2008) notes that EP developed from a response to both scientific research and action research, combining their strengths and filling the gap between hypothesis testing in scientific research and the practical needs of language teaching and education. EP focuses on deepening understanding and fostering mutual growth among practitioners (i.e., students and teachers) by integrating research into everyday educational experiences and promoting continuous development. This integration has the potential to be particularly effective in intercultural settings where it enhances mutual understanding by enabling participants to explore cultural similarities and differences.

Challenges and Opportunities

Widespread application of EP in foreign language education research has been documented (e.g., Niimi & Umeki, 2024; Zhuo & Huang, 2024). However, there is a notable lack of research applying EP in intercultural communication contexts. To address this gap, we integrate EP principles innovatively as a guiding framework into the classroom research project described in this paper.

Additionally, we elaborate on the use of technology to enhance EP-based learning. Digital platforms and artificial intelligence can serve as scaffolding to implement EP, but their potential remains underexplored in the context of intercultural pedagogy. This paper addresses this gap by applying an EP-based intercultural initiative incorporating technology with English as a lingua franca.

Description of the Teaching Practice

The cultural concept-based methodology implemented in this intercultural pedagogical practice integrated Google Docs, ChatGPT, and Vyond into an EP-based intercultural paradigm to bring together "inclusive practitioner-

researchers” in their exploration of cultural backgrounds through key cultural concepts (e.g. 甘え [*amae*], エモい [*emoi*], etc.). This methodology aimed to understand how practitioners enhance their English language and intercultural competence during intercultural communication using English as a lingua franca.

Implementation

This pedagogical practice was applied in a lab seminar over two semesters. The seminar met once a week for 90 minutes. Learning activities included: 1) discussing assigned intercultural research papers (PDFs linked to Google Docs), 2) sharing information about each other's cultural knowledge through cultural concepts assisted by ChatGPT, and 3) creating animations with Vyond to introduce culturally significant keywords from practitioners' cultural background.

At the end of each semester, we conducted semi-structured interviews with students to gather their reflections on their engagement as an outcome of this technology-powered intercultural pedagogical project. The interview questions are adapted from Jin (2015). We used three detailed cases to illustrate how we integrated Google Docs, ChatGPT, and Vyond into our intercultural pedagogical practice to promote language and cultural learning.

Tool 1: Google Docs

We used Google Docs for fundamental pedagogical tasks, including sharing the class syllabus and schedule with practitioners, assigning reading materials to understand cultural concepts, and discussing questions related to these concepts and the assigned papers throughout the seminar.

Materials and Resources Needed

Using the linking feature in Google Docs, we embedded the link to a PDF document to ensure that class materials are neatly organized according to the class schedule, as a preview assignment for students for each session. The assigned papers are as follows: Dalsky & Garant (2016), Dalsky & Su (2020), Su et al., (2021), and Yamaguchi (2004).

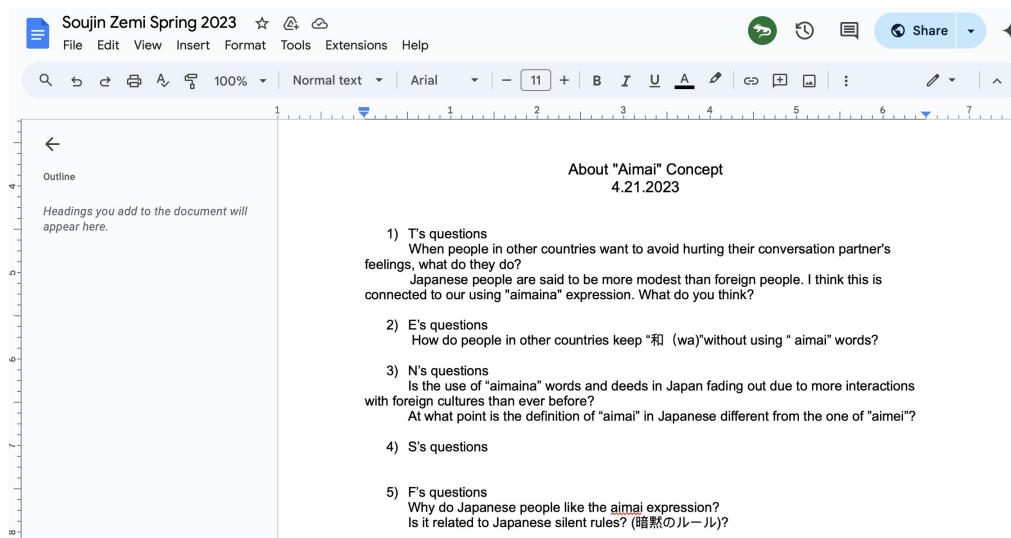
Stages in Implementing the Practice

First, practitioners were invited to a shared Google Docs document to access the class syllabus and materials. During the seminar, practitioners used a Google Doc to read the assigned paper and share their questions and opinions about the classes. These questions were later discussed within the context of intercultural communication using English as a lingua franca.

As shown in Figure 1, five university students (three Japanese, one Chinese, and one Malawian, with names anonymized) participated in intercultural communication to discuss each other's questions surrounding the Japanese cultural concept of 曖昧 (*aimai*). From these discussions, the Japanese students reflected on scenarios illustrating cultural implications and attempted to explain these concepts to their international interlocutors using English as a lingua franca, engaging actively in intercultural dialogue and exercising their English-speaking skills.

Figure 1

Tables in Google Docs 2 and 3 (Completed by Students)



Reflections on the Process and Student Engagement

This workflow enabled practitioners to maintain a traceable record of their questions, thoughts, and corresponding answers. The document history feature in Google Docs allowed for tracking document changes, minimizing the risk of data loss in the project. Indeed, educational goals were effectively supported by fostering a collaborative and interactive environment using Google Docs' flexible features.

Tool 2: ChatGPT

We integrated ChatGPT into the practice of understanding cultural concepts during intercultural communication. Here, we present an interesting case by understanding a classic cultural concept, 意象 (*yixiang*)¹, in literary works using ChatGPT to promote intercultural learning. In this case, two Japanese university students and three Chinese university students participated in discussions, using ChatGPT to explore the classic cultural concepts in 漢詩 (*kanshi*)² and 和歌 (*waka*)³.

Materials and Resources

The third author made the materials in the Google Docs as follows:

- Google Docs 1: A table (adapted from Liu, 2006; Li, 2015) involving the 漢詩 (*kanshi*) and 和歌 (*waka*) categorized by the third author based on the sentiment expressed through the cultural concept—in this case, the Moon. The 漢詩 were excerpted from Japanese textbooks used in senior high school, and the 和歌 were selected from *hyakunin-isshu*.
- Google Docs 2 and 3: Tables where practitioners recorded sentiments expressed through the cultural concept and provided a related literary example from their own culture. Google Doc 2 was designated for Chinese students to fill in 漢詩, while Google Doc 3 was for Japanese students to contribute 和歌 (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Tables in Google Docs 2 and 3 (Completed by Students)

Chinese participant: <i>kanshi</i>			
Yixiang	Sentiment	Reason	<i>kanshi</i>
Moon	Comfortable 長閑、のんびり	诗词本身：秋雨过后天气凉爽。作者赋闲在家，宁静悠闲。	空山新雨后，天气晚来秋。 明月松间照，清泉石上流。 竹喧归浣女，莲动下渔舟。 随意春芳歇，王孙自可留。
	Love, Romantic	元宵节灯会 青年男女相会。观灯赏月。（农历十五 月亮full-moon） 恋人月光柳影下两情依依、情话绵绵的景象，制造出朦胧清幽、婉约柔美的意境。	去年元夜时，花市灯如昼。 月上柳梢头，人约黄昏后。 今年元夜时，月与灯依旧。 不见去年人，泪湿春衫袖。
	miserable, sad, 悲しい	月落乌啼霜满天，通过月亮、乌鸦和霜这些自然景象，表达了诗人对时光流逝和离别的深沉感慨。月亮在这里成为了诗人表达情感的载体，强调了人生的短暂和经历的变迁。	月落乌啼霜满天，江枫渔火对愁眠。 姑苏城外寒山寺，夜半钟声到客船。

Japanese participant: <i>waka/haiku</i>			
Yixiang	Sentiment	Reason	<i>waka/haiku</i>
Moon	Fulfillment, Satisfaction	Fullmoon is used as a metaphor of fulfillment. The author Michinaga made this waka at a banquet, expressing his happiness at consolidating his position in the imperial court.	この世をば我が世とぞ思う望月のかけたることもなしと思えば 藤原道長
	Love, Romantic	月が美しいものの象徴として用いられており、この和歌の中に併用されている「夢」というモチーフとも関連して筆者の儚い一瞥ほれの様子を表現している。	み空行く月の光にただ一目相見し人の夢にし見ゆる 安都摩娘子

¹ *Yixiang*: Yixiang is an objective object infused with subjective emotions, or it is the subjective emotions expressed using objective objects (Yuan, 2009).

² *Kanshi*: Classical Chinese poetry.

³ *Waka*: A kind of classical Japanese poetry.

Stages in Implementing the Practice

- Stage 1: Practitioners read Google Docs 1 and interviewed peers from other cultures to discuss any confusion regarding the content or cultural knowledge. They were allowed to use ChatGPT to search for translations of modern texts, historical background information on 漢詩 and 和歌, and sentiments expressed through the cultural concept. Using this information, practitioners explained their cultural knowledge in English and addressed their foreign peers' questions.
- Stage 2: Practitioners used ChatGPT to identify an additional sentiment conveyed by the cultural concept not covered in the provided materials. They then selected a related literary example from their own culture (漢詩 or 和歌) and recorded it in Google Docs 2 or 3. Finally, practitioners integrated the summarized information from ChatGPT into a brief presentation for their foreign peers, explaining the cultural concept, the newly identified sentiment, the associated literary works, and the cultural insights.

Reflections on the Process and Student Engagement

Integrating ChatGPT provided practitioners with a flexible platform to practice input and a low-pressure space to produce output, thereby enhancing their engagement. In both stages, ChatGPT served as a search tool and assisted practitioners in articulating complex emotions that were difficult to convey using their existing linguistic knowledge, forming a basic understanding of classical cultural concepts.

However, some concerns exist regarding the use of ChatGPT in language learning and teaching. First, the content provided by GPT may be inaccurate in some academic fields. Therefore, an expert is necessary to revise mistakes, and teachers should keep in mind that they should cultivate students' ability to identify and revise errors. Second, responses provided by ChatGPT might be superficial. Overreliance on it without verifying its accuracy may impede students' ability to innovate, extract, and organize information from specialized sources, hindering their creativity, logical thinking, and critical analysis. In our project, the third author, whose research focuses on Chinese and Japanese classic literature, served as the gatekeeper of the information generated by ChatGPT.

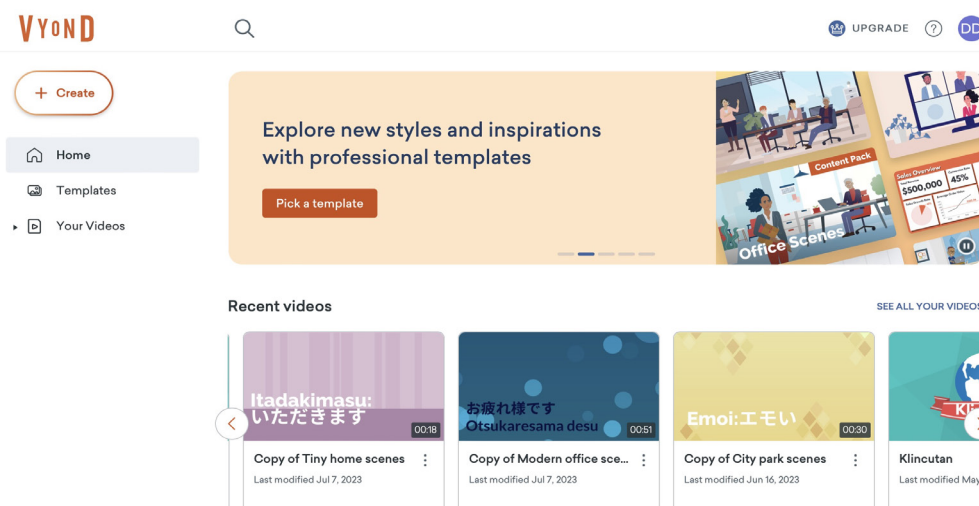
Tool 3: Vyond

Vyond is a web-based platform for creating animated videos with a user-friendly interface. This allows students to focus on content development without being hampered by technical difficulties. At the end of each semester's Soujin Zemi, we ask students to make an animation about the Japanese cultural concepts they discussed.

For example, in the spring semester, three Japanese and three Chinese students (the first, second, and third authors of this paper) worked in three teams, each consisting of one Japanese and one Chinese student. The first author participated in the teamwork and served as a technology assistant in the zemi, helping to create three animations, each focusing on a different Japanese concept or phrase: エモい (*emoi*), いただきます (*itadakimasu*), and お疲れ様です (*otsukaresamadesu*) (Figure 3). The animations focus on Japanese cultural concepts because the project was based at Kyoto University, and all the Chinese students had a basic understanding of Japanese. This facilitated communication, allowing the Japanese students to explain cultural concepts more effectively and collaborate with the Chinese students to create animations based on their discussions.

Figure 3

Vyond Interface and Animations Created by Students



Stages in Implementing the Practice

The procedure for creating these three animations followed a consistent process. First, the Japanese students chose specific cultural concepts discussed in the zemi. Before editing the animations, they were advised to design contextual scenarios, including characters, locations, time, and events in a freeform manner. Next, they brought their ideas to the zemi to create the animation. This step involved selecting a template, main characters, and settings in Vyond, adding English dialogue for each scene, and adjusting characters' movements and facial expressions based on the specific context. After that, each Japanese student dubbed the lines in the story with the original Japanese soundtrack with the help of the technology assistant. Finally, students added titles to their animations and uploaded them to an Instagram account (@intercultural_word_sensei).

Reflections on the Process and Student Engagement

Students created animations that captured the linguistic aspects of the cultural concepts, including their literal meanings and usage contexts and the subtle cultural nuances embedded within the words, fostering cultural sensitivity during intercultural pedagogical practice.

Animations can make language learning more interactive and memorable for both the students who create them and the audience who views them. Moreover, through creating their animations, practitioners solidified their understanding of Japanese cultural concepts, and deepened their cultural knowledge by translating abstract ideas into concrete visual representations.

Outcomes and Observations

Students produced a variety of learning outcomes, including posing questions about cultural concepts, working toward developing a model for improving intercultural competence through intercultural contact, and producing animations about cultural concepts posted on Instagram.

Students' Feedback

Students provided feedback on three aspects: technology, language learning, and intercultural learning.

Technology

Students commented that the incorporation of technology created a more vibrant pedagogical environment. Google Docs facilitated collaborative work from their preferred homework locations, while ChatGPT assisted in revising sentences, thereby reducing stress. These tools streamlined academic tasks and significantly improved students' day-to-day experiences. Utilizing these tools also expanded students' skill sets, equipping them with valuable digital literacy and communication skills, particularly in animation creation.

Student A: It is because of Google Docs. It is very convenient and very easy to use...about sharing information synchronously.

Student B: It reduces my daily stress. So that's one of the aspects that ChatGPT changed my life.

Student C: ...now I recognize a little bit about editing and making animations. When I see some videos on YouTube or something, I'm kind of like how other perspective to when I see that video, which I didn't have before I used Vyond. So it gives me a new point of view...broadens my opinion and appreciate arts and videos and improves your life skills about making some videos.

Language learning

Students highly praised technology-assisted language learning as a means of improving their language proficiency, enabling them to engage with more complex topics and construct more advanced sentences in their English output. Additionally, the integration of EP further increased opportunities to practice speaking English.

Student A: I think the time that I improve my language proficiency most is that I use English to explain some things and matters about my culture to foreigners without misunderstanding...

Student B: As for ChatGPT, for example, when I want to say a word in a foreign language, but I do not know the word in its language and I will search for it. ...For example, I directly type in the chat box, please tell me blah blah blah. And ChatGPT will send some introduction about the information I want...by using ChatGPT, you can just talk to it. It is a very convenient way (compared to using a dictionary). ...I also use ChatGPT to revise my Japanese, sometimes English.

Student C: Without Soujin Zemi, I wouldn't had opportunity to speak in English like this. What I'm trying to say in English. So that's a great opportunity, the significance...It really helped me to develop my language skill.

Student D: I would say I don't like making a formal sentences so much, but after I started using ChatGPT, it really helped me to make a formal sentences. So it reduces my daily stress.

Intercultural learning

In our assessment of intercultural learning, we applied Byram's (2000) assessment criteria, which indicated some improvement in students' intercultural competence, particularly in their attitudes toward their own and other cultures, cultural knowledge, and critical cultural awareness.

Regarding attitude, one Chinese student expressed that her perspective on both Chinese and other cultures had become more positive.

Student: Well, as for Japanese culture, I think compared with before, I become more positive to learn it. ...But compared with before, especially before I entered the university, the attitude becomes more positive.

Students also experienced a mutual enhancement of cultural knowledge. The Chinese students noted that through cultural exchanges with their Japanese peers, they not only deepened their understanding of Japanese culture but also gained a more profound appreciation of their own. This reciprocal exchange fostered a broader and more interconnected understanding of both cultures.

Student: Not only I'm hearing the Japanese students' explanations to me, but also when I talk about and explain my culture to them, I also deepen the understanding toward my culture, I think.

I learned culture more than language. It is not a language learning course. More cultural knowledge about Japan, I think. Especially, you know, the emoji. And how it is connected and related with the Chinese culture. ...even foreign cultures, we can find something common and interconnected.

Regarding critical cultural awareness, Japanese students deepened their understanding of Chinese culture. Also, one student mentioned that her perspective on the Japanese cultural concept of *amae* changed after *Soujin Zemi*.

Student: The changing part is before the *Soujin Zemi*, I was just curious, but after I learned a little bit about Chinese culture and Japanese culture, I feel like explore in System 体系的に. Before the *Soujin Zemi*, I just have a big image about Chinese culture. After *Soujin Zemi*, I just learned it, but like in the (deeper level)....Before the *Soujin Zemi*, I just take the "amae" to children, but by exploring, I recognize that the concept of *amae* is like all over the Japanese society...not feeling like, (people) run from the like responsibility...So just like that (concept) can be seen like everywhere in the Japanese society.

Discussion

Comparison with Existing Teaching Methods or Practices

This integration of technology tools into intercultural practices represents an emerging teaching approach. Unlike traditional language learning and intercultural programs, our project adopts EP, focusing on enhancing quality of life, fostering mutual understanding, and promoting cooperative development.

Within this framework, we learn from each other in a congenial atmosphere, exploring cultural knowledge and enjoying the process without feeling encumbered. Moreover, the EP-based practice breaks away from the traditional teacher-centered model, granting students equal status with teachers and encouraging them to freely express their views on their own culture without fear of judgment. This creates a valuable opportunity for practitioners to develop their English expression and communication skills, and intercultural competence.

Potential Implications for Teaching and Learning in Technology-Assisted Language Classes

The positive outcomes observed in this emerging pedagogical practice have important implications for technology-assisted ESL classes. It is undeniable that incorporating technology in modern language teaching and learning is increasingly important. Our practice encourages students to explore technological tools autonomously, enabling them to raise awareness and develop their ability to use technology for independent learning.

Furthermore, we demonstrated how to integrate technology to empower EP-based language classes. By incorporating AI tools like ChatGPT into EP-based practices, students enhanced their independent learning strategies and formed their own understanding of problems. In a collaborative learning environment, practitioners combined the insights of AI with human intelligence, critically evaluated ChatGPT's output, and reached consensus through discussions with peers and teacher practitioners.

This process helped practitioners learn how to effectively use technology tools during language and intercultural learning, thereby enhancing communication skills. This integration of technology enhanced the effectiveness of language and intercultural learning and had tangible impacts on participants' quality of life. By reducing stress, fostering confidence, and equipping learners with valuable digital skills, this approach demonstrated the potential of technology to enrich both academic outcomes and personal well-being.

Conclusion

In this study, we applied Exploratory Practice (EP) as a guiding principle, combined with modern technologies, namely, Google Docs, ChatGPT, and Vyond, to facilitate a project on intercultural education. The aim was to explore how students naturally develop their English language and intercultural competence with technological support during intercultural communication, where English serves as a lingua franca.

The novelty of our approach lies in integrating EP, a framework centered on understanding, with various technological tools to support and promote intercultural exchange and learning more effectively. Through this innovative integration, we fostered a supportive educational environment that promoted mutual understanding and collaboration while enhancing reflective practice through the student interviews. This approach ensured that students continuously improved their language and intercultural competencies in real-world intercultural exchange settings.

However, this study lacks a robust theoretical framework to guide the use of technological tools and analyze their role in language and intercultural learning. Additionally, the reflective interviews involved only two students, failing to consider factors such as participants' language proficiency and intercultural competencies.

For future research, we aim to adopt a more sophisticated model for technology-assisted learning, recruit a larger sample size, and apply a more detailed classification of participants' language proficiency and intercultural competence. Furthermore, we seek to explore the mechanisms of technology-assisted language learning to gain deeper insights into how it supports the development of students' language skills and intercultural competencies.

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Appendix A

Plan for the 2023 Soujin Zemi in Google Docs

Soujin Zemi Syllabus: Fall 2023

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Fall 2023 Soujin Zemi, Friday, P4: David's Research Room: Academic Building, North 4123

Investigating Cultural Keywords to Understand Human Psychology @intercultural_word_sensei

Schedule

Class	Topic/Activity/Materials																																
1 10/6	<p>Introduction of Course Goals and Schedule:</p> <p>To implement a <u>method</u> of intercultural understanding pedagogy through intercultural exchanges that deepen mutual understanding of cultures through keywords such as those below.</p> <p>1) Add more collaborative essays (2500 words) that compare/contrast new cultural concepts and 2) make animations or illustrations to explain cultural concepts to showcase on: https://interculturalwordsensei.org/ and @intercultural_word_sensei</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Japanese concepts</th> <th>English translation</th> <th>Chinese concepts</th> <th>Indonesian concepts</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>甘え</td> <td>presumed indulgence</td> <td>撒娇, 发嗲</td> <td>manja, manying</td> </tr> <tr> <td>本音/建前</td> <td>true feelings / overt behavior</td> <td>真心话/场面话</td> <td>Sejati, terus terang / basa basi</td> </tr> <tr> <td>集団意識</td> <td>group consciousness</td> <td>集体主义</td> <td>rukun</td> </tr> <tr> <td>和</td> <td>harmony</td> <td>和</td> <td>tepo seliro</td> </tr> <tr> <td>義理/恩</td> <td>obligation/duty</td> <td>人情/恩</td> <td>kewajiban</td> </tr> <tr> <td>面子</td> <td>face</td> <td>面子</td> <td>muka/wajah, kehormatan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>恥</td> <td>shame</td> <td>羞耻, 羞愧, 耻辱</td> <td>klincutan</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Course Procedure: Read and discuss the following articles related to Intercultural Exchanges:</p>	Japanese concepts	English translation	Chinese concepts	Indonesian concepts	甘え	presumed indulgence	撒娇, 发嗲	manja, manying	本音/建前	true feelings / overt behavior	真心话/场面话	Sejati, terus terang / basa basi	集団意識	group consciousness	集体主义	rukun	和	harmony	和	tepo seliro	義理/恩	obligation/duty	人情/恩	kewajiban	面子	face	面子	muka/wajah, kehormatan	恥	shame	羞耻, 羞愧, 耻辱	klincutan
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面子	face	面子	muka/wajah, kehormatan																														
恥	shame	羞耻, 羞愧, 耻辱	klincutan																														

Plan for ChatGPT-Assisted Intercultural Communication of *yixiang*

Before the practice

The third author emailed all students about the procedures of the soujin zemi and what they should prepare as below:

We will talk about the 意象 (*yixiang*) of the Moon on the soujin zemi this Friday (Nov. 10th). 意象 (*yixiang*) is an objective object infused with subjective emotions, or it is the subjective emotions expressed using objective objects.

Before the soujin zemi, please preview Table 1.

Table 1

yixiang	Sentiment	Reason	<i>kanshi</i>	<i>waka</i>
Moon	Homesick	Leave the hometown	低 拳 疑 牀 レ ン ズ ハ 静 頭 頭 是 前 ヲ ヲ コ ェ 思 望 地 看 思 ニ フ ニ ミ ニ ル 故 山 上 月 李 郷 ヲ ヲ 霜 レ 光 ヲ 白 ニ ト	天の原 ふりさけ見れば 春日がなる 三笠の山に 出下し月かも 一阿倍仲麻呂 7
	Farewell		远送从此别，青山空复情。 几时杯重把？昨夜月同行。 列郡讴歌惜，三朝出入荣。 江村独归处，寂寞养残生。 ——《奉济驿重送严公四韵》 唐 杜甫	有り明けの つれなく見え し 別れより 暁ばかり 憂き物はなし 一壬生忠岑 30
	Loneliness and silence of grief	Grief on lose and confusion about the whole life	锦瑟无端五十弦，一弦一柱思 华年。 庄生晓梦迷蝴蝶，望帝春心托 杜鹃。 沧海月明珠有泪，蓝田日暖玉 生烟。 此情可待成追忆，只是当时已 惘然。 ——《锦瑟》唐 李商隐	月見れば ちぢにものこそ 悲しけれ わが身一つの 秋にはあらねど 一 大江千里 23

Each of you should:

1. Understand the meaning of all the 漢詩 (*kanshi*) and 和歌 (*waka*) in Table 1.
2. For literature from your own country, please consider:
 - 1) What sentiment(s) did the author express by using this 意象 (*yixiang*)?
 - 2) Why did each author use this 意象? (Consider historical context, personal experiences, and cultural relevance.)

You may use the internet and AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) for preparation.

During the Practice

Nov. 10th, 2023

1. Each Japanese students explained the waka and the 意象 (*yixiang*) in Table 1 based on the two posted questions. (15 min)
2. Chinese students asked questions about the 意象 (*yixiang*) or Japanese culture, and Japanese students answered. (15 min)
3. Each Chinese participant explained kanshi and the 意象 (*yixiang*) in Table 1 based on the two posted questions. (25 min)
4. Japanese students asked questions about the 意象 (*yixiang*) or Chinese culture, and Chinese students answered. (25 min)
5. Introduce what will be done in the next soujin zemi. (10 min)

Each participant looks for one sentiment (not provided in Table 1) expressed via the appointed 意象(yixiang) with one example of 漢詩(kanshi) and 和歌(waka) in their own culture. Prepare the explanation for the sentiment based on the below contents, and fill in Table 2:

Explain the meaning of 漢詩 (*kanshi*) and 和歌 (*waka*) and what sentiment is expressed.

Explain why the author used this 意象 (*yixiang*) to express such sentiment (The author's personal experience or cultural reasons)

Table 2

Chinese/Japanese students: kanshi/waka/haiku

<i>yixiang</i>	Sentiment	Reason	<i>Kanshi/ Waka/Haiku</i>
Moon			

Nov. 17th, 2023

1. Each Japanese student explained the content of 和歌 (*waka*) and the 意象 (*yixiang*) in Table 3. (20 min)
2. Chinese students ask questions about the 意象 (*yixiang*) or Japanese culture to the Japanese students. (20 min)
3. Each Chinese student explained the content of 漢詩 (*kanshi*) and the 意象 (*yixiang*) in Table 2. (20 min)
4. Japanese students ask questions about the 意象 (*yixiang*) or Chinese culture to the Japanese students. (30min)

Appendix B

Interview Questions

General Information

1. Before taking this course, did you use ChatGPT, Google Docs, and Vyond? If not, were there any online tools/applications you frequently used before this course?
2. How often did you use ChatGPT, Google Docs, and Vyond during Soujin Zemi?
3. How did you use the following tools during the course? ChatGPT, Google Docs, Vyond

Perspective on Using ChatGPT, Google Docs, and Vyond and Their Effectiveness for Intercultural Exchange & Language Learning

4. How did you feel about the use of ChatGPT, Google Docs, and Vyond in Soujin Zemi (e.g., motivation, difficulty)?
5. Do you think ChatGPT, Google Docs, and Vyond were effective tools for: a. Intercultural exchange (e.g., helping with cultural understanding)? b. Language learning? Why or why not?
6. What did you think about the assignments (e.g., creating animations, presenting in English, reading academic papers about intercultural research)? Do you think these activities were relevant for intercultural exchange and language learning?
7. Do you believe Soujin Zemi helped you enhance: a. Language competence? b. Intercultural competence?

Intercultural Competence Related to Byram's (1997) Categories

8. What have you learned in this course? What do you think you gained the most from (e.g., cultural concepts)?
9. Has your knowledge of Japanese and Chinese culture, and their people, increased?
10. How do you feel about learning Japanese and Chinese cultures, and getting to know their people?
11. How did you feel when you discovered differences between the two cultures?
12. Has your attitude toward Japanese and Chinese cultures changed based on your experiences in Soujin Zemi?
13. What aspects of Japanese and Chinese cultures are you still curious about?
14. Have you developed any new strategies or skills to expand your knowledge or understanding of Japanese/Chinese culture during Soujin Zemi?
15. Do you feel more confident communicating with people from Japan or China? Do you believe you can do so without offending them?
16. Has your awareness of cultural similarities and differences between your own culture and Japanese/Chinese cultures increased?
17. Have your behaviors or ways of thinking about Japanese/Chinese cultures changed after Soujin Zemi? If so, how?
18. Have you tried to understand other cultures from a different perspective?
19. Have you started to question your own perceptions and usual ways of thinking about other cultures?
20. Have you become more critical of your perspective on your own culture?

Practical Information

21. What do you think are the benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT, Google Docs, and Vyond for Soujin Zemi?
22. Please describe your overall thoughts, experiences, and impressions of using ChatGPT, Google Docs, and Vyond for intercultural exchange and language learning during Soujin Zemi.
23. Would you be interested in participating in a similar intercultural exchange program in the future? Why or why not?
24. Can you suggest any ways to improve the learning experience in Soujin Zemi?
25. If you have any other thoughts, please feel free to share them.

How to cite the article:

Greisamer, M. (2024). Navigating change: Task-based approaches to boosting self-confidence. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 132–139. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-17>

Practice Article

Navigating Change: Task-Based Approaches to Boosting Self-Confidence

Michael Greisamer

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Abstract

In the post-pandemic era, the return to face-to-face (F2F) classes after two years of online teaching marks a significant shift. However, the challenge of fostering active participation and contribution within the classroom persists. This paper explores an English as a Second Language (ESL) oral communication class focused on presentations in front of peers and group discussions. This task-based approach was implemented consecutively for two years, initially conducted online and later in a face-to-face setting. An end-of-year anonymous survey was administered to collect data. A qualitative analysis of this data was performed, comparing outcomes to ascertain the achievement of our primary goal: building self-confidence among learners. The findings indicate that a well-structured class framework, complemented by explicit instructions and task repetition, significantly facilitated learners' ability to self-correct mistakes and engage at their individual pace. These critical elements, coupled with other factors linked to enhancing self-confidence in second language acquisition (SLA) through oral presentations and group discussions, will be thoroughly examined and discussed.

ポストパンデミック時代において、2年間のオンライン授業を経た後の対面授業への復帰は重要な転換点を迎えます。しかし、教室内での積極的な参加と貢献を促進する課題は依然として存在しています。本論文では、仲間の前でプレゼンテーションやグループディスカッションに焦点を当てた、第二言語としての英語(ESL)の口頭コミュニケーションクラスを探索します。このタスクベースのアプローチは、最初にオンラインで、後に対面形式で、2年間連続して実施されました。年末に匿名のアンケートを実施してデータを収集しました。このデータの質的分析を行い、主な目標である学習者の自信を高めることが達成されたかどうかを比較しました。結果は、明確な指示とタスクの繰り返しによって補完されたよく構築されたクラスフレームワークが、学習者の間違いを自己修正する能力と、各自のペースでの関与を大幅に促進することを示しています。これらの重要な要素は、口頭プレゼンテーションとグループディスカッションを通じて第二言語習得(SLA)における自信を高めるために関連する他の要因とともに、徹底的に検討され、議論されます。

The Covid-19 pandemic forced a sudden switch to online learning. This disruption created many challenges for students and teachers, including a lack of participation and interaction. The pandemic disrupted normal life functions around the world, including learning and education (Greisamer, 2020). This new phenomenon created many hardships for students and teachers (Hobbs & Hawkins, 2020) having to deal with overloaded internet servers and a new style of learning. In Japanese universities, students are now expected to participate fully in online classes. This paper outlines a task-based oral communication course designed to build students' confidence in speaking and communicating with peers through presentations and group discussions, while examining feedback from learners through final class discussions and anonymous end-of-course surveys.

Theoretical Framework

Lack of confidence has been well-documented as a factor contributing to anxiety and reduced classroom participation (e.g., Brown, 2001; Derakshan & Eysenck, 2009; Clément, 1986; Selvi & Martin-Beltrán, 2016; Islam, 2017; Rastelli, 2018; Kung, 2019; Wang & Wu, 2020). Many studies highlight the need to build self-confidence (SC) during language acquisition as it significantly impacts student attitudes and awareness, which in turn determines L2 accomplishment (Clément et al., 1994). Clément's theory of linguistic self-confidence identifies linguistic self-confidence as a key factor in learning another language from a motivational perspective.

The Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework is an innovative approach that emphasizes using meaningful tasks and real communication skills. TBLT focuses less on explicit grammar and encourages students to engage in authentic language use, such as giving presentations and discussing topics of interest to them. As Skehan (2018), posits TBLT's focus on learner engagement and authentic language use helps bridge the gap between classroom practice and real-world language needs. This framework encourages active participation and collaboration, making it a student-centered approach that can enhance language acquisition.

TBLT is particularly effective in developing SC by engaging students in tasks that they are interested in and at their individual proficiency level. According to Long (2015), focusing on task completion rather than linguistic accuracy reduces anxiety and promotes a positive attitude toward learning. Tasks designed to align with students' interests and level can further motivate them and provide opportunities for risk-taking in a supportive environment. This supports Dörnyei and Ryan's (2015) research, which highlights the role of confidence and motivation in language learning success.

SC refers to a person's belief in their own abilities (Douglas, 2014). In the context of ESL, SC or self-esteem plays a crucial role as it empowers learners to achieve their L2 goals more effectively (Islam, 2017). It is shaped by external judgments, contributing to feelings of self-value and worth (Douglas, 2014). Completing tasks and receiving positive feedback can bolster this sense of assurance, thereby enhancing self-confidence (Bandura, 1993).

Research suggests that the mode of presentation via online or face to face can significantly influence SC among second language learners. Online presentations often provide a more relaxed environment, reducing anxiety and building confidence, especially for shy students. A study concerning English as a Foreign Language found that online presentations positively impacted shy students by lowering stress and anxiety levels. (Anjum M., Hanan Abdullah M. 2022).

There is a direct relationship between language learning ability and SC. Erol and Orth, (2011) suggest that self-esteem could be viewed as an assessment influenced by emotions of self-value. Research by Rubio (2007) and De Andrés & Arnold (2011) indicates that greater ability leads to more SC, and having confidence facilitates language acquisition. SC combines self-esteem (built from within) and self-efficacy (built by external support) (Neill, 2005).

As students complete tasks and receive feedback, their SC appears to grow (Kung, 2019). High SC is positively correlated with oral performance and is a crucial affective variable in effective second language acquisition. For example, Heyde (1979) found a positive correlation between SC and oral production performance among American college students. However, Japanese learners may often lack a framework that effectively promotes this behavior.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes using language in social interactions to improve proficiency (Vygotsky, 1987). Despite extensive research on SC in second language acquisition (Clément, R. 1986; Kung, 2019), few studies have investigated its development through task-based approaches during the transition from online to face-to-face classes. Additionally, existing literature often overlooks specific challenges faced by Japanese learners in oral communication tasks.

Oral presentation tasks can be used at all learning levels. Minematsu (2020) proposes that cognitive apprenticeships through peer interactions improve SC. By working in pairs, learners enhance articulation, comprehension, and memorization, which are useful for oral presentations.

Japanese learners often experience low self-confidence and high anxiety due to societal and second language anxiety (Greisamer, 2019). This anxiety leads to communication avoidance, shyness, and confusion Ur (1996) and Tsui (1996) found that anxiety and silence exacerbate each other, increasing anxiety. Additionally, Japanese cultural norms of humbleness and politeness cause students to underestimate their language abilities, hindering progress.

Language learning is unique for each learner, progressing at individual paces to reach personal goals. Rubio (2007) argues that unrealistic goals of native-like competence can negatively impact SC. Derakshan and Eysenck's (2009) Attentional Control Theory suggests that anxiety may influence cognitive processing efficiency, potentially lowering SC and making it more challenging for anxious learners to maintain focus (Greisamer, 2019). Participating in oral presentations (giving, listening, and critiquing) appears to have potential to boost learners' confidence and autonomy, which could help reduce anxiety. Clément (1986) posits that confidence alleviates language anxiety. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering an atmosphere of respect and value, rather than unrealistic comparisons to native speakers.

In the course described, tasks include giving presentations and discussing topics. Building SC involves creating presentations, while efficacy comes from the feedback and discussions that follow.

Design and Procedure

Participants in this class are first-year English majors at a public foreign language university in Kansai, enrolled in a 15-week course requiring two oral presentations. The first group was taught online via Zoom while the second was taught face-to-face. The semester is divided into four parts: learning how to present, delivering the first presentation, receiving feedback and making adjustments, and delivering the second presentation. Each class includes individual presentations followed by group discussions.

Presentation dates are assigned early to encourage students to take responsibility and set goals. The first group of presenters, selected randomly but ideally including confident students, is evaluated more leniently to reduce stress. After presentations, groups of five are formed for discussions, with presenters rotating between groups to gather diverse feedback. Time management is crucial, with 40 minutes allocated to presentations (10 minutes per student) and another 40 minutes for group discussions. Adjustments may be required based on the number of presenters, such as creating groups without a presenter to ensure everyone participates. Additional activities should be planned while considering these time constraints (Table 1).

Table 1

Parameters for the Oral Presentation

Category	Parameter	Details
Presentation	Time	5-minute speaking time, excluding media (video or audio).
	Flow	Smooth transitions and logical progression.
	Directions	Following given guidelines.
	Overall Comprehension	Clear understanding by the audience.
Content	Relevance	Content must relate to the chosen topic.
	Explanation	Adequate details and definition of key terms.
	Knowledge Demonstration	Understanding of the subject, including reasoning for topic selection and background information.
Oral	Pronunciation, Intonation, and Tone	Clear articulation, engaging voice, and appropriate modulation.
	Fluency and Pace	Smooth and coherent speech delivery.
	Articulation	Encourages clear expression using lips, jaw, tongue, and palate effectively (Rosenberg and Hirschberg, 2005).
	Feedback	Written or oral feedback to improve individual needs for the final presentation.
Visual	Props	Relevant slides, photos, or media to enhance visual appeal.
	PowerPoint	Recommended but not required; most students are familiar with its usage.
	Originality	Props should add a distinctive style and aid comprehension.
Memorization	Use of Memory Aids	Full memorization promotes natural flow but can cause gaps or pauses. Memory cards or notes are allowed for support.
	Evaluation of Aid Use	Teachers evaluate the effectiveness of using aids during the presentation.

Topic

Selecting a topic is crucial and needs to be explained clearly to students to prevent confusion and loss of confidence. Delays in choosing a topic can be due to poor communication, lack of confidence, or procrastination. If necessary, the teacher can assign the topic to initiate the process. The topic should be academic, relevant to current events, or related to the students' lives, such as politics, world affairs, environmental issues, technology, health, or social issues. Although this may initially cause anxiety, providing clear examples and guidance helps students understand their options. Students may choose the same topic as long as their work is original. Similar topics can enhance group discussions by providing background knowledge. Pre-presentation discussions allow students to brainstorm and articulate their ideas, reducing topic redundancy.

Feedback on Presentation

Once the parameters, themes, and dates are set and understood, presentations and discussion groups begin. During presentations, the teacher takes notes for feedback, and non-presenting students take notes and prepare questions. After each presentation, the teacher provides constructive criticism both orally (to the class) and in writing (privately) to the presenter. Verbal feedback focuses on procedures and the topic, helping to build self-confidence through task completion. Private written feedback, which is more critical during the first presentation, addresses style, pronunciation, and tone of voice to encourage improvement. For the second presentation, feedback is generally more positive to boost confidence. Students are encouraged to discuss their feedback in breakout rooms or after class.

Group Discussion

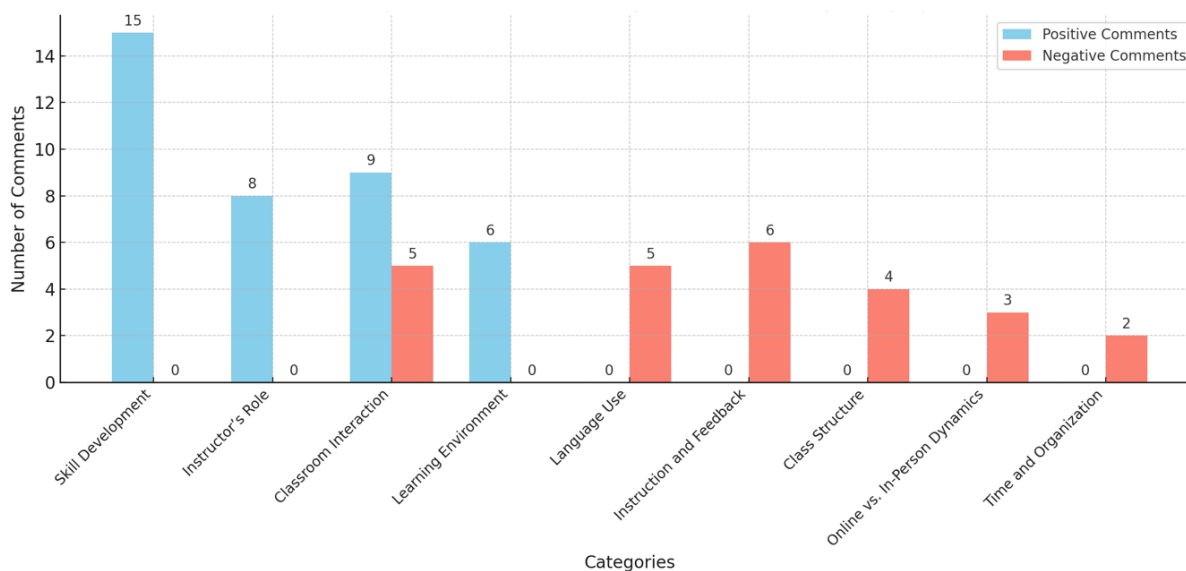
Following presentations, group discussions take place. In both online and face-to-face (F2F) settings, students are divided into groups, with presenters rotating between them. The goal is to encourage English use while avoiding undue pressure. Japanese may be used to support the conversation if it stalls, but maintaining interaction is the priority.

Feedback Results

This class has been taught both online and face-to-face (F2F) by the author. Feedback was gathered through an anonymous online survey at the end of the course. The survey included sections for participants to write comments under “Good points” and “What I would like to see improved.” Figure 1 provides a summary of positive and negative comments from the survey (see Figure 1). Some comments were in English, while most were in Japanese and translated into English. As the comments were anonymous and randomly collected, some students provided feedback in both categories. These responses are marked with a letter (e.g., A). See Appendix A for details.

Figure 1

Survey Results: Positive vs. Negative Comments by Category



Discussion

During the pandemic, teaching online significantly influenced self-confidence (SC) in students in both positive and negative ways. The virtual environment provided a safe, less intimidating place for students to practice and engage from their own space. As Dhawan (2020) posits, the flexibility and accessibility of online learning fostered autonomy and self-directed learning, empowering students to take control of their progress. However, the lack of face-to-face interaction and technical difficulties often hindered students' abilities to fully engage. Often students became frustrated, turned off their camera and stopped participating altogether.

SC is often seen as a counter to language anxiety. Clément (1986) defines SC as the combination of low anxiety and positive self-assessments. The idea is that the more confident a student is, the more they will participate in class. Speaking in front of others, even in one's first language, can be challenging. For Japanese students, doing this in a second language is even more daunting. This course aims to gradually reduce the pressure of public speaking by allowing learners to choose their own topics. This freedom helps boost SC in speaking, reduces anxiety, and, according to feedback, improves SC levels, thereby enhancing overall L2 proficiency.

As highlighted in the literature review, the relationship between ability and SC goes beyond mere positivity in the classroom. Fostering SC is key to creating a supportive environment that encourages learners to reach their full potential. Researching a topic provides the necessary background, vocabulary, and content to support learners' ability to engage in discussion. Being able to use the target language without anxiety in meaningful communication serves as a clear indicator of SC.

The teacher significantly impacts SC development and can also be a source of anxiety (Greisamer, 2020). Williams and Andrade (2008) found that teachers sometimes caused anxiety through inappropriate criticism and a lack of instructional support. However, as seen from student comments, teachers can positively influence both student performance and emotional well-being. From an online class survey, one student stated: “The teacher seemed to be able to see the personalities of each person. Many times I saw him relax a nervous person or give warm encouragement.” while another said: “I was glad that the atmosphere was relaxed and easy to participate in.” Therefore, teachers should maximize exposure to English in a low-anxiety environment, provide opportunities for success through personal and meaningful activities, and emphasize autonomous learning by drawing on learners' knowledge and resources.

Conclusion

This study addresses the previously identified gap in research on task-based approaches to SC development during the transition from online to face-to-face classes among Japanese ESL learners. The findings indicate that structured task repetition and constructive feedback effectively help students overcome these challenges. Positive survey responses and improved scores on subsequent presentations suggest that the class successfully enhanced students' SC. Additionally, simplifying the process of making effective and comprehensible presentations contributes to a more relaxed and learner-friendly environment, leading to greater engagement and participation. This step-by-step approach not only supports skill development but also encourages a willingness to communicate confidently throughout the semester, ultimately boosting SC.

Limitations / Further Research

While the claim that the course builds SC is supported by student feedback, the limited sample size and lack of quantitative data necessitate further validation. This paper opens avenues for deeper research, such as incorporating a more detailed peer review system. This could involve practicing drafts with different partners before presentations and using peer assessment forms afterward to take a more active role in the process. Ahangari, Rassekh-Alqol, and Hamed (2013) developed a suggest form tailored to students' needs, which could be adapted here. This form uses a five-point Likert scale, providing quantitative data for further research.

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Appendix A

First year of teaching course

Comments for the Good Points of the Course (Online during pandemic)

- There were a lot of presentations, and it was good for both listeners and presenters to gain experience. It is good for both the listeners and the presenters to gain experience.
- I am going to give a presentation, so it was good to learn how to prepare for it.
I think it was good that I could learn how to prepare and give a presentation.
- (A) I could use English making a presentation and in breakout room discussion.
- The teacher seemed to be able to see the personalities of each person. Many times I saw him relax a nervous person or give warm encouragement. I was glad to meet my classmates as it is difficult to meet face-to-face.
I was able to talk and communicate with my classmates online and in groups.
I think it's a great thing to be able to talk and communicate with your classmates in a pleasant way. I think it is due in part to the help of these teachers who help us on a daily basis.
- The class provided a good opportunity to make presentations in English, which was very effective.
- (B) I was glad that the atmosphere was relaxed and easy to participate in.
- I was able to interact with many people in groups, so I didn't feel lonely even in the Corona
I didn't feel lonely during the disaster.
- (C) I was able to acquire not only English skills, but also presentation and conversation skills.
- (D) I learned a lot of new things by listening to everyone's presentations.
- I love this class! I love to talk with classmates and Dr. G. in English.
- (E) I am nervous about presentations no matter how many times I do them, so this is a class where I can practice that.
- The breakout room is a great opportunity for students to improve their English skills.
You will be able to gain new knowledge in a variety of areas through your classmates' presentations. The classmates' presentations are a great way to gain new knowledge in various fields. The teacher also participates in the discussions, so I can listen to his opinions.
It's interesting to hear the teacher's opinions.

Improvements for the Course (Online during pandemic)

- I want to be able to communicate more in English with my classmates. Discussions between students are often in Japanese.
I wish I could speak more since this is a communication class.
- (A) It can't be helped but I couldn't meet my classmates face-to-face.
- (B) It was a communication class but I felt that not much instruction was given to improve conversation skills. The lines for presentations are usually prepared in advance. In addition, the discussions were left to each student's own English ability. I felt that there was not enough opportunity for students to improve their English.
- (D) It's a little hard to do presentations twice a semester. I think it would be better to have one presentation per half year.
- I understand that you are online, but I would like to see you and take your English course.

I wanted to have a solid English conversation class.

I would have liked to do that.

- (E) I wish I had more advice from the teacher on how to give a presentation and how to make slides that are easy to read.
- (F) I think it would be good if there were more things to learn from the teachers.
- I would like to learn more from the teacher.

Second year face to face (Post-pandemic)

Comments for the Good Points of the Course

- The teacher's story/speaking is interesting.
- Through the viewing of presentations, students will acquire the ability to listen to and understand English, and to share their own meaning in English in subsequent discussions. The teacher will provide supplementary explanations when you have difficulty understanding.
- It's all in English, so I can learn a lot.
- Although the content of the presentation was difficult to understand, the teacher explained the content in an easy-to-understand manner.
- There will be group work, so I have to actively speak English! I like that there is no pressure to be a "good" speaker, and I think it is a good way to learn English in a natural conversational context. Usually it is easy to speak what I am thinking, but I thought it was good that I could learn a lot by speaking out in English.
- He explained what I didn't understand in a way that was easy to understand.
- (B) The teacher spoke at a speed that I could hear and answered my questions in a respectful manner.
- The fact that he went around to each group and taught them about topics that were unclear. The opportunity to speak English with independence.
- I have a lot of time to think for myself, and I don't get bored doing it.
- (C) Being able to communicate using English.
- The English group discussion was good.
- It is easy to feel at home and speak up.
- Anyway, it's fun.
- The doctor is very kind and easy to talk to. I appreciate the direct intervention and guidance in group discussions.
- We have a lot of chances to discuss with other students.
- (E) Dr. G. spoke to the students, so we can express our opinion freely.
- There was lots of opportunities to talk to the instructor.
- The distribution of presentation and discussion was appropriate.
- An atmosphere is created in which it is easy to talk.
- I appreciated that he pronounced the words slowly and clearly in every class.

Comments for Improvements

- (A) I want the class to start on time.
- (B) The same was true for the other students. The students spoke English to each other, but since none of them had much experience in speaking English, they did not understand the presentation topics, so they often had to speak in Japanese.
- (C) I thought that the group work may need to be reconsidered if it is to be an effective oral communication practice in English due to the differences in the students' English levels (conversational ability).
- The number of students is too large for an English communication class. The group conversation is with Japanese students, so the conversation does not progress well in English.
- (D) Sometime I didn't understand what to talk in the discussion.
- Increase the number of topics for discussion.

How to cite the article:

Jeffery, D. (2024). L2 speaking anxiety on L2 acquisition for learners of English and Patwa. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 140–149. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIG10.1-18>

Research Article

L2 Speaking Anxiety on L2 Acquisition for Learners of English and Patwa

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Abstract

This research examined foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) in two linguistic contexts: English and Patwa. It explored how Japanese learners acquired these languages. Participants included students, language enthusiasts, and those in immersion programs. FLSA ratings of 25 participants were measured using Guntzville, Yale, and Jensen's (2016) communication measure, while the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) assessed oral proficiency from A1 to C1. Tests were conducted orally, face-to-face. In-depth interviews provided additional insights into participants' L2 learning backgrounds and experiences in various contexts, including classrooms, travel, and cultural immersion. Results indicated that participants with the highest proficiency levels had minimal or mild anxiety in both languages: 88% for English and 100% for Patwa learners. This study offers unique insights into L2 speaking anxiety, particularly comparing standard and nonstandard English varieties.

この研究は、英語とパトワという二つの言語環境における外国語スピーキング不安 (FLSA) を調査しました。日本人学習者がこれらの言語をどのように習得するかを探り、参加者は学校で学ぶ学生、言語愛好者、そして言語・文化浸透プログラムに参加する人々でした。25人の参加者のFLSA評価はGuntzville, Yale, and Jensen (2016) によるコミュニケーション測定を使用して行われ、CEFRのスピーキングテストでA1からC1までの口頭能力レベルを評価しました。テストは対面の口頭で行われ、詳細なインタビューを通じて学習者の背景と経験をさらに理解しました。結果は、最高の熟達度を持つ参加者が両言語で最小限または軽度の不安を示し、英語で88%、パトワで100%でした。この研究は、標準および非標準の英語の種類を比較し、FLSAに関する独自の洞察を提供します。

Anxiety is a primary factor influencing the learning of a foreign language (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). There are no studies related to foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) learning Jamaican Patwa (See Appendix E for key features of Jamaican Patwa). While comprehensive data on the number of Japanese individuals who speak Jamaican Patwa is not readily available, many Japanese encounter Patwa through music (Reggae and Dancehall), cultural events such as the Yokohama Reggae Festival and tourism. Patwa presents a unique opportunity to explore anxiety in a nontraditional context. There is limited comparative research on nonstandard contexts (nonformal and informal languages, including but not limited to dialects, colloquial languages, pidgins and creoles) such as Patwa. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the implications of FLSA in both standard and nonstandard language learning contexts.

Literature Review

“Since the official establishment of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Jamaica Office in 1989, JICA Jamaica has implemented several projects, dispatched over 462 volunteers, and provided training opportunities in Japan to over 650 Jamaicans” (JICA Newsletter, March 2021). As recorded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Jamaica, up to 2020, the number of Japanese nationals residing in Jamaica was 188 (October 2020) and on record in the Embassy of Jamaica Tokyo, Japan, “Over 100,000 Japanese travelers have visited Jamaica in the last fifteen years, mostly for sightseeing, to attend reggae concerts to study English and Jamaican patois” (Embassy of Jamaica, Tokyo, Japan, 2019). The longstanding cultural and educational exchanges between Japan and Jamaica provide a unique context for examining how Japanese learners approach acquiring language skills like Jamaican Patwa, especially when contrasted with the challenges faced in learning English, which is often marked by high levels of anxiety

Anxiety is “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope 1986). It is a topic of much discussion by linguists calling for a multifaceted approach, considering factors such as aptitude, motivation, and anxiety, all of which help to determine the extent to which learners acquire L2 (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Specifically, Japanese learners experience high levels of anxiety due to fear of making mistakes and negative

feedback, which hinders their oral communication skills in English. Kaneko (2018) while studying foreign language classroom anxiety, found that it is widespread among Japanese university students, many reporting significant anxiety during speaking activities, particularly in front of peers and instructors. Chahrazad and Kemel (2022) highlighted the significance of understanding the effects of anxiety on language, where the fear of negative evaluation, lack of preparation and limited proficiency is addressed.

Research has been emphasizing interaction, output and sociocultural factors in efforts to mitigate FLSA. Wang and Liu (2024) found that low-anxiety environments with frequent interaction improve fluency among learners. The work highlights the importance of meaningful interaction, where learners can negotiate meaning which helps in developing linguistic skills and reduces anxiety through opportunities to clarify meaning and immediate feedback.

Another theory focusing on output underscores the role of language production in SLA. Chen (2023) demonstrated that structured output accompanied by supportive feedback reduces speaking anxiety and improves learners' oral proficiency. Additionally, the sociocultural approach to addressing anxiety in SLA asserts that collaborative dialogue and scaffolding within a learners Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) are essential for SLA. Al-Shehri and Al-Qahtani (2024) examined FLSA in Saudi University classrooms, concluding that collaborative and culturally responsive environments significantly reduced learners' anxiety while fostering linguistic growth. Other researchers focused their resources and attention on using online presentations to alleviate anxiety (Shahi, 2016), while peer support and technology have been presented as creative options and solutions to fostering low pressure environments aiming to enhance language outcomes (Jabber & Mahmood, 2020; Wan & Moorhouse, 2024).

While authors like Paugh (2012) examine the interplay between language and childhood and the cultural change within a Caribbean community, more work can be done to investigate FLSA outside of the classroom for Japanese learners or in situations where the target language is non-standard. As suggested by Paugh, exploring how language helps to shape identity and community is crucial.

The longstanding cultural and educational ties between Japan and Jamaica provide a compelling backdrop for exploring language acquisition, particularly the role of anxiety in SLA. While much research highlights the debilitating impact of FLSA in traditional classroom settings, especially for Japanese learners studying English, there is a significant gap in understanding how anxiety manifests in nonstandard language learning contexts, such as Jamaican Patwa.

This review underscores the importance of fostering low anxiety environments, leveraging sociocultural factors and encouraging meaningful interactions to enhance language outcomes. Further research into the intersection of anxiety, identity and community in informal learning settings will deepen our understanding of SLA. As such, this research seeks to answer the following research questions: Is there a connection between FLSA and SLA within the contexts of learning English, and Jamaican Patwa? What are the similarities and differences between factors connected to FLSA and SLA in the contexts of English learners and Patwa learners?

Methodology

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches that involved using survey questionnaires and interviews, seeking to provide a holistic understanding of the complex phenomenon of FLSA and its effects on second language acquisition in two distinct linguistic contexts.

Participants

The participants in this study were Japanese learners of English and Patwa. They included former language students, language enthusiasts (people drawn to the language due to personal interest, cultural appreciation, intellectual curiosity, or a passion for linguistic diversity), and individuals who participated in cultural immersion programs. Participants were recruited through referrals from individuals within social and professional circles who knew others' aptitude in both English and Patwa.

Data Collection

Participants were asked to complete a standardized FLSA assessment questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Communication Anxiety (FLCA) scale designed by Guntzviller, Yale, and Jensen (2016) to assess FLCA levels. The FLSA scale used in this study is an adaptation of the FLCA, specifically focusing on the apprehension experienced during the verbal interactions in a second language. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions, seven of which requested demographic data and seven that were used to assess FLSA. The sum of the latter seven questions asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to calculate the FLSA levels (see Appendix A). Scores in the range 7–11 were classified as having a minimal level, 12–15 mild, 16–20 moderate and greater than 21 severe. The survey was available to participants for a month and was created using Google Forms and the link was sent to the participants who volunteered to be a part of the research.

Language Proficiency Tests

Guided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), participants were given

speaking tests in both English and Patwa to assess their oral proficiency levels (see Appendix B). Participants were scored and ranked based on their comprehension and responses to the questions in the respective language. They were assessed and ranked solely by the author. The questions were the same for both languages. The tests were done orally, face-to-face and over the Zoom meeting platform.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the participants to explore their personal experiences, coping strategies, and perceptions of FLSA in both L2 contexts. The interviews were done face to face and over Zoom. They were conducted in English, Patwa and Japanese. Sometimes, there was a mixture of languages used for clarity and comfort. There were 10 base questions (See Appendix C), and each interview lasted 15-25 minutes.

Data Analysis

This research focused on both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were analysed using statistical methods to identify correlations while the qualitative data from interviews provided deeper insights into personal experiences and contextual factors influencing FLSA.

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data comprised of FLSA ratings and CEFR-guided proficiency levels for English and Patwa. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, followed by a correlation analysis to examine relationships between anxiety levels and language proficiency.

Descriptive Statistics:

- Anxiety Levels: The participants were categorized into four anxiety levels: minimal, mild, moderate, and severe.
- Proficiency Levels: Proficiency in English and Patwa was assessed using the CEFR scale, ranging from A1 to C1.

Correlation Analysis:

- A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to measure the relationship between FLSA and proficiency levels in both languages.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and organized into themes that emerged from the participants' experiences and perceptions.

Coding and Themes:

- Fear of Negative Evaluation: Many participants highlighted anxiety due to the fear of making mistakes and being judged.
- Cultural Factors: Differences in cultural contexts between English and Patwa learning environments influenced anxiety levels.
- Coping Strategies: Strategies such as constant communication with native speakers, traveling overseas, and self-motivation to produce the language were identified as effective in reducing FLSA.

Comparative Analysis:

- The interviews revealed that while both English and Patwa learners experienced anxiety, the nature and intensity of anxiety differed depending on the context of learning and the learners' experiences.
 - English learners often faced anxiety in formal academic and professional settings, where the structured environment, focus on grammar accuracy, and fear of negative evaluation amplified their speaking anxiety.
 - In contrast, Patwa learners encountered anxiety in informal social and cultural contexts. The nonstandardized nature of Patwa presented unique challenges, as learners often had to navigate its varying usage and cultural nuances. However, this was mitigated by the supportive and immersive environment in which they learned. Participants frequently mentioned how cultural immersion, direct interaction with native speakers, and the playful, informal atmosphere surrounding Patwa learning helped reduce their anxiety.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings gave insight into FLSA among Japanese learners. The quantitative data highlighted the inverse relationship between anxiety and proficiency, while the qualitative data provided contextual explanations for these findings. Lower anxiety levels reported by Patwa learners can be attributed to the supportive and informal learning environments compared to the structured and evaluative contexts of English learning.

Qualitative data from interviews highlighted that many participants found learning Patwa easier due to its culturally immersive and nonjudgemental nature. For instance, as noted by one participant, “Jamaican people taught me how to speak Patwa. They don’t accuse you of speaking it wrong, which made it easier to learn,” while another stated that Patwa feels close to his heart. It is energetic and expressive, unlike English, which feels too formal. These remarks emphasize how the informal atmosphere surrounding Patwa learning fosters comfort and reduces anxiety.

Quantitative data further supports this observation, as 100% of Patwa learners at the C1 proficiency level reported minimal or mild anxiety, compared to 88% of English learners at the same level. Moreover, English learners often faced anxiety in formal academic and professional settings, where a focus on grammar accuracy and fear of negative feedback amplified their apprehension. In contrast, Patwa learners benefitted from socially driven contexts, where interaction with native speakers and cultural immersion created relaxed and encouraging environments, mitigating their anxiety.

Results

Anxiety Levels

Twenty-five participants undertook the FLSA assessment, where 44% recorded minimal foreign language speaking anxiety levels. The second most common level among the participants was mild, which accounted for 32% of the participants. Moderate anxiety levels were reported by 8% of participants, while twice that amount—16%—experienced severe anxiety (see Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Participants’ FLSA Scores

Assessment Score	Anxiety Level	No. Participants
7 to 11	Minimal	11
12 to 15	Mild	8
16 to 20	Moderate	2
21 <	Severe	4

Language proficiency Levels

In terms of English-speaking proficiency, the majority of participants ($n = 11$) were at the B1 level. Seven participants ($n = 7$) were at the C1 level, while three ($n = 3$) were at the A2 level. The remaining four participants ($n = 4$) were classified at the A1 level.

For Patwa-speaking proficiency, 25 participants ($n = 25$) were assessed. Among them, seven ($n = 7$) were at the B1 level, and another seven ($n = 7$) were at the B2 level. The A2 and C1 levels each had four participants ($n = 4$), while three ($n = 3$) were classified at the A1 level.

Research Question 1

Among the 25 participants ($n = 25$) who completed proficiency assessments, 12 ($n = 12$) were classified at the C1 level. Of these, nine ($n = 9$) reported minimal anxiety levels, two ($n = 2$) had mild FLSA, and one ($n = 1$) experienced severe FLSA.

The B2 proficiency level, the second-highest recorded in this study, was attained by seven participants ($n = 7$) learning Patwa. Of these, four ($n = 4$) reported either minimal or mild anxiety levels.

The B1 proficiency level was the most common among participants and represented the mode proficiency level in this study. A total of 14 participants ($n = 14$) at this level reported minimal or mild FLSA, the two lowest levels on the FLSA measure. However, the remaining four participants ($n = 4$) at the same proficiency level exhibited either moderate or severe FLSA.

Overall, results indicate that participants with higher speaking proficiency tended to report lower levels of FLSA, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

List of Participants' FLSA Scores, English, and Patwa Oral Proficiency

Participant	Anxiety Level	English Proficiency	Patwa Proficiency
1	Minimal	B1	C1
2	Minimal	B1	B2
3	Minimal	C1	A2
4	Minimal	C1	B2
5	Minimal	A2	B1
6	Minimal	B1	B2
7	Minimal	C1	C1
8	Minimal	C1	B1
9	Minimal	A1	B1
10	Minimal	B1	C1
11	Minimal	C1	C1
12	Mild	C1	A1
13	Mild	B1	A1
14	Mild	C1	B2
15	Mild	B1	B1
16	Mild	B1	B1
17	Mild	B1	A2
18	Mild	A2	A2
19	Mild	A1	B1
20	Moderate	B1	A2
21	Moderate	A2	B1
22	Severe	B1	B2
23	Severe	B1	A1
24	Severe	C1	B2
25	Severe	A1	B2

Pearson Correlation Results

A correlation calculation was conducted to look at the relationship between Anxiety Level and English Proficiency. The result showed a correlation coefficient of -0.214 with the p -value being 0.305. The correlation between Anxiety Level and Patwa Proficiency showed a correlation coefficient of -0.233 with the p -value being 0.263.

The negative correlation coefficient (-0.214) suggests a slight inverse relationship between anxiety levels and English proficiency; as anxiety increases, English proficiency slightly decreases. The p -value (0.305) indicates that this correlation is not statistically significant at the typical significance level (0.05). Similarly, the negative correlation coefficient (-0.233) suggests a slight inverse relationship between anxiety levels and Patwa proficiency. The p -value (0.263) again suggests that this correlation is not statistically significant at the typical significance level (0.05).

These results indicate that there is a slight inverse relationship between foreign language speaking anxiety and both English and Patwa proficiency among the participants. However, these correlations are not statistically significant, implying that further research with a larger sample size or additional variables might be necessary to draw more definitive conclusions.

Research Question 2

Participant responses were coded to identify key themes, which are presented in Table 3. Most participants ($n = 14$) felt that traveling/living overseas played a significant role in addressing FLSA and its connection to SLA. The other major factors connected to both FLSA and SLA were Feedback/Mistake fear ($n = 9$), Grammar/Semantics ($n = 8$), National/Individual personality ($n = 8$) and Teaching methodology ($n = 8$). Though mentioned, only a few of the participants believed that Cultural familiarity ($n = 2$) and Prior L2 learning ($n = 2$) were factors to be considered.

Table 3

Interview Responses: Factors Affecting Anxiety in English

Factor	Number of Responses
Traveling/living overseas	14
Constant communication	5
Grammar/Syntax	8
Interaction with natives	6
Cultural familiarity	2
Pressure to produce	4
Motivation for learning	5
Prior L2 learning	2
Feedback/Mistake fear	9
National & Individual personality	8
Teaching methodology	8

The patterns and themes that emerged from the interviews regarding learning Patwa were similar except for Language similarities as depicted in Table 4.

Table 4

Interview Responses: Factors Affecting Anxiety in Patwa

Factor	Number of Responses
Traveling/living overseas	15
Constant communication	7
Grammar/Syntax	3
Interaction with natives	10
Cultural familiarity	12
Pressure to produce	5
Motivation for learning	5
Prior L2 learning	5
Feedback/Mistake fear	2
National/Individual Personality	5
Language similarities	4
Teaching methodology	3

The leading factors that emerged from the interviews for learners of Patwa were recorded as Traveling/living overseas (n = 15), Cultural familiarity (n = 12), Interaction with natives (n = 10) and Constant communication (n = 7). Only two of the participants (n = 2) cited Feedback/Mistake fear as a factor.

As noted in Tables 3 and 4, traveling or living overseas had a significant impact on FLSA and plays a key role in SLA. While grammar and syntax are key to SLA, many of the participants noted that they lacked speaking practice within the classroom setting which stands out as a flaw within L2 teaching in Japan. On the other hand, learners of Patwa acquire the language through cultural immersion and are less negatively affected by FLSA. One participant pointed out that “Jamaican people taught me how to speak Patwa. That is why I can speak it now. The Jamaican culture doesn’t accuse you of speaking wrong patwa, that is why Japanese people learn Patwa so fast.”

Along with cultural assimilation and interaction with native speakers, sharing similarities with the target language is also inherently linked to FLSA and SLA. Participants noted that “*patwa similar to Japanese soun* [Patwa sounds similar to Japanese]” and “I am from Osaka, so I felt like Jamaican people are similar to people from my city.” Additionally, prior L2 learning equips L2 learners with the skills needed to function and overcome challenges in other L2 learning spaces: “After learning English, Patwa is easier for Japanese.” / “*Mi learn Patwa an den mi get inglish*. [I learnt Patwa and then I was able to acquire English]”.

A less talked about topic in the discourse surrounding FLSA and SLA–learner’s feelings towards the target language–plays a significant role in a learner’s ability to and motivation to acquire the language. Some participants spent time explaining how they felt about English and Patwa:

If mi talk inglish in di streets mi fren dem look dung pon me. [If I speak English in the streets my friends will look down on me]

it (English) too formal. Mi caan relax. [It’s too formal. I can’t relax].

It feel far from mi heart. [It feels far from my heart].

Patwa has more energy than English when you say things.

Discussion and Implications

Based on the Correlation Coefficient values (-0.21 for English and -0.233 for Patwa), which show a slight inverse relationship between anxiety and proficiency levels, among the participants with C1 proficiency (88% in English and 100% in Patwa), there is a correlation between FLSA and L2 acquisition. Of the Japanese learners of English, eighty-eight percent (88%) of the top learners with the highest speaking proficiency levels (C1) had *minimal* or *mild* anxiety levels. This aligns with Wang and Liu’s (2024) findings that anxiety environments impact fluency among learners, highlighting the importance of interactive and meaningful communication. This relationship between anxiety and language proficiency warrants a closer examination of how FLSA manifests in classroom settings and its broader implications for SLA.

FLSA in the Japanese classroom context has been found to be a hindrance in some instances. The more relaxed a learner is the more likely it is for that learner to produce the target language. This is consistent with Chen’s (2023) finding that structured output opportunities and supportive feedback reduce speaking and enhance oral proficiency. However, the study also revealed that 12% of the high performers tested for severe FLSA but were able to produce language at the same level as those with less FLSA worries. This indicates that while anxiety can hinder SLA, some learners can overcome. Similarly, FLSA can motivate learners to improve their language abilities, pushing them to practice more and seek opportunities for improvement.

While classroom anxiety poses challenges, external factors such as immersion experiences provide another perspective on reducing FLSA and enhancing proficiency. Traveling/living overseas influences Japanese L2 learners. Interacting with speakers of English while on trips and engaging in meaningful interactions often lead to the creation of output and reduced FLSA levels over time. Al-Shehri and Al-Qahtani’s (2024) assert that emphasizing collaborative and culturally responsive environments reduces anxiety and foster linguistic growth. However, not all L2 learners have the resources or opportunities to travel or live overseas so avenues such as virtual classes providing speaking practice with competent speakers can perform similar functions. For learners who may not have access to immersion opportunities, implementing classroom practices that simulate similar benefits becomes essential.

As can be inferred from Table 3, a solution to FLSA for Japanese L2 learners involves integrating speaking practice more consistently into L2 education. In this way, learners get more opportunities to engage in communication tasks appropriate to their abilities.

Broadening the focus of SLA to nonstandard context introduces a compelling framework for understanding adaptability and cross-cultural competence in SLA. This study highlights the role of adaptability in language learning, demonstrates how to use playful expressions and idiomatic phrases, encourages critical thinking about language norms and examines sociolinguistic factors influencing language learning. It reinforces the fostering of cross-cultural relationships through language. For educators, the study emphasizes the focus on creating learning spaces that promote a positive feedback culture by implementing endeavors such as peer review sessions, setting clear expectations to show that feedback is meant to help improve learning, emphasizing the learning process rather than just the results and enabling learners to self-correct. The distinct motivation and experience of learners studying Patwa offer actionable insights for designing culturally responsive and purpose-driven language instruction.

The research affirmed two reasons why L2 learners of Patwa were able to grasp the language (see Appendix D for more on Jamaican Patwa):

1. a deep understanding of Patwa’s cultural context
2. a simple grammar structure and syntax.

Japanese learners felt that they had to learn Patwa for personal motivation while many of the participants who studied English felt less connected to the language. These findings underline the significance of linking language instruction to cultural and personal relevance, as also emphasized by Wan and Moorhouse (2024). Addressing FLSA in the Japanese context calls for demystifying the target L2 by fostering cultural connections and creating supportive learning environments. Language education should emphasize purpose-driven learning and foster authentic, informal learning contexts.

Limitations and Future Directions

The sample size was limited. Participants were either Jamaican music or culture enthusiasts, language lovers, or JICA volunteers. Having a sample size that better represented the typical Japanese L2 learner could provide deeper insights. Additionally, most of the participants had experience living or traveling overseas and therefore had some exposure to foreign cultures and had already addressed their FLSA prior to the research. While the proficiency levels varied, the participants were motivated, had an interest in learning the languages and arguably had personalities that do not represent the typical Japanese L2 learner. Future studies examining L2 learners at the beginning stages of English and Patwa would be valuable, as the feedback would be fresher for learners.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that most participants (88% for English and 100% for Patwa) with the highest proficiency level (C1) tested for *minimal* and *mild* FLSA levels, which suggests that there is a correlation between FLSA and SLA. The research also revealed that the issues impacting FLSA on SLA are similar in both contexts, but the leading concerns differ.

For English learners, the leading factors were traveling/living overseas, fear of feedback/ mistakes, grammar/ semantics, national & individual personality, and teaching methodology. However, for Patwa learners, the primary factors were traveling/living overseas, cultural familiarity, interaction with native speakers and constant communication in the target language.

The study highlighted that while grammar, semantics and teaching methods were significant sources of anxiety for English learners, these were less prominent concerns for Patwa learners, who benefitted from the language's simpler structure and less rigid learning contexts. Additionally, the fear of feedback and making mistakes, a major factor for English learners, was notably absent among Patwa learners. This suggests that the informal and culturally immersive context of Patwa learning fosters a more forgiving environment, enabling learners to focus on communication rather than perfection.

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that FLSA has both negative (inability to produce output when needed) and positive (making learners aware of weaknesses in efforts to improve) effects on SLA for learners of English. The findings underline the importance of adapting teaching methods and addressing specific learner concerns based on the target language's context and culture norms.

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Appendix A

Foreign Language Communication Anxiety Measure

1. I start to panic when I have to speak in the language without preparation (Physiological anxiety)
2. When speaking to a native speaker, I can get so nervous I forget things I know (Physiological anxiety)
3. I worry about speaking in the language, even if I'm well prepared for it (Motivational anxiety)
4. I get nervous and confused when I speak in the language (Physiological anxiety)
5. I get nervous when I do not understand every word in the language (Understanding anxiety)
6. I fear that people will laugh at me when I speak the language (Interactional anxiety)
7. I get nervous when I am asked questions in the language that I have not prepared in advance (Motivational anxiety)

Appendix B

CEFR speaking assessment questions (English)

Level	English	Patwa
A1	What is your name? How old are you? Where are you from?	Weh yuh name? yuh a ow much? Weh yuh com from?
	What do you do? Do you study or work? Give details.	Weh yuh do fi a livin? Yuh study or werk? Gimme sum mor details.
	What do you usually have for breakfast?	Weh yuh usually eet fi brekfaas?
	What do you do in your free time	Weh yuh du inna yuh free time?
A2	What do you like doing on weekends?	Weh yuh like fi duh pan weekends?
	Tell me something about your family.	Tell mi supn bout yuh family.
	Do you like watching films?	Yuh like watch movies?
B1	What kind of films do you like watching?	Wah kinda movies yuh like watch?
	Tell me about the area you live in/where you live.	Tell mi bout di area weh yuh live inna/ weh yuh live.
	Do you like music? What kinds of music?	Yuh like music? Weh kinda music?
	What is your favourite time of the year?	When a yuh favarit time a di year?
B2	Why do you like that time of the year?	Why yuh like dat time a di year?
	Some people think extreme weather events are due to climate change. Others are skeptical. What is your personal point of view about this issue?	Sum people tink extreme weada events a because a climate change. Oda people skeptical. Wah a yer persanal pint a view bout dis issue?
	What are the advantages and disadvantages of the use of technology (Smartphones, internet, etc.)?	Wah di advantages an disadvantages a di use a technology (Smartphone, internet, etc.)
C1	Express your views on the urgent action needed to address climate change and discuss potential challenges in implementing effective solutions.	Talk bout yuh views bout the urgent action weh needed fi sort out the climate change problem an weh kinda challenge it ago face fi implement propa solushon.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. How do you feel when you try to speak English or Jamaican patwa student? Can you tell me about any difficulties you face?
2. Have you ever felt worried or stressed when speaking English or Jamaican Patwa? Can you give examples of a time when you felt this way?
3. What do you do when you feel anxious while learning English or Jamaican Patwa? Do you think your strategies help?
4. Do you feel differently when youre anxious learning English compared to Jamaica patwa? If so, can you explain how they're different?
5. How do you think culture and society affect your speaking in English and in Patwa?
6. Have you noticed anything about how Patwa is spoken that impacts whether you get anxious or not when learning it? Can you give an example?
7. How do you think teachers and schools have helped you with anxiety while learning English and Jamaican Patwa? Did they suggest any specific ways to cope?
8. How do you think anxiety has affected your ability to use English and Jamaican Patwa ? Can you share specific instances?
9. Do you think people treat learners of English differently than those learning Jamaican Patwa? How has this affected your learning and anxiety?
10. Based on your experiences, what advice or ideas do you have for teachers to help learners manage anxiety and improve language learning, especially for English and Jamaican Patwa.

Appendix D

Key Features and Examples of Jamaican Patwa

Patwa Phrase	English Translation	Notes
Wah gwaan?	What's going on?	A common informal greeting, similar to "What's up?"
Mi deh yah.	I'm here.	Standard response to "Wah gwaan?" indicating well-being.
Tank yuh.	Thank you.	Pronunciation shows vowel changes typical of Patwa.
Mi a go shop.	I'm going to the shop.	Demonstrates Patwa's use of "a" as a marker for continuous action.
Him cyaan come.	He cannot come.	Highlights the Patwa word "cyaan" (cannot).
Pickney	Child/Children	Derived from the Portuguese word "pequeno," meaning small.
Fi mi book.	My book.	Possessive construction unique to Patwa, replacing "my" with "fi mi."
Run come yah.	Come here quickly.	Expresses urgency, showing the dynamic nature of Patwa syntax.

Appendix E

Key Features and Examples of Jamaican Patwa

1. Phonological Features:
 - Patwa often simplifies English sounds, such as "th" being pronounced as "t" or "d."
 - Stress patterns and intonation may vary from Standard English, giving it a melodic rhythm.
2. Historical Context:
 - Jamaican Patwa is an English-based creole language influenced by West African languages, Spanish, Portuguese, and French due to Jamaica's colonial history (Cassidy & Le Page, 2002).
3. Cultural Significance:
 - Patwa is not only a mode of communication but also a marker of Jamaican identity and pride, often used in music, poetry, and daily interactions.

How to cite the article:

Yuan, X. (2024). Of puzzles, mountains, and torii gates: International students' motivation for learning Japanese. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 150–157. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-19>

Research Article

Of Puzzles, Mountains, and Torii Gates: International Students' Motivation for Learning Japanese

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Abstract

This study investigates the motivation of international students studying Japanese in a Japanese university, using Elicited Metaphor Analysis (EMA) to understand their underlying cognitive and emotional experiences over time. Seven students from diverse countries, aged 22 on average and with Japanese proficiency ranging from basic to pre-intermediate, participated in this research. Data were gathered through questionnaires administered twice during the academic year, complemented by individual interviews to gain deeper insights into students' motivations and perceptions regarding their language learning experiences. The analysis uncovered a variety of metaphors symbolizing the challenges, growth, and transformation associated with learning Japanese. These metaphors revealed the students' perceptions of their learning process, emphasizing both the difficulties and the developmental aspects. This study highlights the power of metaphorical language in capturing the nuanced motivations of language learners, providing valuable insights for educators and researchers.

本研究は、日本の大学で日本語を学ぶ留学生のモチベーションを調査するものであり、彼らの認知的・感情的経験を経時的に理解するためにElicited Metaphor Analysis (EMA)を用いている。参加者は平均年齢22歳で、日本語能力が初級から初中級程度のさまざまな国から来た7人の留学生である。データは、年度内に2回実施された質問紙調査によって収集され、さらに、言語学習経験に関する学生の動機や認識についてより深い洞察を得るために、個別インタビューによって補足された。分析の結果、日本語学習に伴う課題、成長、変容を象徴するさまざまなメタファーが観察された。これらのメタファーは、言語学習における困難と発展的側面の両方を強調しながら、日本語学習に対する留学生の認識を明らかにした。本研究は、言語学習者のモチベーションを捉える上でのメタファー的言語の力を浮き彫りにし、教育者や研究者に貴重な洞察を提供するものである。

Language learning motivation involves a dynamic interplay of psychological, social, and contextual factors that shape individuals' willingness and ability to engage with a second language. Decades of research have highlighted key motivational constructs, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, integrative and instrumental orientations, and language learning autonomy (Noels et al., 2000). These constructs provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how internal drives and external influences interact to shape language learners' attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes.

Motivation is particularly critical for second language acquisition, especially for international students studying abroad (Du & Jackson, 2021). It not only determines their engagement with the language but also influences their ability to adapt to new cultural and academic environments, overcome language barriers, and integrate into local communities. In the case of international students learning Japanese in Japan, motivation becomes both a driver and a challenge, as students navigate the unique opportunities and obstacles presented by this context (Hennings & Tanabe, 2018). Japan's rich cultural heritage, cutting-edge technology, and economic prominence attract a diverse array of international students eager to immerse themselves in its language and culture (Matsumoto, 2007). However, the significant linguistic and cultural differences between Japanese and many students' native languages and cultures often pose substantial challenges. These include the intricate Japanese writing system, differences in linguistic structure and vocabulary, and social norms that may contrast sharply with those of their home countries. Successfully navigating these hurdles requires sustained motivation, as students must not only overcome initial difficulties but also maintain their enthusiasm over time.

Understanding the motivations that drive international students' language learning endeavors is also essential for educators seeking to provide effective support and create conducive learning environments. Despite the growing interest in language learning motivation, there remains a gap in research specifically examining the motivation of international students studying Japanese in Japan. Moreover, Yu et al. (2022) highlight that many existing studies focus on either initial motivations or snapshots of motivation at a single point in time, overlooking its dynamic nature and potential evolution throughout the language-learning process. Additionally, traditional approaches to motivation

research have typically employed direct queries such as “What is your motivation to study Japanese?” (Kubanyiova, 2019), which often fail to capture the multifaceted inner dynamics and intricate layers of individual learners’ motivational journeys. As a result, there is a pressing need for research approaches that explore the dynamic and evolving nature of motivation, providing a more holistic and context-sensitive understanding of how motivation shapes language learning experiences and outcomes.

To address these gaps in understanding the dynamic and evolving nature of language learning motivation, Huang and Feng (2019) provide valuable insights through their exploration of Chinese learners of Japanese. Using Elicited Metaphor Analysis (EMA), they revealed how learners’ motivational states evolve across academic years, shifting from enthusiasm to frustration, and later to a pragmatic focus on outcomes. However, a limitation of their approach lies in its focus on Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 students as separate groups rather than tracking individual learners’ continuous growth over time. This cross-sectional approach offers valuable comparative insights but misses the opportunity to capture the nuances of an individual’s motivational trajectory and the interplay of personal and environmental aspects throughout their language-learning journey. Building on this perspective, examining students’ metaphors in an immersive language-learning context provides a powerful tool for exploring the shifting mental and emotional landscapes they experience. This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating, first, how international students’ metaphors for learning Japanese evolve during a one-year exchange program, and second, what insights these metaphors provide into their individual motivational and cognitive experiences.

By examining the metaphors used by international students to articulate their language learning journey, the study aims to gain insights into the dynamic nature of motivation and its influence on language learning outcomes, focusing on students beyond Chinese learners studying Japanese in China. The results section addresses RQ1 by detailing the metaphors observed at different stages of the program, capturing the evolving perspectives of the students. The discussion section answers RQ2 by analyzing how these metaphors reveal the interplay of personal, cognitive, and environmental factors shaping learners’ motivational trajectories. Through this exploration, the study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on language learning motivation and inform pedagogical practices that promote successful language learning experiences for international students in Japan.

Using Elicited Metaphor Analysis to Undercover Student Motivation

Ushioda (1994) points out that much of the research on second language (L2) motivation has predominantly utilized quantitative methods (see also Yi Tsang, 2012). While studies employing quantitative approaches offer the advantage of objectively measuring motivation and systematically examining relationships between variables, Ushioda (1994) notes that they primarily demonstrate differences in degree rather than quality. Specifically, they often lack insight into the subjective and individual experiences of students and fail to capture how their motivation is influenced throughout the learning process, information that holds significant value for L2 instructors.

EMA is a qualitative research method used to explore the underlying cognitive structures and conceptualizations of individuals’ experiences, including motivation in language learning (Huang & Feng, 2019; Wan & Low, 2015). Rooted in cognitive linguistics and metaphor theory, EMA involves eliciting metaphors from participants to uncover their implicit beliefs, attitudes, and motivations. In the context of language learning, EMA offers a unique lens for understanding the subjective experiences and mental representations of learners. By prompting participants to articulate their experiences through metaphorical language instead of relying on direct questioning, researchers can access deeper layers of meaning and insight into the complexities of motivation.

To further illustrate, metaphors serve as linguistic tools that allow individuals to express abstract concepts, emotions, and perceptions in concrete terms, shedding light on their underlying cognitive processes and motivations. Studies utilizing EMA have revealed a variety of metaphors used by language learners to conceptualize their motivation (Huang & Feng, 2019). For instance, journey metaphors such as *learning Japanese is like climbing a mountain* highlight the effort, perseverance, and incremental progress required to overcome linguistic challenges. Growth metaphors like *learning Japanese is like planting a seed* emphasize the nurturing process of acquiring a language, where consistent effort and time are essential for meaningful language development.

Furthermore, these metaphors not only capture the learners’ perception of language learning as a dynamic and evolving process but also underscore emotional and cognitive dimensions, such as the satisfaction of achieving milestones and the transformation of their identity as they integrate the target language into their life. Each metaphor provides unique insights into the multifaceted nature of motivation, illuminating how learners navigate obstacles, set aspirations, and interpret their progress. By employing this qualitative approach, I aim to uncover the richness and complexity of motivation in language learning of Japanese, while complementing traditional quantitative methods and contributing to a more nuanced understanding of learners’ evolving motivational dynamics.

Methodology

Participants and Data Collection

The participants in this study consisted of seven international students who enrolled in a one-year academic exchange program at Akita University. They represented a diverse demographic background, hailing from various

countries including the USA, Romania, Israel, Mongolia, Ukraine, and Germany. Among the participants, there were three male students and four female students. The mean age of the participants was 22 years old. In terms of language proficiency, all participants exhibited proficiency levels ranging from basic to pre-intermediate. Language proficiency was assessed using the Japanese Computerized Adaptive Test (J-CAT), with all participants scoring below 200 out of 400 on the placement test upon entering the program.

To facilitate the study, participants first attended a workshop on metaphor expressions, conducted by the researcher. The workshop introduced examples of metaphorical expressions, such as “learning programming is like,” accompanied by several programming-related metaphors to clarify the concept. Building on these examples, students were encouraged to create their own metaphors about Japanese language learning (see Appendix A). Data collection was conducted over two years, from 2022 to 2024, with participants completing the same questionnaire at two key points: approximately one and a half months after their arrival, once they had acclimated to their studies, and again about one and a half months before their final exams, as they approached the end of their program. Participants were instructed to use the language of their preference. However, most students opted to use English for their metaphorical expressions.

Upon completion of the final survey at the end of their study period, students were invited to participate in individual interview sessions. During these sessions, selected participants were asked to elaborate on their chosen metaphors and explain why they chose those particular expressions. The interviews provided an opportunity for students to reflect on their language learning experiences and articulate their motivations and perceptions based on their metaphor expressions.

To provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the evolving changes in students’ motivations, two participants were selected from the data pool to serve as representative cases for this study. These two participants, Students A (male) and B (female), were chosen based on their engagement with the metaphor elicitation task and their detailed responses throughout the study. By focusing on these individuals, the findings aim to provide insights into an individual’s language learning, which might reflect broader experiences and attitudes common among the larger group of international students.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) to identify underlying metaphors (Steen et al., 2010), as the majority of the data was in English. MIPVU is a systematic method that involves identifying metaphorical expressions by comparing the contextual meaning of a word to its more basic, concrete meaning. The target domains in this study focused on students’ overall Japanese language learning, as well as specific areas such as grammar and vocabulary (see Appendix A). Each target domain was mapped to at least one source domain to capture the full range of metaphorical expressions. To ensure the reliability of the metaphor identification process, a second rater was involved. The inter-rater reliability test (Landis & Koch, 1977) yielded a score of 0.96, indicating a near-perfect agreement between the raters.

Results

The results of this study are presented in two parts, corresponding to students’ perception towards learning Japanese at the beginning of the exchange study, and the end of the program.

Metaphors observed at the beginning of the study program

Regarding the first question “Learning Japanese in general is like...” Student A responded:

Learning Japanese in general is something like *getting to know a loved one for the very first time*. It’s awkward, there are often misunderstandings and miscommunications, and it’s a struggle, but at the end of the day, when I get to know it just a little bit better than the day before, it all feels worth it.

The metaphor compares the process of learning Japanese to the initial stages of getting to know a loved one, suggesting that the experience is both personal and emotionally engaging. For Student A, learning Japanese at the beginning involves building a relationship with the language, filled with both challenges and rewards. This personification of Japanese as a loved one suggests Student A finds interpersonal meaning and satisfaction in the process. Furthermore, describing the experience as “awkward,” with “misunderstandings and miscommunications,” highlights the inherent difficulties in learning a new language. The final part of the metaphor, “when I get to know it just a little bit better than the day before, it all feels worth it,” emphasizes the incremental progress and the satisfaction derived from each small achievement. Student A further described learning Japanese grammar as follows:

Learning Japanese grammar is kind of like *trying to solve a puzzle with a lot of pieces missing, and slowly finding them one by one at the bottom of the box*. The reason for this is that often I try to come up with a way to say something that I don’t quite have the tools to yet, and discovering those tools allows me to slowly complete that puzzle.

This metaphor highlights the complex and gradual process of learning Japanese grammar. The idea of “a puzzle with a lot of pieces missing” suggests that the learner initially feels a lack of knowledge, or resources needed to fully grasp Japanese grammar. This captures the common experience of feeling overwhelmed or confused when first encountering a new grammatical system. The act of “slowly finding them one by one at the bottom of the box” reflects the slow and deliberate effort, as he reaches “the bottom of the box,” required to acquire and understand new grammatical concepts. Finally, Student A concludes with “discovering those tools allows me to slowly complete that puzzle,” indicating a sense of achievement as each new piece of grammar is gradually understood and integrated into the overall language competence. In terms of the third question, Student A responded as follows:

Learning Japanese vocabulary is, for me, a bit like learning *to paint with a lot of colors missing*. Because you can paint a picture (with limited colors), maybe even make it pretty, but until all those colors are on your palette, all those synonyms and antonyms, those terms of phrase, and metaphors and similes are at your disposal, it's never going to be quite how you imagined it in your head. But when learning new words, phrases, sayings, and euphemisms, your palette becomes more complete, and the colors become richer and more intricate, and the picture really comes to life.

This metaphor likens the process of learning Japanese vocabulary to painting with an incomplete palette. The initial image of painting “with a lot of colors missing” suggests feeling the sense of incompetence of not having enough vocabulary to fully express oneself. The learner can still create “a picture” or communicate basic ideas, but it lacks the depth and precision they desire. The metaphor progresses by explaining that as the learner acquires “new words, phrases, sayings, and euphemisms,” their “palette becomes more complete.” This suggests that each new vocabulary item enriches the learner’s linguistic toolkit, enhancing their ability to communicate more effectively. The “colors become richer and more intricate,” signifying the increasing complexity and nuance that come with a more extensive vocabulary. The final part of the metaphor, “the picture really comes to life,” conveys the satisfaction and achievement of being able to express thoughts and ideas more fully and accurately.

Despite all the anticipated difficulties, Student A maintains a constructive attitude, believing that each small improvement and deeper understanding of the language will make the effort worthwhile. Student B expressed her experiences through a distinct set of metaphors at the beginning of the study.

Learning Japanese in general is like *a quest in a forest*. You go straight on your path, and you face different challenges (new grammar constructions) or locations (different complicated kanjis). But you go through it and enjoy new impressions and reach new achievements.

Student B likens learning Japanese to embarking on a quest in a forest, an often-observed JOURNEY metaphor in learning (Komorowska, 2013), highlighting the adventurous and exploratory nature of the process. The phrase “You go straight on your path” indicates a sense of direction and purpose in the learner’s journey. It suggests that despite the complexities of the language, the learner has a clear goal and is committed to progressing along this path. The “different challenges (new grammar constructions)” and “locations (different complicated kanjis)” represent the specific difficulties encountered during the learning process. Conversely, grammar constructions are viewed as obstacles to be overcome because you have to “go through it,” while kanji are seen as landmarks within the forest that one has to pass. The idea of going through these challenges and “enjoying new impressions” implies that the learner finds joy and satisfaction in overcoming obstacles and gaining new knowledge. Finally, “reach new achievements” underscores the sense of accomplishment at the end as one “reaches,” with mastering different aspects of the language. Student B further elaborated on learning Japanese grammar, saying: “Learning Japanese grammar is like a leapfrog game because there are different particles that are similar to little frogs jumping around other words.”

This metaphor highlights the dynamic and playful nature of learning Japanese grammar. In the later interview, Student B explained that particles such as で, に, へ, and を moving around different parts of speech in a sentence are much like frogs leaping over each other. This suggests to Student B that mastering grammar involves constant adjustment and attention to the position of these small but significant elements. The game-like comparison also indicates that, despite its challenges, the process can be engaging and enjoyable. Lastly, when it comes to vocabulary, Student B responded as follows: “Learning Japanese vocabulary is like *painting a landscape*, katakana syllables are like leaves and ears, hiragana syllables are like flowers, kanji characters are like small sceneries with its own weather, buildings and nature.”

This metaphor compares the vocabulary learning process to painting a landscape. Student B elaborated on the metaphor by explaining that she views katakana syllables as leaves and ears because of their shapes. For instance, Student B pointed out that the katakana characters, such as ア, ウ, ラ, コ, ス, フ, and ュ resemble ears in their forms. Similarly, the characters イ, エ, キ, and ミ look like vines in tiny leaves. Hiragana syllables look like different types of flowers that are more round and fuller. Kanji characters, described as small sceneries “with their own weather, buildings, and nature,” highlight the richness of kanjis, each carrying different parts. For example, the kanji for 窓 has a rooftop of a building, and there is water and condensation observed on the window of that building. These metaphors reveal the multi-dimensional nature of learning Japanese vocabulary to Student B, portraying it as a process that requires patience as it takes time to paint a landscape, and creativity as different types of shapes and sceneries, and where each component plays a role in creating a complete painting of the landscape.

Overall, both students displayed evaluative metaphors with positive attitudes. They also acknowledged the difficulties ahead of them with metaphors such as getting to know a loved one, solving a puzzle, or embarking on an

unknown journey, and both of them expressed a willingness to tackle these challenges.

Approaching the end of the study program

When approaching the end of the study program, Student A responded to the exact same questionnaire again. However, this time, he used a rather different set of metaphors. For the first question, he responded as follows: “Learning Japanese in general is like *Hercules task* because like the labors of Hercules, because it’s very hard, and it never ends, the more you learn the more you have to learn.”

In his response, Student A compares learning Japanese to the labors of Hercules, a metaphor that conveys the immense challenges and ongoing nature of the language learning process. Just as Hercules faced formidable tasks, Student A acknowledges that mastering Japanese demands persistent hard work and resilience. The phrase “the more you learn, the more you have to learn” indicates that with each advancement, new challenges emerge. This cyclical nature of learning can be daunting as each milestone reached only reveals further complexities and new areas to master. Student A described his experience of learning Japanese grammar and vocabulary as follows:

Learning Japanese grammar is like *pulling teeth* because it’s difficult and becomes an unpleasant task, and learning Japanese vocabulary is like *pushing a rock up a mountain* because it seems every time I make my headway slide back to square one.

Here, Student A compares learning Japanese grammar to “pulling teeth,” a metaphor that suggests the task is not only difficult but also unpleasant and painful. This imagery indicates that Student A finds the process of mastering grammar to be a strenuous and often discouraging endeavor, much like the physical discomfort associated with dental procedures. Right after finishing the survey, Student A pointed out that the heavy amount of individual grammar he had to memorize was particularly difficult. He expressed that grammatical structures with similar usages such as ようだ, そうだ, らしい, みたいだ involves tedious memorization and different conjugations rules that are challenging to retain. Student A further compares learning Japanese vocabulary to “pushing a rock up a mountain,” evoking the myth of Sisyphus. This metaphor suggests that the process is laborious and seemingly futile, as progress is constantly undermined by setbacks. The imagery of making headway only to slide back to the beginning implies a sense of repetitive struggle and frustration. It reflects the learner’s perception that despite putting in significant effort to memorize and recall vocabulary, there is a continual sense of starting over, due to forgetting words or struggling with retention. Together, these metaphors demonstrate Student A’s language learning experience as one filled with persistent obstacles and emotional strain.

Now let’s turn to Student B’s responses: “Learning Japanese in general is like *going through the tori gates* because every next one gives you kind of a blessing for your next level of language.” Student B employs a culturally rich metaphor (Kövecses, 2005, p. 109) to describe her experience of learning Japanese, comparing it to “going through the tori gates.” This metaphor is embedded in Japanese culture, where tori gates are traditional gateways found at the entrance to Shinto shrines, symbolizing the transition from the mundane to the sacred. By comparing the process of learning Japanese to passing through tori gates, Student B suggests that each stage of her language acquisition feels like a positive experience. The metaphor further implies a transformative aspect to the learning journey as in “every next one gives you kind of a blessing”. Just as passing through tori gates is often seen as a journey towards enlightenment or deeper understanding in Shinto belief, learning Japanese for Student B may be seen as a path towards cultural and linguistic enlightenment. This perspective highlights a respectful and reverent attitude towards the language and culture. Student B’s responses to the next two questions are as follows:

Learning Japanese grammar still feels like *playing the leapfrog game*, because there are different particles that are similar to little frogs jumping around other words, and learning Japanese vocabulary is like *learning the martial arts* because here can be used same approach of mastering a few main moves (characters) is more important in the long distance than trying to cover all unique and rare ones from the very beginning.

In the interview, Student B explained that she is satisfied with the same metaphor they came up with last time, where particles (grammar components) are seen as “little frogs” jumping around other words. In terms of the third question, Student B compares learning Japanese vocabulary to mastering martial arts this time. This metaphor emphasizes a disciplined approach to vocabulary acquisition. In martial arts, practitioners focus on mastering fundamental moves before advancing to more complex techniques. Similarly, Student B said in learning Japanese, it is crucial to first master essential and basic characters, which serve as the foundation for future learning. It highlights a long-term perspective on language learning, where mastering core vocabulary is seen as more beneficial than attempting to learn all unique and rare words from the start.

Overall, Student A’s responses to the end-of-program questionnaire reveal the immense challenges and ongoing difficulties of learning Japanese, highlighting the emotional strain and daunting complexity of mastering the language. In contrast, Student B’s responses reveal a thoughtful and strategic approach, suggesting the learner is both engaged and methodical in the language learning journey. By balancing the challenges of grammar with a disciplined approach to vocabulary, Student B aims for comprehensive and long-term mastery of Japanese.

Discussion

The metaphors observed in the previous section revealed nuanced interplay between motivation and language learning. At the beginning of the program, Student A's metaphors highlighted a sense of enthusiasm, such as viewing Japanese as "getting to know a loved one" and grammar as "solving a puzzle." These metaphors illustrated a constructive and optimistic perspective toward learning, with a focus on incremental progress and the satisfaction of overcoming challenges. However, by the end of the program, Student A's metaphors took on a more negative tone, describing learning Japanese as "the labors of Hercules" and grammar as "pulling teeth." This shift likely reflects the increasing difficulty of the course material, compounded by the pressures of personal and academic commitments, such as preparing for graduate school as he revealed in the interview later. The brevity of Student A's later responses may further suggest he was overwhelmed with tasks, leaving little room for reflection or engagement with the language on a deeper level. In contrast, Student B demonstrated a consistent and strategic approach to language learning throughout the program. Her metaphors, such as "a quest in a forest" at the start and "going through the tori gates" at the end, emphasized persistence, cultural appreciation, and the transformative nature of the learning process. Student B's steady motivation appeared to stem from a long-term perspective on language acquisition. This mindset, reinforced by metaphors like "learning martial arts" for vocabulary and "playing leapfrog" for grammar, highlights an ability to balance challenges with enjoyment, sustaining motivation over time.

These findings indicate that both students exhibited personal and emotional engagement throughout the learning process, reflecting the motivational trajectory described by Huang and Feng (2019), in which motivation evolves through distinct phases of enthusiasm and challenge. However, this study complements their work by offering a longitudinal view of individual motivational trajectories in a diverse group of international students during a one-year exchange, revealing how personal and contextual factors interact over time. A recurring theme was the sense of achievement and accomplishment, with both students expressing satisfaction in their incremental progress, whether through "completing a puzzle" (Student A) or "reaching new achievements" (Student B). However, the challenges and complexities of learning Japanese were also evident as the course advanced, particularly in metaphors such as "pulling teeth" and "pushing a rock up a mountain," which reflected the frustration and sense of incompetence that can accompany the process. Note that these challenges were balanced by patience and creativity, as seen in Student B's comparison of vocabulary acquisition to "painting a landscape," where each word enriches the linguistic palette. Together, they revealed the multifaceted and evolving nature of motivation, offering insights into how personal, cognitive, and environmental factors shape learners' experiences over time.

Interestingly, the dataset did not reveal a pattern where motivation starts low and either increases or further declines. Instead, the findings from both students highlight two distinct trajectories: fluctuating motivation tied to external and internal pressures (Student A) versus stable, goal-oriented motivation maintained by strategic learning (Student B). These contrasting experiences underscore the importance of individualized approaches in supporting learners, as their motivational needs and responses to challenges vary significantly.

Lastly, the findings suggest that elicited metaphors can serve as a valuable diagnostic tool for identifying students' motivational challenges and emotional states during their learning journey. For example, metaphors like "pulling teeth" or "pushing a rock up a mountain" provide teachers with insight into the specific frustrations students encounter, such as grammatical complexity or vocabulary retention. Teachers can use these insights to design more personalized support strategies, such as gamified grammar exercises or visual aids for vocabulary retention, to sustain motivation over time. Furthermore, metaphors like "going through the tori gates" underscore the importance of integrating culturally meaningful and contextually rich materials into instruction, as such connections appear to foster both engagement and appreciation for the language and culture.

Conclusion

Overall, the results affirm the value of EMA in capturing the subjective and evolving nature of motivation. The metaphors elicited in this study not only shed light on the emotional and cognitive dimensions of language learning but also offer valuable insights into how motivation intersects with learners' personal goals, environmental conditions, and social contexts. This study also highlights that understanding students' metaphorical perceptions of their language-learning journey allows teachers to better address the psychological and emotional dimensions of learning. The ability to identify fluctuating or stable motivational patterns through metaphor can help teachers adapt their approaches to suit individual learner needs, fostering long-term motivation and better language-learning outcomes. However, one limitation of this study lies in its small sample size. Future research could build on these findings by examining larger datasets and longitudinal patterns to provide a more comprehensive understanding of motivational dynamics in language learning.

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Appendix

Metaphor Questionnaire

Instructions: Thank you for taking part in this survey. We are interested in your Japanese learning experience. Can you think of a metaphor and complete the sentence 'Learning Japanese is... ..because... ..?' You may explain why you choose specific metaphors (after 'because... ..'). There might be a follow-up interview after the questionnaire is completed. You can choose to complete the questionnaire using your first language or any languages you are comfortable with.

I. Basic Information

1. Name:
2. Gender: 1) male 2) female 3) others
3. Age:
4. Grade at your home university: 1) Year 1 2) Year 2 3) Year 4) Year 4 5) Graduate school and above
5. Email:

II. Metaphor Completion

1. Please complete the sentence:

Learning Japanese in general is
because... ..

Learning Japanese grammar is... ..
because... ..

Learning Japanese vocabulary (Katakana, Hiragana, Kanji) is
because... ..

2. If you have any difficulty coming up with a metaphor, would you please specify below.

How to cite the article:

McCarthy, T. & Armstrong, M. (2024). Dialogue: A core element in the learning process. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 158–167. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-20>

Research Article

Dialogue: A Core Element in the Learning Process

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Abstract

This two-year collaborative research project aimed at understanding the role of dialogue in the EFL classroom. Both researchers teach at national universities with similar student populations, courses taught, and institutional expectations. The researchers noted that during and after COVID, engaging in meaningful discourse had become the core element in the teaching and learning process. This paper introduces key elements that helped the researchers and students engage with each other and the learning materials. Initial findings revealed how dialogue influenced teaching practices. It further showed students' preferences towards dialogic learning over independent study, or lecture-style classes. Implications from this study address the need for continued communicative teaching approaches in the L2 classroom and consistent collegial dialogue to deepen and expand current knowledge of dialogic teaching practices.

この2年間の共同研究プロジェクトは、EFL教室における対話の役割を理解することを目的としています。両研究者は、類似した学生人口、教授するコース、そして制度的期待を持つ国立大学で教えています。研究者たちは、COVIDの期間中およびその後において、意味のあるディスコースに参加することが教育と学習プロセスの核心要素となったことに注目しました。本論文では、研究者と学生が互いに、そして学習資料と関わるために役立った重要な要素を紹介します。初期の調査結果は、対話が教育実践にどのように影響を与えたかを明らかにしました。それはさらに、学生が独立学習や講義スタイルのクラスよりも対話的学習を好む傾向を示しました。この研究からの示唆は、L2教室における対話的な教育アプローチの継続と、現在の対話的教育実践の知識を深め拡大するための一貫した同僚間対話の必要性に関連しています。

This study began to take shape during COVID, when the authors frequently met online to discuss how to teach effectively in an emergency remote situation. The students, for the most part, were unfamiliar with technology and each other, which sometimes resulted in a somewhat disjointed and inactive learning space. Through ongoing dialogue, the authors managed to redesign language tasks that enabled students to successfully achieve curricular goals, as well as create an interactive environment in which students could bond with classmates. Reflecting on the challenges and successes during COVID, the authors came to the realization that the core component that helped them overcome the challenging circumstances was the consistent dialogue between themselves and the students. When classes resumed as normal, it was determined that maintaining meaningful dialogue as a core element during classroom activities would help learners to understand the learning materials more deeply, produce work at the expected standard, and retain the information learned longer. It was further observed that consistent collegial dialogue during the design and development of learning materials resulted in faster lesson planning and tasks that led to a more active classroom.

The term “dialogue” has been gathering momentum in classroom teaching in recent years, as research continues to show that meaningful interaction in the L2 classroom contributes to the (co-)construction of knowledge and challenges learners to think more critically about the course content. In the second language classroom, what might come to mind for many instructors is communication-style teaching activities, such as role-play, pair work, or presentations. Typically, this kind of dialogue focuses on teaching linguistic components to meet specific teaching objectives. For other teachers, dialogic teaching focuses on interaction that is purposeful, critical, and reciprocal. Various factors, such as learning context, curricular goals, teaching approach, and/or proficiency level of students, help to determine the most appropriate type of dialogic activities promoted in the classroom. Appendix A identifies various types of dialogue that are employed in the L2 classroom. Over the years, there has been a noticeable shift from ‘traditional’ discourse, in which the teacher leads the classroom with authority to a somewhat “flipped” (Mohan, 2018) version, in which the students are given more control over their learning and the teacher facilitates the process. For Nystrand (1997), “the quality of student learning is closely related to the quality of classroom talk” (p. 29). Therefore, to engage in dialogic teaching, instructors need to determine the most suitable type of dialogue, as well as practical applications that will promote effective learning in their specific learning context.

This paper will focus on two main points related to meaningful dialogue: (a) dialogue between researchers in two separate universities as the impetus that encouraged teacher and researcher professional development, and (b) dialogue as a core element in students’ learning process.

Research Context

The researchers teach at national universities in Japan and have similar educational backgrounds, teaching beliefs, and classroom experiences. In addition, English courses taught, course loads, number of students per class, and proficiency levels of students at both universities are comparable. Over the years, this has led to several collaborative research projects and joint government grants (McCarthy & Armstrong, 2019; Armstrong & McCarthy, 2021).

Wennerberg and McGrath (2022), examining the outcome of participating in collegial dialogue for professional development over individual efforts, found that informal dialogue helped to reduce feelings of isolation, gain confidence, and understand the progression of courses. For the researchers, professional development beyond traditional conferencing, individually publishing papers, and reading up-to-date studies on teacher pedagogy became more relevant and immediate to our respective teaching contexts.

Our dialogic moments consisted of unplanned Zoom meetings to discuss classroom activities and class management, frequent emails and text messages, and Google Doc exchanges of lesson plans and syllabi. It was during one of our Zoom meeting discussions that we observed that the core element that reduced the stress of designing new materials and adapting to the new online learning platforms was our dialogue, in which we questioned, problem-solved, reflected, and co-created new knowledge to suit the new context. We further came to the realization that this was the style of learning we had both experienced during teaching practicum at the start of our teaching professions. Our dialogic practice was thus, in essence, “getting back to basics,” which was the theme of the 2024 PanSIG conference.

Designing Dialogic Activities for L2 Learners

Both researchers were expected to use assigned textbooks for their respective writing courses. However, the underlying philosophy of academic freedom in both universities allowed teachers to adapt materials according to their personal style of teaching, as long as they met the curricular requirements. Having a high level of teacher agency and a flexible learning context meant that the researchers could apply the five principles of dialogic teaching when designing learning tasks (Alexander, 2017)—collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful—which served as a guide during discussions about suitable learning activities. The examples of dialogic tasks presented below illustrate how the researchers employed these principles to engage in meaningful dialogue about course design and materials development, and create a more active learning experience.

Collective dialogue refers to joint discussions by students and the teacher about a particular activity. A task designed was reviewing paragraph writing by completing a partial essay in which students were given only the introduction and conclusion. They were required to work together to co-construct body paragraphs to write a coherent essay. This task provided a dialogic space to agree, disagree, question, and expand on ideas.

Reciprocal dialogue refers to listening carefully to others, asking critical questions about student written or oral assignments, acknowledging each other's feedback, and offering a different perspective. An effective activity which encouraged reciprocity was giving critical feedback in pairs on recorded academic presentations to help each other to improve presentation skills. This kind of dialogic task encouraged critical thinking and reflective practices, as students were asked to justify their feedback comments and provide ideas that would improve each other's performance.

Supportive dialogue refers to negotiating with students about particular tasks. Giving students the responsibility to decide on a list of topics for essays or presentations, for example, was an effective method of giving students more agency and ownership over their learning, thereby creating an inclusive, supportive environment.

Cumulative dialogue refers to building on contributions to allow for deeper discussion and exploration of a specific theme. An illustrative example which encouraged cumulative discussion was a whole-class brainstorming activity for an argumentative essay in which half the class presented arguments which agreed with the topic while the other half disagreed with each point raised. Following this, students were asked to refute the best argument and then decide which side had the most convincing argument.

Purposeful dialogue refers to students having shared learning goals. This lent itself best to situations in which students have a clear purpose for improving language learning such as giving presentations for real-life academic conferences or learning how to write a CV for a job application. The stronger the purpose, the more students became actively engaged with the learning materials.

Studies in dialogic learning/teaching, from elementary level to tertiary education, typically expound the power of discursive interaction to enhance students' engagement with learning (Alexander, 2017, 2020; Skidmore, 2006); thus, it is imperative for teachers to build a repertoire of dialogic activities in order to engage in successful dialogic teaching.

Data Collection & Analysis

Students in this study were purposively selected from mandatory freshman academic writing courses and an elective presentation course offered to students from sophomore to doctoral students. Data were collected from peer-feedback dialogue. Although there were slight differences in the aims and objectives of both courses, as well

as students' proficiency levels and motivation, the researchers found commonalities in learner dialogue that were relevant to this study. Written dialogue from freshman students' peer review activities was downloaded from Google Docs, and recordings of graduate student peer feedback in presentation courses were transcribed. Feedback data were grouped into six dialogical categories, as shown in Table 1—*Building relationships*, *Peer Advising*, *Reciprocity*, *Collaboration*, *Reviewing*, *Discovery*. Categories were decided through discussion of the data over several meetings. The researchers then organized the peer feedback into larger conversational chunks rather than sentence-level sections to focus on the purpose of the interactions rather than specific linguistic elements. The categories were ranked in order by number of utterances coded, from highest (number 1) to lowest (number 6), to identify benefits of engaging in dialogue (see Appendix B for a numerical breakdown of utterances per category). Following the analysis of feedback utterances, the researchers then collected survey responses to understand student preferences for dialogic teaching.

Table 1

Six Benefits of Dialogic Activities

Category	Descriptor	Academic Writing course: Data ranked (1-6) by number of utterances (<i>n</i> = 251)	Scientific Presentation course: Data ranked (1-6) by number of utterances (<i>n</i> = 75)
Building relationships	Personal or informal dialogue helps to build friendship and balances the critical discourse and encourages further discourse	2	3
Peer Advising	Dialogue largely unilateral where one student uses teaching guidelines (rubric, checklists) to give feedback on writing or speaking	1	1
Reciprocity	Dialogue showing acknowledgment of the advice and a shared understanding between peers	3	2
Collaboration	Dialogue involving problem-solving, questioning, and framing solutions.	6	4
Reviewing	Dialogue in which interlocutors review important course points and (re)build knowledge together	5	6
Discovery	Dialogue in which interlocutors identify new skills learned or deepen learning	4	5

It should be noted here that qualitative analysis software, such as NVivo (Jackson & Bazeley, 2014) or inter-rater reliability tests, such as Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960) or Gwet's AC1 (Gwet, 2014), were not employed during data analysis. Although rigorous methods of evaluating agreement among raters, the researchers felt that in-depth discussion of categories would achieve sufficient agreement for the purposes of this study. Further, we also considered this discussion as a professional development opportunity to enhance and expand our knowledge of qualitative data analysis procedures, as well as compare student responses in our respective universities. The top three categories that saw the majority of utterances were Peer Advising, Reciprocity, and Building Relationships.

Appendix C provides excerpts of students giving feedback on final essay assignments and presentations. (Please note that excerpts provided in this paper are written verbatim from recordings and feedback comments and include non-standard linguistic variations.)

Peer Advising

Peer advising is built into every course as part of both universities' educational goals of encouraging learner independence through critical thinking. Therefore, as expected, there was a significant number of utterances related to peer work in both academic writing and presentation courses. Through peer advising, learners were expected to have rich, meaning-creating exchanges that led to action and the opportunity for change and/or deeper understanding. This kind of discourse required a strong relationship with the dialogic partner, and a deep understanding of the course content to effectively give feedback. Graduate and doctoral students were more effective in giving critical feedback, as their proficiency level was higher and they approached each task with greater maturity. However, freshman students were also capable, even at the surface level, of checking the basic structure of an essay.

Excerpt 1 in Appendix C is an illustrative example of how student talk can help to improve various components of essay writing. There are debates about how beneficial peer advising is in the L2 classroom due to low L2 proficiency (Hu, 2005) or friendship bias (Cheng & Warren, 2005); however, there is considerable agreement that the more critical students are during peer review, the better their own writing becomes (Byl & Topping, 2023; Yalch et al., 2019).

Reciprocity

This category involves the concept of reciprocity, which is an essential element in discourse-driven learning activities. Reciprocal dialogue (Gillies, 2016) aims to improve the quality of participation and increase student motivation. Through dialogic feedback, students not only receive advice, but they are encouraged to acknowledge the reviewer's words so that it does not feel like a one-directional, passive, monologic discourse. Having students acknowledge each other built rapport, developed empathy, and improved communication skills. Excerpt 2 is an example of a pair of students working on improving each other's posters for a midterm examination, and excerpt 3 illustrates acknowledgment of advice from freshman students in the academic writing course:

Similar to Byl & Topping's (2023) study, reciprocal feedback sometimes benefitted the reviewer more than the writer due to careful construction of feedback comments. However, by encouraging students to respond to every comment and acknowledge the efforts of the reviewer, students were able to think more critically about the advice rather than ignoring it or making random revisions.

Building Relationships

Throughout each semester, the researchers worked on building rapport and a sense of community through dialogue. This was done informally through warm-up discussion questions and formally through critical evaluation of student work. Notably, creating closer social networks was more beneficial for freshman students (especially during the pandemic, when classes were held online) as they were experiencing their first year of university and trying to build a community of friends. Although less important to graduate students, they also benefited from rapport-building activities, as participants in the course belonged to different labs and had few opportunities to interact with students in other faculties. For both sets of students, informal dialogue led to a social space where students could more comfortably ask critical questions and show support for each other during peer-review sessions. In essence, encouraging informal social interaction in the classroom balanced rapport-building with critical discourse, which, in turn, encouraged further discourse. Excerpt 4 shows relationship-building dialogue in the scientific course between two students from different labs.

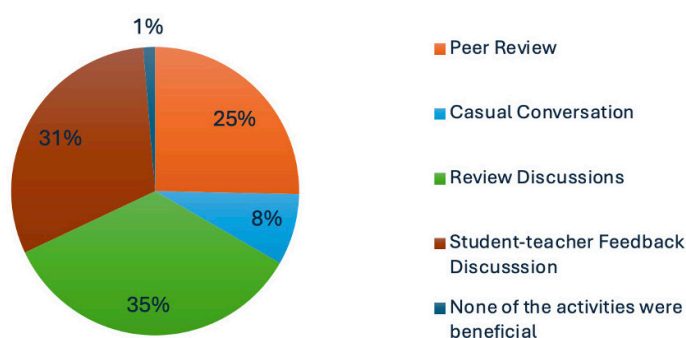
This kind of friendly discourse often led to casual meetings after lessons, where students helped each other with assignments. Although research has been conducted on the benefit of informal dialogue among educational professionals and in the business workplace (Thompson & Trigwell, 2016), more research is needed on how informal dialogue between students (on topics unrelated to immediate teaching tasks) contributes to improved learning.

Perception of Dialogic Learning

In the final class of the semester in the academic writing course in the researchers' respective universities, students were asked to reflect on the dialogic activities they experienced. Question 1 asked students which dialogic activities they considered most and least useful during the course and why. Question 2 asked students which style of teaching they preferred in the second language classroom. As can be seen in Figure 1, responses indicated that the activity that benefited students the most was reviewing the learning materials through group tasks and discussions (35%). They explained that peer discussion, rather than teacher talk, helped them to recall the course materials and understand them more deeply. It was also more interesting to review with peers than work alone. One-to-one dialogue with the teacher in the classroom and on Google Docs (31%) helped students to receive personalized feedback and ask specific questions about problem areas. Peer feedback (25%) had both positive and negative comments. Students understood the purpose of peer feedback, but ultimately, many preferred talking with the teacher directly, since the teacher gave the final grade on the course. Other students recognized that the teacher did not have time to teach individual students, and it was also a skill they needed to practice for their future. Although students enjoyed speaking with each other about the latest events happening in their lives, casual conversation as a lesson activity was less beneficial, as they could speak with each other outside of class via text messaging or in the cafeteria during lunch.

Figure 1

Dialogic Activities which Benefitted Students in Academic Writing



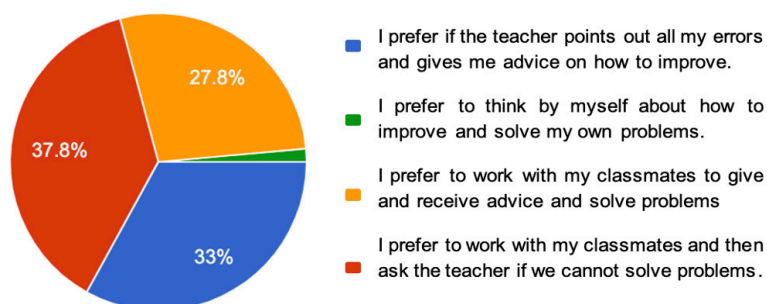
In the Scientific Presentation course, dialogue was built into all lessons since students were more proficient. There were two main activities that encouraged graduate students to actively participate in class: (a) video recording presentations and discussing improvements with a peer, and (b) critically assessing each other's performances. The main reasons for the effectiveness of these activities, as reported by the students were as follows:

- Improve specific aspects of my presentation (e.g., voice, structure, body language, visual aids)
- Increase my confidence in public-speaking and lower anxiety
- Improve my communication skills
- Become more critical when giving and listening to presentations
- Feel like a professional
- Understand how the audience views me
- Convey my presentation message clearly

Regarding Question 2, students in the academic writing course were asked about their preferences for teaching style. Graduate students were not asked this question, as the Scientific Presentation course did not lend itself to lecture-style teaching. Figure 2 shows freshman students' strong preference for a more active, communicative classroom. For teachers interested in adapting a more dialogic teaching style in their L2 classrooms, this result is encouraging.

Figure 2

Preferred Teaching Style



Noticeably, many students showed that they did not have the confidence or experience to work by themselves solely and preferred the teacher to assist them with their writing assignments. Only a few students showed preference for problem-solving their own essays and working independently. Overall, it is evident from the results that the students have a positive attitude towards working interactively.

Conclusion

There has been significant research around dialogic learning and teaching over the years, which has had a positive impact on the learning process and academic performance (Skidmore, 2006; Alexander, 2020). Respectful and collegial dialogue between teachers when designing courses also benefits teaching practices by focusing on shared views and trying to understand new perspectives in a constructive manner (Thompson & Trigwell, 2016). This study identified various types of dialogue used in the second language learning classroom focusing specifically on meaningful dialogue that helped learners increase engagement and perform at the academic level expected at both universities. To create a dialogic classroom, the basic requirements for instructors are having knowledge and skills of the pedagogical approach, a suitable curriculum to apply the underlying principles, and a university culture that enables teachers a certain level of agency in how they conduct classes. A limitation of this study is that it did not explore the outcome of the researchers' dialogic interactions on student performance or material design.

What was evident in this collaborative study, upon reflection, were three changes in the researchers' teaching approach. First, after focusing on a more dialogic style of teaching, we shifted away from teacher-directed activities and overuse of the textbook to a more relaxed approach, in which time was allotted weekly to more discussions, such as reviewing important points as a group, or one-to-one teacher/student discussions. This meant managing classroom time differently and choosing textbook activities more carefully to ensure that students had time to grasp the learning point sufficiently. The second area was that the researchers were able to bridge the gap between more and less proficient learners. This was true for courses in both universities, as there was a wide range of proficiency levels in classrooms from lower intermediate learners to almost fluent speakers. Through pair and group work, students were able to critically review course materials and assess each other's assignments. Both researchers encouraged students to have discussions in English; however, they were free to speak in their L1 if it allowed for deeper discussion and supported their L2 learning. Finally, focusing on dialogue created a more active and communicative classroom. For students who

preferred learning independently, they had the option to work by themselves.

In the research literature on dialogic pedagogy, the term “dialogue” is sometimes used interchangeably with other terms such as “discourse,” “talk,” “communication,” “conversation,” or “interaction.” However, for all terms, the idea is that interaction is two-way and reciprocal, rather than monologic, or preconstructed discourse. For instructors who would like to move away from the typical Initiation-Response-Feedback pedagogy and incorporate more meaningful dialogic practices in their classrooms, it is perhaps best to consider “dialogue” as a “disciplined, consensus-building process of collective communication based on shared values and beliefs” (Banathy, 2003, p.11, as cited in Watson et al., 2004, p. 54). In essence, this means that to benefit from dialogue, students must have a shared purpose and teachers should encourage a reciprocal, supportive relationship. For instructors, it is imperative that they build a repertoire of dialogue-driven activities that matches the specific needs and abilities of students and classroom context. This is possible through engaging in regular discussions with other educational professionals and attending teaching conferences.

In the end, although there are drawbacks to dialogic teaching in EFL settings, the act of engaging in meaningful dialogue can act as a valuable catalyst for students to become more critical thinkers and ultimately more active participants in the learning process.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers 22K00788 and 22K00737. More details about the grants can be found at:

<https://kaken.nii.ac.jp/grant/KAKENHI-PROJECT-22K00788/>

<https://kaken.nii.ac.jp/grant/KAKENHI-PROJECT-22K00737/>

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Appendix A

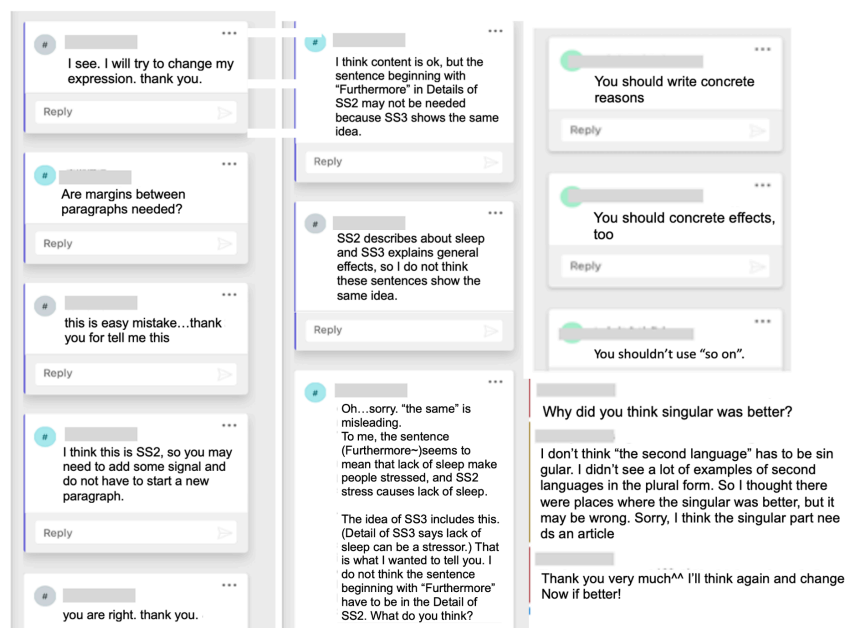
Defining and Unpacking “Dialogue”

Dialogue Type	Definition	Example
Monologic Dialogue	Dialogue largely concerned with the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student (Lyle, 2008); Dialogue by students which incorporates a three-stage model of speech production: Conceptualization, Formulation, and Articulation (Levelt, 1989).	e.g., Initiation-response-feedback (IRF) teaching: The teacher controls the learning process mainly through recapitulations, elicitation, repetition, reformulation, and exhortation (see Mercer, 2000); student presentations.
Structured Dialogue	Dialogue focused on the competence for speaking production rather than interaction; distinguished largely by what an individual knows rather than how an individual interacts with others (Hall & Pekarek, 2011); Dialogue which has been modified to facilitate interaction more efficiently (Long, 1981).	e.g., role-play activities; and discussion circles in which students are assigned specific roles and guided questions; and given prepared responses for specific social situations.
Collaborative Dialogue	Dialogue in which speakers engage jointly in problem solving and knowledge building (Gillies, 2019).	e.g., project-based style of learning: Building ideas through discussion about a text; co-writing or co-presenting a project; Pair or group reading of an academic text to understand the content and generate multiple perspectives.
Constructive Dialogue	Dialogue in which new meanings or knowledge are (co)constructed based on specific communication principles, or ground rules for discussion (Michaels & O’Conner, 2015); and/or one that fulfils some specific (constructive) function (see Baker, 1999).	e.g., theme-based academic discussion classes in which students actively listen to each other, share and build knowledge on a particular theme, co-construct new knowledge together, synthesize information, and draw conclusions.
Meaningful Dialogue	Dialogue which capitalizes on the power of talk to further students’ or instructors’ thinking, learning, and problem solving (Kim & Wilkinson, 2019); dialogue which nurtures engagement, confidence, independence and responsibility (Alexander, 2006).	e.g., peer-analysis of academic writing or presentations in which students clarify, exemplify, explore, expand, explain or justify ideas; collegial dialogue about lesson planning and materials development.

Appendix B

Data Analysis of Peer Feedback in Academic Writing and Presentation Courses

Example of Academic Writing Feedback Data Downloaded from Google Doc



The image displays a collage of screenshots from Google Docs comments, illustrating peer feedback in academic writing. The comments are organized into three columns, each showing a sequence of feedback and responses.

- Column 1 (Left):**
 - Comment 1: "I see, I will try to change my expression. thank you." (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 2: "Are margins between paragraphs needed?" (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 3: "this is easy mistake...thank you for tell me this" (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 4: "I think this is SS2, so you may need to add some signal and do not have to start a new paragraph." (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 5: "you are right. thank you." (Response: Reply)
- Column 2 (Middle):**
 - Comment 1: "I think content is ok, but the sentence beginning with 'Furthermore' in Details of SS2 may not be needed because SS3 shows the same idea." (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 2: "SS2 describes about sleep and SS3 explains general effects, so I do not think these sentences show the same idea." (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 3: "Oh...sorry, 'the same' is misleading. To me, the sentence (Furthermore)-seems to mean that lack of sleep make people stressed, and SS2 stress causes lack of sleep. The idea of SS3 includes this. (Detail of SS3 says lack of sleep can be a stressor.) That is what I wanted to tell you. I do not think the sentence beginning with 'Furthermore' have to be in the Detail of SS2. What do you think?" (Response: Reply)
- Column 3 (Right):**
 - Comment 1: "You should write concrete reasons" (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 2: "You should concrete effects, too" (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 3: "You shouldn't use 'so on'." (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 4: "Why did you think singular was better?" (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 5: "I don't think 'the second language' has to be singular. I didn't see a lot of examples of second languages in the plural form. So I thought there were places where the singular was better, but it may be wrong. Sorry, I think the singular part needs an article" (Response: Reply)
 - Comment 6: "Thank you very much^^ I'll think again and change Now if better!" (Response: Reply)

Example of Transcribed Excerpts from Presentation Courses

- **Example of Peer Advising**

A: Hi! OOO!! There are three points I think you need to edit (Just I think haha). 1: The color of the theme box—Except of conclusion part, all theme box is black blue. However, the only conclusion part is gray. So, you should change black blue conclusion box into gray. 2: Too many characters—Without Result/Discussion section, there is no figure and picture. I think it's ok, but in my opinion, too many characters make people get reluctant to read. For example, Introduction section is easy to introduce my idea. 3: Figure bottom center—I could not understand what it means. 52% of those who believe in major technological improvements pay 42,000 yen? Maybe it is not true, so I want you to make improved figure. Except these points, your poster is so brilliant that my poster is based on yours [laughs]. I hope you will adopt my idea to your presentation!

B: You can't see it, but even so, I had made reduce very much. In fact, at first, there were 62 words in Methodology section, 87 words in Future prospects section. So I was making effort to decrease, yes I knew it was still lengthy and wordy...But next time, I improved it more!

- **Example of Reciprocity**

A: OOO said to me I should use more transition words and emphasize the current problem. It helped me a lot, and the presentation became better. In addition, I saw him doing presentation before final, and that made me aware of the importance of enthusiasm.

B: Me too. mostly, I watched his presentations and learned a lot from him, such as how to speak slowly and confidently. He showed me a great example. My peer gave me a helpful advice about my images in my presentation. This kind of advices was not given even by my teacher but it was persuasive to me. What do you think about my poster?

A: OK. A couple of comments then. As a general comment, there's too many words. It's better to use less or add something different (that's not words). Having this many words makes it look more like an essay than a poster. I also think you can remove the shadow for the boxes, it might be distracting instead. I think it could also use a lot more colour than just black and white, a different colour for the title and the subheadings.

B: Thank you.

- Example of Discovery

A: Why did you decide to give the questionnaire to only 14 students?

B: I thought 14 students was enough to research.

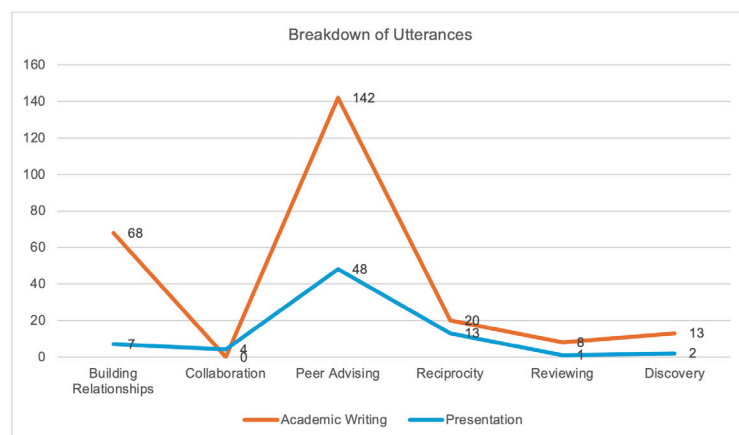
A: Maybe 14 students is too few. But maybe your topic is ok because you are trying to analyze the sounds of music. It is quantitative? Or...

[silence...checks dictionary]

B: Qualitative!

A: Qualitative? OK.

Numerical Breakdown of Utterances and Example of Color-Coding Utterances into 6 Categories

[illegible]

Appendix C

Excerpts of Student Voices from Data

Excerpt 1

You many need to write “effect” clearly. You should write concrete reasons. You should write concrete effects too. You shouldn’t use “so on”. I’m not sure but you should refrain from using the word “we”.

Excerpt 2

A: Your poster’s heading says, “Research Question.” This is not a question; it is a statement. Sometimes in a poster session, the presenter is not there but the poster is up. They come to read the poster, so you cannot explain.

B: Ok I will change it. Your poster has a good layout. I can understand the structure clearly from the heading.

A: Thank you. I followed the teacher’s style.

Excerpt 3

A: First paragraph content says developed countries produce a lot of garbage but second paragraph content says how help developing countries reduce garbage. I think the way to reduce garbage in developed countries is more important.

B: Yes you are right. Thank you. I will change it.

A: Maybe you can talk about Japan because of a lot of plastic waste.

Excerpt 4

A: Is there anything that you are doing in your research now?

B: Actually, I have a big problem [laughs]. I will have, have the international conference in April and its abstract deadline is soon.

A: [laughs loudly] when?

B: the deadline is this month, on the 15th, but...

A: [laughs again] have you started? It’s next week!

B: Now I am doing pilot, pre-pilot study, so, so...help me! [laughs]

How to cite the article:

Hart, E. (2024). Pitch frequency's impact on L2 listening comprehension. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 168–174. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-21>

Research Article

Pitch Frequency's Impact on L2 Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

While volume and pronunciation are often considered when discussing listening comprehension, vocal pitch frequency is a salient and often overlooked factor. Especially in schools where second language (L2) learners consist of students from different cultures with different native frequency pitches, vocal pitch frequency on the part of the instructor and the materials used may play a key part in the ease or difficulty with which students will have with comprehending material (Novia et al., 2018). Participants in this study were asked to listen to two speeches of approximately equal English level (CEFR B1), followed by a short comprehension test. The first speech was recorded and shifted to a lower pitch (118 Hz), while the second speech was recorded and shifted to a higher pitch (149.2 Hz). A pilot test was run with the same speaker with no pitch shift (139.8 Hz). Test results demonstrated a significant difference in performance depending on the frequency of the speaker. Implications to language instruction to internationally diverse L2 learners will be discussed.

リスニング理解について議論する際には、音量や発音が考慮されることが多いですが、音声ピッチ周波数は顕著でありながら見落とされがちな要素です。特に、第二言語(L2)学習者が、母国語の周波数ピッチが異なるさまざまな文化の生徒で構成される学校では、講師側の音声ピッチ周波数と使用される教材が、生徒が教材を理解する際の容易さや困難さに重要な役割を果たす可能性があります(Novia et al., 2018)。この研究の参加者は、ほぼ同じ英語レベル(CEFR B1)の2つのスピーチを聞き、その後短い理解テストを受けました。最初のスピーチは録音されて低いピッチ(118 Hz)にシフトされ、2番目のスピーチは録音されて高いピッチ(149.2 Hz)にシフトされました。同じ話者でピッチシフトなし(139.8 Hz)のパイロットテストが実行されました。テスト結果では、話者の周波数に応じてパフォーマンスに大きな違いがあることが示されました。国際的に多様なL2学習者への言語指導への影響について説明します。

Listening comprehension tests are a mainstay of second language proficiency evaluations. Pitch can have an impact on listeners' comprehension and retention (Pourfannan et al., 2022). Certain studies have even indicated that the use of female voice overs often yielded better test results by L2 learners (Novia et al., 2018). This study aims to narrow down even further the more precise causative factor in the improvement of listening scores by checking if in fact the pitch frequency of the voice being heard is more of a contributing factor to intelligibility over the gender of the voice being spoken. The results of the current study will then be reported, which sought to address the following research questions (RQs): To what degree, if any, does vocal pitch frequency affect the L2 listening comprehension accuracy of Japanese tertiary students of English as a foreign language (EFL)? To what degree, if any, does L2 listening comprehension accuracy of Japanese tertiary students of EFL align with their perception of pitch?

Literature Review

Listening comprehension tests are a commonly used form of examination in standardized English testing such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication). As such, there have been studies examining the efficacy of different vocal qualities of the speakers in the exams and any correlation in test results. Listening comprehension (TOEFL) tests with women speakers conducted in an Indonesian university yielded high overall test scores in those who participated (Novia et al., 2018). On average, women have a higher vocal pitch frequency than men (Fitch et al., 1970), which lends some credence to high-pitched voices having an effect on listening comprehension tests. Conversely, lower-pitched voices lent themselves to higher accuracy of memory recall in earwitness testimony (by L1 English speakers) (Mullennix et al., 2009). In the case of text memory recall, L1 speakers listening to both higher and lower pitched voices yielded better memory recall than listening to a normally pitched voice (Helfrich et al., 2011). Higher levels of comprehension and retention in online lectures to L1 speakers (regardless of the lecturer's gender) tend to favor high-pitched voices (Samoza et al., 2015). While the effect of voice pitch on comprehension is well-established, there has been little study done in the context of an L2 learning environment.

The methods and findings in this study aim to focus primarily on the effects, if any, of vocal pitch frequency on L2 English students primarily from Japan.

Pitch has a unique position amongst other suprasegmental features of speech in that it often also affects

not only the listening comprehension of the listener, but also can contribute to other aspects as to how the speech is perceived. In designing robotic assistants, studies have found that both female and male voices modulated to a similar fundamental pitch frequency (225 Hz and 225 Hz respectively) resulted in better understanding and retention of information by human listeners (Pourfannan et al., 2022) clearly indicating a relation between pitch and memory retention. High-pitched voices can in one sense seem more friendly and childlike, or conversely can even seem more aggressive, which also have an effect on text memory (Helfrich 2004). As such, the use of pitch and its effect on test takers warrants important consideration when creating materials for L2 students.

Methodology

Participants

The current study was conducted at a small, private Japanese university. The student body primarily consists of students in technical fields such as sports sciences, electrical and mechanical engineering. While the university does not offer an English major, English is a required subject for all students in all four years of their study. Students typically take two English classes a week (90 minutes each). Courses in years one and two focus on listening and conversational skills, with later years lending more practice in standardized tests such as TOEIC. The university is located in a rural area of Japan, with little-to-no spontaneous interactions with L1 English speakers.

The English ability levels of students are evaluated annually with an abridged version of the TOEIC Bridge test. The results of these tests are also considered for students' class placements. This test is solely a listening comprehension test, with no speaking or writing components. The levels of students in the university follow the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) model: Advanced level (C1, C2), Intermediate level (B1, B2), and Beginner level (A1, A2), with the majority of students falling within the B and A levels of ability. The researcher informed the students before the test that for the purposes of his research the students would be asked to listen to two short speeches and be quizzed afterwards. The participants were also advised by the researcher that involvement in the research was completely voluntary, and that participation (or lack thereof) would have no bearing on or affect their current class grade in any way. They were also told that they could opt out of the study at any time.

In total, 189 students were involved in the study. However, only the data from participants who took part in both the Low-Pitched and High-Pitched tests were used for the pair comparison data analysis. The participants were divided into three groups, with names derived from the form of stimulus they received: Pilot Group (Group M, $n = 49$), Low-Pitched (Group LP, $n = 110$), and High-Pitched (Group HP, $n = 110$). Of the 110 participants, 89 were male (88 Japanese, 1 Vietnamese) and 21 were female (19 Japanese, 1 Vietnamese, 1 Thai).

Listening and Assessment Materials

Two original passages of approximate English level and length were created for this experiment by the researcher (Appendices A and C). The original passages were adapted from general information gathered from Wikipedia and adapted to match the ability range of the students in the university (CEFR B, A). The passages were regarding dragonflies and red lantern flies, respectively. These topics were carefully considered so as to eliminate the possibility of topic familiarity interfering with test results (e.g., Alexander et al., 1994; Rubin, 1992). Using a web-based vocabulary level analyzer based on the CEFR-J word list (cvla.langedu.jp), the contents of the passages were checked to be within the CEFR-B1.2 and B1.1 levels (see Table 1). This was done to ensure that the English used would not be too difficult and be within the ability for the students tested (CEFR B, A), with over 60% of the terms in each passage actually being in the A1 range. Some words which fell outside of the B1, 2 range included proper nouns and loanwords (e.g., dragonfly, nymph, North America). Both sets of the comprehension questions were designed so as to be able to reflect specific information directly from the text which was read. An endeavor was made to have similar specifics be asked about (the colors of the insects, number of wings, their eating habits).

Table 1

Vocabulary Level Analysis of Texts Used in Comprehension Tests

CEFR	Dragonfly Text		Spotted Lantern Fly Text	
	<i>AvrDiff</i>	<i>BperA</i>	<i>AvrDiff</i>	<i>BperA</i>
A1	1.27	0.06	1.27	0.06
A2	1.41	0.11	1.41	0.11
B1	1.50	0.13	1.50	0.13
B2	1.67	0.19	1.67	0.19
Input	1.58	0.18	1.50	0.16
Estimated Level	B1.2	B2.1	B1.1	B1.2

Note. As per cvla.langedu.jp, *AvrDiff* denotes average word difficulty with A1 = 1, A2 = 2, B1 = 3, and B2 = 4. *BperA* denotes the ratio of B level words to A level ones.

Three variants of the stimulus used for the test were prepared. A male speaker of L1 Standard American English (the researcher), first recorded audio of himself reciting Passage A (Appendix A). The recording was extracted and converted into a wav audio file for presentation with no pitch modification (139.8 Hz) to the pilot group. The same audio was modified, and pitch shifted two semitones down (118Hz) for use for the low pitch listening group.

A second recording was made of the researcher reciting the Passage B (Appendix C). This audio was modified, and pitch shifted two semitones up (149.2 Hz). These pitch frequencies were chosen in reference to stay within established boundaries of the frequency range for an adult male (Fitch et al., 1970) without sounding too unnatural or distorted. Other studies have found that pitch shifting the samples beyond 20 Hz in either direction can make the sample become noticeably artificial, unnatural and distracting (Pourfannan et al., 2022).

The audio was recorded using a Shure SM7B dynamic microphone connected via XLR to a Tascam Portapro X8. The audio files (wav) were recorded at a sample rate of 48 kHz and then pitch shifted up or down as needed in the open-source software Audacity. After modification and export, the samples were put through Praat to more precisely measure the average pitches of the audio samples.

Data Analysis

Two original 10-item quizzes were written by the researcher to correspond to each test to evaluate the participants' level of comprehension (Appendices B and D). To ensure quick and accurate comprehension of the quiz items, this outcome measure was created in the participants' L1 (Japanese) by the researcher and checked by a colleague with a Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N1 proficiency level. The quiz was piloted with a sample population of 49 students from the same university. Inferential statistics (t-tests) were run to determine if statistical differences existed between the groups.

After participating in both the LP and HP sessions, students were asked to take part in a post-test impressions questionnaire (Appendix E) to gauge the perception of how they performed versus their actual test results.

Procedures

At the beginning of each listening test, the participants were given time to read over the 10 comprehension questions before the audio was played. While such reading of questions before listening begins is a procedure commonly done in TOEIC examinations, reading the questions beforehand considers working memory as an independent variable in L2 listening comprehension (e.g., Fay & Buchweitz, 2014; Linck et al., 2013; Wallace & Lee, 2020). By familiarizing themselves with the questions and answers beforehand, the participants could focus on listening, thereby reducing other variables such as comprehension. Students who took part in the tests were told that they would be listening to a short speech in English which would only be played once, and to look over the questions before the audio was played. Once all the participants indicated that they were ready, each group listened to the audio sample corresponding to their test.

The Pilot Group heard the audio of the speaker with no pitch shift (139.8 Hz), Group LP heard the audio of the low pitch shifted (118 Hz) speaker, and Group HP heard the audio of the high pitch shifted (149.2 Hz) speaker. After the audio was finished playing, participants were allowed to answer the quiz questions at their own pace without the restriction of a time limit.

After the LP and HP groups finished their tests, they were asked to answer an exit questionnaire regarding their perception on their own performance in each test as well as how they perceived the ease of understanding for each of the differently pitched audio clips.

Results

A dataset was created using the website langest.jp, which operated using the statistics program R v3.2.1, from which all statistical calculations were performed. Descriptive statistics were first calculated for each group, with means and standard deviations reported (Table 2). Although there were originally 149 participants in the study, only the results from participants who took part in both the LP and HP groups were used in the data analysis.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Comprehension Quiz Scores

	Pilot Group		Group LP		Group HP	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Quiz Score	5.50	2.03	5.06	2.16	5.54	1.83

Note. The various group participant sizes were as follows: Pilot Group $n = 49$. Group LP, Group HP $n = 110$. The scoring scale was from 0 (minimum) to 10 (maximum).

A paired *t*-test of Group LP and Group HP was conducted to determine if a statistical difference was present between the groups. A significant statistical difference was found between the comprehension scores of the low-pitched

and high-pitched groups: $p = 0.007$, $d = 0.26$ [0.07 ~ 0.45]. If effect sizes were taken into account, the results could be made even more apparent.

The exit questionnaire the participants filled out regarding their self-perceived performances on the tests seem to reflect these results, with 82% of students asked saying that they felt that the higher pitched voice test was easier to understand. Despite all audio recordings being done by the same male L1 speaker of English with the only digital audio augmentation being pitch shifting up and down by two semitones, some students erroneously associated the higher pitched voice as a female voice.

Discussion

The current study sought to investigate whether the pitch frequency of a speaker would have an impact on listening comprehension test results, with results demonstrating that tests conducted with the high-pitched (149.2 Hz) voice yielded statistically significant higher scores ($p = 0.007$, $d = 0.26$). This is information important for consideration in the development of listening comprehension assessment materials especially for instructors who design and create their own materials to suit the specific needs and levels of their students.

Limitations and Future Directions

While 107 of the 110 participants in this study were Japanese nationals, the student body of the university also includes foreign students from Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Mongolia, and China. Some cultural factors related to the L1 of the participants may be a fruitful avenue of study in checking if factors relating to the L1 of participants has a notable influence on their perception of pitch in an L2 context. While variation of pitch as well as lexical styles are demonstrated as important factors in a pitch accented language such as Japanese (Sano S. and Sano C., 2019), effects of pitch on L2 learners of English (a non-tonal language) in tonal based languages (such as Chinese or Thai) would also be another course of study of interest to this researcher.

As there has been research indicating an important link between the fundamental pitch and tonal slope in learners' L1 languages and their ability to grasp certain phonetic concepts in Asian languages such as Chinese and Japanese (Guion and Pederson, 2007), a focused study on the impact of students' L1 on their L2 listening comprehension would be an interesting continuation on this theme.

Conclusion

Research on the effect of pitch and listening has shown that pitch does have an effect on memory recall (Helfrich et al., 2011; Samoza et al., 2015) and even influences notions regarding the speaker (Aung et al., 2020). However, in the context of lower-level learners of L2 English, pitch also had a statistically significant effect on the results of listening comprehension tests. In the current study, 110 students of L2 English listened to two passages of comparable English level (CEFR B1), with one pitch-shifted down (118 Hz) and one pitch-shifted up (149.2 Hz). Students had higher results on listening comprehension tests, as well as perceived it to be easier to understand. These results indicate that the pitch of a voice used in testing materials bears serious consideration not only for ease of testing for the participants, but for their results as well. Free, open source software such as Praat and Audacity can be used by test creators and makers of educational materials to carefully measure and fine tune voices to suit the ability levels of their students. Such care to voice and pitch modulation can also have implications in fields such as creating AI text to voice models to create voice types conducive to better information retention in the targeted listeners.

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Appendix A

Script for the Listening Passage A

Sometimes in the summer, you can see large insects flying around. Many of these large flying insects are dragonflies.

Dragonflies are flying insects which have four large wings and long slender bodies. When at rest, dragonflies hold their wings horizontally.

Adult dragonflies often have brilliant colors. Their overall color is often a combination of yellow, red, brown and black. Freshly emerged adults are often a pale white color, but get their normal color after a few days. Once fully developed, the wings of dragonflies are a clear color with black.

Young dragonflies, called nymphs, are usually a blend of brown, green and grey.

Dragonflies are excellent hunters, and often catch their food in the air. Adult dragonflies eat other insects such as mosquitoes, butterflies, and sometimes even other dragonflies.

Dragonfly nymphs are also good hunters, and eat animals smaller than themselves. For example, worms, other baby insects (called larvae), and sometimes small frogs and fish.

In addition to having excellent flying and hunting ability, dragonflies also have advanced eyesight. Dragonflies see about three hundred images in a second, and can also see in three hundred sixty degrees. About eighty percent of the dragonfly's brain is used for its eyes.

Appendix B

Comprehension Quiz For Listening Passage A (English translation)

1. What is this speech about?
 - a) dragons
 - b) dragonflies
 - c) earthworms
 - d) flies
2. What kind of bodies do dragonflies have?
 - a) two wings
 - b) long and thin
 - c) short and round
 - d) thin and round
3. What color are matured dragonflies?
 - a) clear
 - b) gray
 - c) pale white
 - d) yellow
4. What is a "nymph"?
 - a) a young dragonfly
 - b) a small insect
 - c) a mature dragonfly
 - d) a type of color
5. What color are nymphs?
 - a) yellow and red
 - b) pale white
 - c) brown and gray
 - d) clear
6. Which do mature dragonflies typically eat?
 - a) mosquitoes
 - b) mice
 - c) frogs
 - d) fish
7. Which do nymphs typically eat?
 - a) earthworms
 - b) large frogs and fish
 - c) praying mantises
 - d) butterflies
8. Dragonflies have advanced ____?
 - a) biting power
 - b) flying ability
 - c) degrees
 - d) eyesight
9. How many images does a dragonfly's brain see in one second?
 - a) 4
 - b) 80
 - c) 300
 - d) 360
10. What is 80% of a dragonfly's brain used for?
 - a) flying
 - b) hunting
 - c) eyes
 - d) brain
11. What is your native language?

a) Japanese	f) Malay
b) Korean	g) Indonesian
c) Chinese	h) Bangladeshi
d) Vietnamese	i) English
e) Thai	j) Other
12. If "Other", please specify: _____

Appendix C

Script for the Listening Passage B

In North America, the spotted lantern fly has become a problem. This insect is native to Asia, but arrived in North America in 2014. The spotted lanternfly has 4 wings - two large grey wings with small black spots, and two small red wings with small black spots. This fly is about 2.5 cm long and 1.2 cm wide. It has a small, black head, and red eyes. Its stomach is often a yellow color.

Although they have 4 wings, spotted lantern flies are not good fliers. Instead, they jump from plant to plant to feed. Spotted lantern flies do not have teeth or a stinger, so they cannot bite or hurt humans. However, they can harm plants and trees. For example, spotted lanternflies eat the sap, or juice, of plants and trees. Sometimes many spotted lanternflies eat at the same time, so this can damage or kill many plants and trees. This is especially a problem

for businesses that grow fruits. Because spotted lanternflies also eat the juice of grape vines, these flies can have a very large impact on wine business and local economies.

The spotted lantern fly has no natural predators in North America, so people were told one thing - if you see a spotted lanternfly, kill it!

Appendix D

Comprehension Quiz For Listening Passage B (English translation)

1. Where are spotted lanternflies originally from?
 - a) North America
 - b) Asia
 - c) South America
 - d) Europe
2. How many wings do spotted lanternflies have?
 - a) two wings
 - b) four wings
 - c) they do not have wings
 - d) six wings
3. What year did spotted lanternflies arrive in North America?
 - a) 2014
 - b) 1914
 - c) 2040
 - d) 2004
4. Spotted lanternflies are about _____.
 - a) 1.2 cm
 - b) 2.5 cm
 - c) 2.5 mm
 - d) 4 cm
5. What color are the wings of spotted lanternflies?
 - a) yellow
 - b) red with black spots
 - c) gray with black spots
 - d) clear
6. How are spotted lanternflies harmful?
 - a) they harm local wildlife
 - b) they have poison which is dangerous to humans
 - c) they emit a foul odor
 - d) they are harmful to local agriculture
7. Which do spotted lanternflies typically eat?
 - a) earthworms
 - b) other insects
 - c) pollen
 - d) tree sap
8. Spotted lanternflies are not good at _____.
 - a) biting
 - b) hunting
 - c) seeing
 - d) flying
9. In North America, what are people told to do if they see a spotted lanternfly?
 - a) kill it
 - b) capture it
 - c) take a picture
 - d) report its location to the authorities
10. According to the passage, spotted lanternflies are _____.
 - a) pests
 - b) poisonous
 - c) beneficial organisms
 - d) an endangered species
11. What is your native language?

a) Japanese	f) Malay
b) Korean	g) Indonesian
c) Chinese	h) Bangladeshi
d) Vietnamese	i) English
e) Thai	j) Other
12. If "Other", please specify: _____

Appendix E

Post-testing Impressions Questionnaire (English translation)

1. Between samples A and B, which do you feel was easier to understand/comprehend?
 - a) A was much easier to understand
 - b) A was a little easier to understand
 - c) they were the same
 - d) B was a little easier to understand
 - e) B was much easier to understand
2. Please explain your choice from the above.

How to cite the article:

Kawashima, C. (2024). Politeness strategy addressed in English grammar books. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 175–183. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-22>

Research Article

Politeness Strategy Addressed in English Grammar Books

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Abstract

This study explores the most recently published English grammar reference books focusing on politeness features in relation to grammar knowledge. Initially, the examination identifies instances of grammar information where politeness features are explicitly mentioned based on the terminologies related to politeness. Subsequently, the focus shifts to determine the politeness features of identified instances. The study also investigates how these politeness features are demonstrated in relation to pragmatic information and grammatical knowledge. Additionally, the study examines communicativeness of the tasks to practice identified politeness features. The findings underscore the significant role of grammatical knowledge in shaping communicative strategies as (im)politeness, intensifying, softening, indirectness, and formality alongside related cultural values. The most significant gap is underrepresentation of communicative tasks to practice politeness strategies.

本研究は、最新の英文法参考書における文法知識に関連したポライトネスの紹介についての調査である。まず、ポライトネスに関する明示的記述を含む文法事項の例を特定し、文法事項を絡めて導入されたポライトネスの特徴を分析した。また、本研究はポライトネスの特徴に関する説明を語用論的情報と文法事項との関連についての調査も行った。さらに、これらのポライトネス表現の実践的な適用に関する検討を行った。結果として、日本の文化的価値観の反映と共に婉曲表現やフォーマル表現といったポライトネス戦略を形作る上で文法知識の重要性が浮き彫りになった。しかし、学習者の語用論的コミュニケーション能力を養うためのタスクの欠如がみられた。

Appropriate language use, including knowing when to be polite depending on the situation, is crucial for effective communication especially in a second language. Politeness strategies are necessary depending on the speaker-hearer power relations or social distance. This skill involves pragmatics and goes beyond grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation (Barron et al., 2024). Failure to use pragmatically appropriate language can lead to perceptions of uncooperativeness, rudeness, or insult even in speakers with high linguistic proficiency (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991). Pragmatic competence, or being able to use language appropriately in context, appears in theoretical models of communicative competence involving both knowledge of L2 grammar and the ability to use this system in actual communication (Taguchi, 2012).

Since the implementation of the new Course of Study in 2022, the Japanese education ministry has enhanced learners' communicative competence. Ministry-authorized textbooks try to prioritize communicative activities over detailed linguistic information. However, the users of these textbooks tend to adhere to a grammar-based syllabus and classroom instruction remains centered on grammar. While memorizing decontextualized example sentences can impede learners' pragmatic competence (Mizushima, 2016), grammatical knowledge remains crucial in supporting learners' pragmatic performance, especially varying levels of politeness (Ishihara, 2022; Taguchi & Rover, 2017). Ishihara (2022) stated that learners' divergence from pragmatic norms is commonly attributed to their underdeveloped grammatical competence in the L2. Thus, learners' grammatical knowledge may help learners' appropriate use of language. Politeness strategies using a range of modals for conversational indirectness can be instructed and practiced in a classroom according to learners' proficiency levels (Rover, 2022).

This study explores the most recently published English grammar reference books to examine the presence of politeness features, which were underrepresented in textbooks for classroom instruction. By analyzing these resources, the research aims to understand the extent and types of grammar information that convey politeness features. It also investigates how these features are introduced and the relationship between politeness strategies and elements such as syntax structures, pragmatic information, and cultural values. Additionally, the study examines whether the identified politeness features are practically applied, shedding light on the role of grammatical knowledge in helping learners use politeness strategies in everyday interactions.

Literature Review

Politeness strategies are employed to save the speaker's or hearer's face and relate to power, distance, and the weight of imposition in calculating the intensity of a face-threatening act (FTA) with positive politeness and negative

politeness (Yule, 2023). Ryabova (2015) interpreted negative politeness as avoiding interference with the hearer's face by using indirect speech acts, while positive politeness involved the speaker showing interest in the hearer and sharing goals using the pronoun *we*.

A lack of politeness strategies in pedagogical materials has been observed despite numerous studies identifying speech acts. Diepenbroek and Derwing (2013) found limited occurrences of formality and politeness in popular ESL textbooks and noted a lack of contextualization in teaching pragmatics related to politeness. They suggested that teachers should emphasize context variables to raise learners' awareness of appropriate language use in different settings. Similarly, Roohani and Alipour (2017) found that EFL textbooks used in Iranian high schools presented speech acts out of context without explicit information about speaker-hearer relations. They argued that the absence of contextual information makes it difficult to determine the politeness or face-threatening nature of speech acts. Nozawa (2014) examined the use of modal verbs related to politeness strategies in upper-intermediate and lower-secondary EFL textbooks in Japan. They found an underrepresentation of polite requests using modal verbs and limited explicit instruction, leading to a mismatch between high grammar competence and low pragmatic competence. More recently, Kawashima (2022) found that Japanese high school EFL textbooks underrepresented tasks for practicing politeness-sensitive speech acts like requests and offers, despite using complex syntax. Liam (2023) noted that Hong Kong ELT textbooks focused on directives tied to grammar points with limited inclusion of indirect speech acts, making it difficult for learners to use language appropriately outside the classroom. Addressing the lack of contextualization and metapragmatic information is necessary to enhance learners' pragmatic awareness and language use.

Politeness strategies in language use may be closely related to cultural values, and are sometimes reflected in pedagogical materials. Meiratnasari et al. (2019) investigated politeness strategies in Indonesian English textbooks based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework and found a higher percentage of positive politeness (46%). They suggested that this reflects Indonesian society's character, where people show interest and friendliness toward others. Similarly, Mohd Nabil and Kaur (2020) found a higher portrayal of positive politeness with exaggeration in conversations in both local and global English textbooks used in Malaysia. They implied that exaggeration helps to please those of higher social status in their culture, suggesting that awareness of such values helps learners develop communication skills alongside language skills. These cultural values and polite language use can be reflected in pedagogical materials.

Furthermore, some studies have found that learners' grammatical knowledge can aid in developing pragmatic competence if instructed appropriately. Ashoorpour and Azari (2014) studied the relations between grammatical and pragmatic knowledge, and found that advanced-level Iranian university EFL students' pragmatic competence positively correlated with their grammatical knowledge regarding the speech act of requesting. They emphasized the need to keep focusing on appropriate language use in diverse contexts for successful communication exposing learners to authentic language use situations. Huschova (2021) explored modalized speech acts in a spoken learners' corpus in Czech tertiary education, and discovered the use of tentative could to show social remoteness with a high degree of politeness, although this was infrequent, while *can* was more common. They stated that B2 level learners of English might communicate successfully using modalized speech acts as they can produce and interpret these acts. Among grammar items, modals play a key role in producing speech acts. Modal verbs, including hypothetical forms such as *would* or *could*, hedges, downgraders, and intensifiers encode politeness through the morphological, syntactic, and lexical resources of languages (Leech, 2014). As learners' grammatical knowledge increases, they may apply their grammatical knowledge to pragmatic language use appropriately.

Alief and Nashruddin (2022) observed that junior high school learners' language use was influenced by classroom examples. They emphasized the importance of teaching appropriate language use according to the situation and incorporating politeness into the learning process. According to Rover (2022), lower-level learners have difficulties producing more indirect speech acts using modals, whereas A2 level or upper-beginner/lower-intermediate level learners display the ability to use modals such as *can*, *could*, and *would*, and interrogatives for pragmatic purposes such as making conventionally indirect requests. He suggests pragmatics curriculum developmentally sensitive enough to bridge each level of learners' proficiency such as incorporating different levels of indirectness.

Methods

Data Collection

The data for this study consist of instances of grammar information introduced with politeness features in the selected materials. Four recently published English grammar reference books designed for upper secondary education in Japan were selected: Crown, Quest, My Way, and Zoom as shown in the Appendix. These books are used in both public and private high schools as ancillaries alongside coursebooks to supplement learners' grammatical knowledge. These four grammar reference books were selected due to their widespread use in Japanese high school EFL classrooms and popularity as top-selling supplements to MEXT-approved textbooks for reinforcing grammatical instruction. This selection was made through informal interviews with school textbooks sales representatives. The grammar information in these reference books closely aligns with the MEXT prescribed textbooks. As the grammatical knowledge introduced in the MEXT prescribed textbooks is surface level, these reference books provide learners with more detailed syntactical information with metalanguage.

Data Analysis

The study initially identified the instances of grammatical knowledge with explicit mentioning politeness features including the terminologies such as (im)politeness, indirectness, formality, intensifying, and softening. Alongside, the average number of the identified instances per page was calculated to determine the frequency of these identified instances in each book. As each type of grammar information was present in particular units for grammar items such as modals, conjunctions, and hypothetical conditions, etc, the identified instances were categorized based on the unit for grammar items to see the types of grammar information involving politeness features. Subsequently, the identified instances were categorized according to different politeness features following the terminologies related to politeness. This categorization aimed to determine which types of politeness features were explained and to assess their frequency.

For the sake of understanding how different types of politeness feature were explained and reflection of cultural values, the categorized instances from the previous stage were labeled according to its type of pragmatic information and examine syntactic structures used for each type of pragmatic information. Furthermore, in order to examine the reflection of Japanese cultural values in these reference books, the instances involving the directive speech acts as requesting or seeking permission were assessed in terms of positive and negative politeness strategies, following the concepts introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987). At the same time the frequency of these speech act types was also examined.

Contextualized activities provide learners with pragmatic language choice according to the situation. The study, additionally, examined whether or not politeness strategies presented in these books could be practiced. After identifying the tasks to practice politeness features in each unit, they were assessed with regard to contextualization and communicativeness. Those with contextualized interactive activities were determined to be communicative tasks.

Results and Discussion

The results of the data analysis highlighted the benefits of using grammatical knowledge to enhance learners' awareness of polite language use in different contexts. The findings are presented with a focus on both grammatical knowledge and politeness features. Additionally, the analysis identified gaps that teachers need to address.

Grammar Information Containing Politeness Features

Table 1 summarizes the instances of grammar information with politeness features. *Crown* had the highest frequency with 43 instances. Although the number of instances varied between *Quest* and *My Way*, their frequencies did not differ significantly.

Table 1

Number of Instances with Politeness Features

Book	Number of Instances	Frequency
Crown	43	0.061
Quest	22	0.033
My Way	11	0.037
Zoom	6	0.014

Note. Frequency is calculated through page-by-page analysis.

Overall, considerable differences were observed across these books regarding the inclusion of politeness features. The inclusion of politeness features in grammar information may be incidental as the primary purpose of these books is supplementing learners' grammatical knowledge.

The types of syntactic structures with politeness features are shown in Table 2. *Crown* provided the broadest range with modal units containing the highest number of instances. However, *Crown* had a lower percentage of these instances compared to other books, but a notable number of hypothetical conditions and tense and aspect features were present. *My Way* uniquely included colloquial expressions with politeness features.

Modal verbs were prominently featured as politeness markers in these books. According to Leech (2014) and Rover (2022), modal verb structures play a key role in conveying indirectness in requests. These structures are included in secondary-level foreign language education curricula (Ishihara, 2022) and learners may be able to use them practically if properly instructed. Leech (2014) stated that hypothetical statements containing the modals would or could exhibit less imposition maintaining interlocutors' distance. Similarly, politeness is conveyed through the hypothetical use of past tense and progressive aspect forms in requests (Leech, 2014). Overall, these politeness features can be an important means of presenting grammatical knowledge.

Table 2

Number of Instances with Politeness Features

Title of Unit	Crown	Quest	My Way	Zoom
Adverbs	1 (2.3%)			
Colloquial Expressions			4 (36.0%)	
Conjunctions	2 (4.7%)			
Hypothetical Conditions	9 (21.0%)	1 (4.5%)		1 (16.0%)
Interrogatives	3 (7.0%)			
Modals	21 (49.0%)	16 (73.0%)	6 (55.0%)	5 (84.0%)
Sentence Types	3 (7.0%)	3 (13.5%)		
Tense and Aspects	4 (9.0%)	2 (9.0%)	1 (9.0%)	
Total	43	22	11	6

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Politeness Features Introduced through Grammar Information

This section examines politeness features presented through grammar. Table 3 categorizes these features using the terminologies found in the books: formality, impoliteness, indirectness, intensifying, politeness, and softening. While most instances were labeled as politeness, Crown and Quest also included a notable number of other features.

Table 3

Politeness Features Addressed through Linguistic Information

Feature	Crown	Quest	My Way	Zoom
Formality		1 (4.6%)	1 (9.0%)	
Impoliteness	4 (9.5%)			
Indirectness	3 (7.0%)	1 (4.6%)	1 (9.0%)	
Intensifying	6 (14.0%)	6 (27.0%)		1 (17.0%)
Politeness	26 (60.0%)	11 (50.0%)	9 (82.0%)	3 (50.0%)
Softening	4 (9.5%)	3 (13.8%)		2 (33.0%)
Total	43	22	11	6

Politeness terminology was common across the books and frequently used to explain language use. Despite cultural and contextual influences on interaction (Barron et al., 2024), politeness remains central in teaching pragmatics. In addition to politeness, modification strategies like intensifying and softening were predominant both lexically and grammatically, which aligns with Leech's (2014) findings. Indirectness appeared occasionally, which, according to Thomas' (1995) reflects power dynamics and social factors. Formality, marked by modal verbs like *may* and *can*, signaled authority or urgency as Ishihara (2022) stated. Impoliteness appeared in only one book, though Ishihara (2022) highlights its role in understanding politeness. Overall, these books offered diverse politeness-related terminologies although inconsistently present across the books. *Crown*, in particular, provided stronger links between grammar and politeness benefiting its users more than the others.

Factors to Feature Politeness Strategies

This section explores how the identified politeness features were demonstrated as politeness strategies in relation to pragmatic information and grammar information alongside cultural values, which influence language use. The key findings of this assessment are summarized according to the identified politeness features as follows:

Politeness in Communication

- Requests with Modals: Using modals as *can/could* and *will/would* to indicate varying degrees of politeness based on power relations and proximity between interlocutors.
- Requests with Tense and Aspect: Utilizing phrases such as “I wonder if you could,” “I wondered if you could,” and “I was wondering if you could” to show politeness.
- Requests with Hypothetical Conditions: Using “Could I” instead of “Could you” to make a polite request.
- Requests Using the Future Progressive: Using future progressive tense, e.g., “When will you be giving back the book?” to make the request more tentative.
- Seeking Permission with Modals: Using *can/could* and *may/might* to reflect the degree of politeness based on power relations and proximity.
- Seeking Permission with Hypothetical Conditions: Using phrases like “Would you mind if I did?” depending on the proximity of interlocutors.
- Offers and Suggestions with Modals: Using “would like” instead of “want” based on the proximity of interlocutors, e.g., “Would you like a drink?”
- Greetings Using Imperatives: Using imperatives for the benefit of the addressee, e.g., “Have a nice trip.”

Intensifying in Communication

- Advice, Orders, Suggestions, Obligation, and Prohibition with Modals: Using modals as *had better*, *must*, and *should* to vary in forcefulness depending on the power relations and proximity between interlocutors.
- Offers and Suggestions with Modals: Using *must* for the benefit of the addressee, e.g., “You must try this dish.”

Softening Techniques

- Advice with Modals: Using “might want to” to soften advice. Using *should* instead of *must* to reduce intrusiveness.
- Requests with Adverbial Hedges: Incorporating adverbs like “possibly” with the modal *could*, e.g., “Could you possibly speak a little louder?”
- Assertions with Adverbial Hedges: Using hedges, e.g., “This is a relatively common problem.”

Indirectness in Communication

- Requests with Different Tenses and Aspects: Employing past tense and past tense modals for indirect requests.

Formality

- Permission with Modals: Using *may* instead of *can* to reflect the degree of formality depending on power relations between interlocutors.

Impoliteness

- Advice Followed by Conjunctions: Using imperatives followed by conjunctions such as *and* or *or*, e.g., “Study hard, or you’ll fail,” displaying forcefulness.
- Requests with “Please”: Adding “please” to imperative sentences, which does not necessarily make them polite.
- Permission with Modals: Granting permission using the modal *may* with a focus on the power relations between interlocutors.

Politeness features in grammar largely integrated requests and permission with requests appearing 29 times and permission 12 times out of 82 instances. All instances used negative politeness strategies, employing formal language and modal verbs to soften directives.

Politeness strategies were primarily demonstrated through directive speech acts of requesting or seeking permission, focusing on speaker-hearer relationships. The use of modal verbs for polite requests was emphasized. According to Huschova (2021) and Rover (2022), learners may become more adept at using them for pragmatic purposes as their language proficiency grows. Additionally, polite requests employed past tense, progressive tense, and embedded structures to soften the directive nature of requests by creating distance (Wigglesworth & Yates, 2007).

While non-native English speakers seldom used embedding techniques in workplace role-play tasks (Wigglesworth & Yates, 2007), Takimoto (2012) found that university-level EFL learners in Japan could employ statements like “I wonder if you could VP” after tasks followed by discussions on language use. Learners might adopt this mitigation device with practice. Furthermore, using future progressive and past tense modals with a first-person subject serves as a distancing mechanism (Leech, 2014).

Unlike requests, offers were made for the benefit of the hearer, sometimes at the speaker’s expense. Direct forms for offers allows the hearer less room to decline, and is considered polite (Leech, 2014). However, Fukushima (1990) noted that using direct forms for offers might feel constraining unless there is a strong rapport between the speaker and hearer. Therefore, the phrase “would you like” is commonly used, and learners at A2 or higher proficiency levels are usually capable of expressing this speech act (Rover, 2022). Overall, complex sentence structures are frequently employed to produce appropriately polite speech in various contexts, and instruction and practice tasks may help learners use these devices effectively.

The modification of speech acts, as intensifying or softening, depends on grammatical knowledge. Intensifiers like *had better* were used for strong advice, which can seem impolite, while *should* conveys less obligation (Leech, 2014). Offers and suggestions often use direct forms like *must* for the addressees’ benefit. Conversely, softening strategies increase politeness. Internal modification with modals like *may* or *might* could be softer directives based on speaker-hearer relations (Leech, 2014). Adverbial hedges such as “please” or “possibly” emphasize uncertainty or tentativeness (Barron et al., 2024; Leech, 2014). While non-native English speakers underuse these softening techniques (Wigglesworth & Yates, 2007), Rover (2022) suggested that learners may incorporate these hedges as their proficiency grows. Thus, learners’ grammatical knowledge enables effective use of modification techniques.

Other politeness strategies were used differently albeit in fewer instances. The past tense is often used to convey indirectness in requests. Requests can be classified as direct or indirect with direct requests being easier to interpret while indirect requests require contextual understanding (Barron et al., 2024).

Communication failures may occur if speech acts are used inappropriately especially when indirect language is required. Using *may* for seeking permission is more polite and formal, but using it to grant permission can imply authority (Ishihara, 2022). Thus, granting permission with *may* to those of higher status may be impolite. In the reference books analyzed in this study, the syntactic structure “Imperatives and/or SV” was used to introduce conjunctions and was described as impolite. The adverbial hedge “please” can mitigate requests but may sound coercive depending on context (Leech, 2014). Past tense and modal verbs contribute to politeness strategies like indirectness and formality. Impolite language may appear in grammar books, but learners can differentiate language use according to politeness if teaching materials provide information on impoliteness.

Speakers’ cultural values often influence their language use particularly when expressing politeness. In addition to requesting, seeking permission such as “Would you mind if I closed the window?” using hypothetical conditions was prominently featured as examples of politeness strategies. This emphasis may reflect Japanese cultural norms, where school culture strongly values discipline, respect, and hierarchy. Consequently, students are expected to seek permission for many activities, highlighting the influence of these cultural values on language use.

In addition, the reference books investigated in this study all employed negative politeness strategies with the use of modals, past tense, or progressives to introduce directive speech acts reflecting cultural values. Wigglesworth and Yates (2007) found that in role-playing scenarios for mitigating difficult requests in the workplace, non-native English speakers tended to show deference to higher authority emphasizing hierarchy, while native English speakers focused on addressing solidarity.

In summary, information on politeness strategies was often provided alongside complex sentence structures such as hypothetical conditions, modals, and various tense and aspect forms. Although these structures may pose challenges for non-native English speakers or lower-level learners, they can learn to use them appropriately as their proficiency improves, provided they receive proper instruction and opportunities to practice. Additionally, cultural norms are also reflected in the politeness strategies featured in these books such as the use of specific speech acts and negative politeness strategies.

Practical Application of Politeness Features

The study revealed a lack of tasks aimed at providing interactive practice for utilizing politeness features in context. Instead, all tasks involving politeness features consisted of written exercises focused on deepening learners’ grammatical knowledge. These exercises included translation from English to Japanese, fill-in-the-blank questions, multiple-choice questions, and word order exercises.

The absence of opportunities to practice language use may hinder learners from effectively applying the politeness strategies they have learned. While explicit consciousness-raising activities could potentially increase learners’ awareness of using politeness routines (Wigglesworth & Yates, 2007), Ishihara (2020) emphasized the importance of contextualized output and interactive practice for acquiring fluent language use. Merely being aware of appropriate language use, as introduced in pedagogical materials, may not be sufficient for achieving fluency.

Limitation of the Study

The analysis of the four grammar reference books provided substantial data to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in helping learners acquire politeness strategies through grammatical knowledge. However, the scope of this study is limited, as a wide range of grammar reference books are used in Japanese high schools, and the selection of only four—despite being top sellers according to sales representatives—may not fully represent the diversity of available materials. Additionally, the content of these reference books does not necessarily align with learners' actual grammatical competence, which could affect their ability to internalize politeness strategies effectively. To better assess the role of grammatical knowledge in developing pragmatic competence, future research should incorporate empirical data on learners' pragmatic abilities in relation to their grammatical proficiency.

Conclusion

This study identified numerous instances where grammatical knowledge related to politeness is presented in grammar reference books. These politeness features primarily appear in sections covering modals, hypothetical conditions, and tense-aspect distinctions. Additionally, these instances employ terminology associated with politeness. Some references also reflect cultural values linked to polite language use. The inclusion of politeness features in grammar reference books highlights their potential as valuable resources enabling learners to make informed language choices in different social contexts whereas these features are often absent from classroom textbooks. However, grammar reference books do not provide learners with contextualized communicative tasks necessary for practical application while politeness strategies are present. Appropriate language use in contexts is indispensable in everyday interaction. The speaker sometimes needs to minimize the imposition or save the hearer's face with language they use to maintain a good relationship. In order to maximize the benefits of grammatical knowledge related to politeness, it is essential for teachers to bridge this gap. By integrating their pragmatic expertise and modifying instructional tasks, educators can create interactive activities that encourage appropriate language use in real-world contexts. Furthermore, politeness strategies can be introduced at any stage of language learning with sentence complexity gradually increasing to match learners' proficiency levels.

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Appendix A

Grammar Reference Books Evaluated in This Study

- Corpus Crown English Grammar & Expressions (Sanseido, 2022)
- Vision Quest Sogo Eigo, 3rd Edition (Keirinkan, 2022)
- My Way Sogo Eigo (Sanseido, 2022)
- Zoom Sogo Eigo, 3rd Edition (Daiichi Gakushusha, 2022)

How to cite the article:

Chochol, A. & Yamamoto, Y. (2024). Pre-departure learning through hybrid sessions for effective preparation for study abroad programs. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 184–190. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-23>

Practice Article

Pre-Departure Learning Through Hybrid Sessions for Effective Preparation for Study Abroad Programs

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Abstract

This study presents a practical approach to pre-departure learning for university students to efficiently prepare for a short-term study abroad program. By integrating two modes of sessions, namely, face-to-face and on-demand, the teaching practice aims to elucidate students' purposes for studying abroad and preparing within a limited time before the program. The paper outlines an academic course of a study abroad program and its implementation process, including modes of delivery, content, and assignments. Observations and reflections on the implementation are discussed. The study formulates recommendations for educators on the effective application of the hybrid approach in similar contexts. The study concludes by highlighting the needs for future research on student feedback regarding pre-departure and on post-training learning after the program to comprehensively elucidate the learning outcomes of the hybrid approach.

本論文は、大学生が短期留学プログラムの渡航前の段階において、効果的に学習を進め準備を行う実用的方法について述べる。この方法は、対面形式とオンデマンド形式の二つを統合させるもので、学生が留学の目的を明確にし、留学前の限られた時間で効果的に準備ができるようにすることを目的とする。本論文では、留学プログラムとしての授業概要、及び、授業形式や授業内容、提出課題を含む実践の流れについて詳細に説明する。さらに、実際に行った過程で得た知見や考察を提示し、教育者が同様の文脈でこのハイブリッド方式を効果的に導入する際の留意点を述べる。最後に、このハイブリッド方式の実践による学習成果を包括的に把握するために、出発前の学習に対する学生から意見や留学後の事後学習についての研究の必要性を述べる。

The Faculty of Global Interdisciplinary Science and Innovation (GISI) was launched at Shizuoka University in April 2023. As indicated by its name, the faculty emphasizes interdisciplinary and practical learning to address local issues from a global perspective (GISI, n.d.). As GISI illustrates, the faculty aims for a participation rate of 100% among its students in a study abroad program. One of its specialized subjects is study abroad programs to develop human resources with a global perspective who can proactively collaborate with diverse individuals (GISI, n.d.).

Regarding short-term programs, additional learning is designed exclusively for GISI students to create a distinction in learning for general education courses. This structure also allows students from other faculties to participate in the same program without requiring additional learning for general education. Lemmons (2023) states that universities which provide pre-departure preparation for study abroad programs mainly focus on risk management and logistics and often neglecting personal reflection, culture, and language. Research has reported that short-term study abroad programs rarely provide students with sufficient time to develop language skills or intercultural perspectives (Lemmons, 2023).

This study describes hybrid sessions as one of the practical approaches for effective preparation for study abroad programs, shares the overall course design with additional learning as the specialized subject, and focuses on pre-departure learning through hybrid sessions. In terms of English teaching/learning format, the term hybrid has multiple interpretations. Komeda et al. (2012) used the term hybrid when referring to a structure combining a master's and doctoral program. Yokogawa (2018) employed the term hybrid for a program integrating an intensive course abroad with preliminary online lessons in Japan. Several studies define the term hybrid as a combination of instructional elements from traditional face-to-face formats and online course formats (Akutsu, 2020; Nakayama & Umamoto, 2022; Nomura, 2022). In this study, the term hybrid is defined as the integration of two modes, namely, face-to-face formats and online, particularly on-demand formats. This study clarifies that hybrid sessions benefit students and instructors in terms of time management and workload during the busy period of preparation before traveling and studying abroad. In addition, this approach provides an opportunity to share student performance smoothly among instructors and administrative staff. The purpose of this study is to elucidate the practical implementation of the proposed approach and to contribute for educators seeking to apply effective preparation for study abroad programs in similar contexts.

Literature Review

This study highlights pre-departure preparation for study abroad programs to increase student motivation and enable students to gain prior knowledge. Kosman et al. (2023) insist that pre-departure preparation should be provided to staff and host communities as well. Conversely, a platform for instruction and learning has been shifting especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many studies have reported various teaching practices (Deacon & Miles, 2022; Hozaki et al., 2023; Iwasaki, 2022; Nakaya, 2022; Yoshikubo et al., 2023). The current study presents a design for the formulation of a proposed teaching approach.

Pre-Departure Preparation

Kosman et al. (2023) state that the preparation of higher education students for participation in study abroad programs is essential, and pre-departure preparation increases the probability that students will gain the benefits provided by such programs. They illustrate that the most common topics of pre-departure preparation are language, behavior, health and safety, visa requirements, and social, cultural, economic, and environmental aspects. Goldstein (2017) reported that prior knowledge of psychological concepts that are relevant to the student experience abroad helps students develop intercultural competence. A pre-departure course that focuses more deeply on cultural content has a significant impact on students' intercultural competence (Lemmons, 2023), and raises their awareness of their expectations, attitudes, and needs regarding intercultural exchange (Heinzmann et al., 2015).

However, as mentioned in the introduction, Lemmons (2023) is concerned that although the majority of universities provide pre-departure preparation, they mainly focus on risk management and logistics and lack an emphasis on personal reflection, culture, and language. Even though Lemmons discusses study abroad preparation in the U.S., the contexts of Japan and the U.S. are similar in terms of preparing students to travel abroad and study while being surrounded by a foreign language and culture in another country. Lemmons also points out that research has demonstrated that short-term study abroad programs do not frequently offer students sufficient time to develop language abilities or intercultural perspectives. Students should be prepared prior to the programs not only with general information about destinations but also with an academic attitude and self-reflection on perspectives toward different environments.

Online Learning

In addition, previous studies have examined online learning, such as designing interactive online courses (Hozaki et al., 2023), online courses in higher education (Iwasaki, 2022), online study abroad programs (Deacon & Miles, 2022; Nakaya, 2022; Yoshikubo et al., 2023), and collaborative online international learning (COIL) in study abroad programs (Nago, 2021). Some studies have pointed to the downside of online learning. Nakaya (2022) interviewed students after a one-week program conducted online via Zoom video meeting and observed that online programs may risk students learning in isolation, rather than competing with classmates and improving together. Deacon and Miles (2022) indicated that the effects of online courses are likely to be short-lived unless students engage in ongoing development, such as post-program projects and more structured classroom-based opportunities.

However, many studies have demonstrated that online learning has a positive impact on students. It can provide students with as much knowledge as face-to-face courses (Deacon & Miles, 2022), and students feel engaged and deepen their cultural understanding (Nakaya, 2022). Students were highly motivated to learn about social and environmental issues directly from local university students in target countries during pre-departure learning (Nago, 2021). Nago (2021) observed that students improved not only their language skills but also their communication skills by exchanging opinions, identifying solutions from multiple points of view, and developing sympathy toward one another.

In terms of teaching approaches, Yoshikubo et al. (2023) indicate that online learning is more suitable for classroom interactions facilitated by faculty members rather than research activities and creative projects that involve interaction among students. Moreover, on-demand classes enhance students' cognitive development, because they enable students to repeatedly watch sections that they do not understand. In fact, Nakazawa (2022) reported test scores from on-demand classes indicating students' understanding of the course content was at the same level or slightly higher than that of face-to-face courses.

Gaps and Opportunities

Regarding the content of pre-departure learning, previous studies have revealed that preparation with prior knowledge on language, behavior, or health and safety is effective; however, a need exists for developing academic attitudes and engaging in personal reflections on perspectives toward different environments. In terms of the mode of delivery, the advantages of online learning and on-demand lessons are well-documented; however, there remains a need for additional practical approaches and detailed guidance on the effective implementation of pre-departure learning for study abroad programs. Although certain teaching practices have been developed for the on-demand mode, they are less frequently utilized for student education prior to study abroad programs.

In previous studies, we observed three points that require attention in terms of practical approaches for pre-departure learning for study abroad programs: (1) the development of attitude and personal reflection, (2) preparation in two modes, namely, face-to-face and online, and (3) the utilization of on-demand for online learning. These points denote the gaps in the process of pre-departure learning for study abroad programs. Thus, we developed on-demand lessons as another strategy for the pre-departure preparation of students, specifically designed for the learning of useful English expressions and safety measures abroad in relation to social, cultural, and economic considerations. In addition, for the on-demand lessons, students are guided to self-reflect and write down their goals and expectations during study abroad and to establish the study abroad experience as a milestone in their education and career development. This study aims to fill the research gaps by providing a detailed description of hybrid sessions as one of the practical approaches for effective preparation for study abroad programs.

The Current Study

The hybrid approach for pre-departure learning implemented in this teaching practice aimed to enable students to learn useful English expressions and gain awareness of safety abroad in relation to social, cultural, and economic considerations. In addition, for pre-departure learning, students are guided to self-reflect by writing down their goals and expectations for study abroad, and to establish the study abroad experience as a milestone in their education and career development. Although this paper focuses on pre-departure learning as a topic, information on study abroad programs as a whole should also be provided for a better understanding.

Implementation

Overall Course Design

As previously explained in the introduction, additional learning in short-term study abroad programs is designed only for students of the Faculty of Global Interdisciplinary Science and Innovation to differentiate learning within general education courses. The short-term study abroad program for GISI students consists of three components, namely, pre-departure learning, the study abroad program, and post-training learning (Table 1).

Table 1

Overall Course Design

	Contents	Modes
Pre-Departure Learning	Guidance	Face-to-Face
	Safety Abroad	On-demand (Online)
	Useful English Expressions	On-demand (Online)
	Academic English	On-demand (Online)
Study Abroad Programs	English Classes	Face-to-Face
	Intercultural Understanding	
	Global Perspectives	
Post-training Learning	Group Discussion	Face-to-Face
	Presentation Preparation	On-Demand (Online)
	Group Presentation	Face-to-Face

Regardless of which country students travel to and which language institute they learn in, all GISI students participating in short-term study abroad programs are required to take the course to obtain two credits of the specialized course “Study Abroad Program I,” one of the elective courses mainly for the first and second year in the GISI curriculum. In face-to-face guidance, instructors explain the steps to follow, the content to cover, and deadlines for assignments in pre-departure learning. Students are also required to join a course in Google Classroom in which they receive and submit assignments online. Students need to submit all assignments before they leave for their study abroad programs. The details of pre-departure learning are illustrated in the next section of “Overview of Pre-Departure Learning.”

Study abroad programs typically provide English classes, opportunities for cultural exchange with locals, such as students and host families, and chances for participating students to independently explore the program location. Two study abroad programs were offered in AY2023, for four weeks in the United Kingdom and for three weeks in Australia. The programs in AY2023 were all conducted face-to-face. Through experiences in these programs, students are expected to increase their intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

After returning to Japan, the participating students are required to conduct a group presentation in which they report and share their experiences with other GISI students who have not participated yet. The group presentation

is conducted in English, meaning that the students need to collaborate with group members to compile presentation slides in English and practice delivering a speech in English in front of an audience.

As the last assignment in the course, the students submit an essay that reflects their overall experience in the specialized course. The writing assignment for an essay in the pre-departure learning is explained in the next section as Session 4 of Pre-Departure Learning. In the assignment, students once again self-reflect and compare their experiences with their goals and expectations set during pre-departure learning. Moreover, the students are encouraged to set their study abroad experience as a milestone in their education and career development, which is similar to the writing task during pre-departure learning. We expect that this writing process—that is, answering questions both before and after the program—will enable students to compare their thinking and feeling and discover their own improvements.

Heinzmann et al. (2015) state that pre-departure preparation increases students' awareness of their expectations, attitudes, and needs regarding intercultural exchange. In particular, in terms of attitudes, this awareness is one of the keys not only to intercultural exchange prior to a program but also to their future study and career path.

Overview of Pre-Departure Learning

In the previous section on overall course design, we described the three components of the short-term study abroad program for GISI students. This section focuses on the first component of the course, namely, pre-departure learning, and provides an overview. Pre-departure learning consists of four sessions (Table 2).

Table 2

Overview of Pre-Departure Learning

	Modes	Contents	Assignments
Session 1	Face-to-face	Guidance	
Session 2	On-demand	Safety Abroad	Quiz
Session 3	On-demand	Useful English Expressions	Quiz
Session 4	On-demand	Academic English Writing	Quiz/Essay

In Session 1, we explain the assignments and steps for pre-departure learning in person. We also ensure that students can access and enter the course in Google Classroom. If students have questions or cannot access Google Classroom, we immediately assist them face-to-face.

In Sessions 2-4, students watch a video created by one of the instructors for GISI students. Lemmons (2023) states that students should be prepared prior to the programs with not only general information about the destination but also academic attitudes and self-reflection on perspectives toward different environments. Therefore, we included topics on safety abroad, useful English expressions, and academic English writing. In particular, for Sessions 2 and 3, we produced videos that featured social, cultural, and economic considerations.

The video in Session 2, which consists of five episodes, focuses on safety abroad. Based on information from the Shizuoka University Organization for International Collaboration and the instructors' own experiences, several points to keep in mind when traveling and studying abroad are presented along with examples. Similarly, the video series in Session 3, also consisting of five episodes, introduces useful English expressions, such as phrases frequently used in airports, classrooms, homestays, and handling troubles, which students practice along with in the video.

The sessions are delivered in an on on-demand mode, and students submit a quiz via Google Form after each video. One of the instructors created the quizzes, each including five multiple-choice questions to verify students' understanding of the video summary.

Lastly, in Session 4, students write down their goals and expectations for study abroad. Through this writing task, we expect students to establish the study abroad experience as a milestone in their education and their career development. As mentioned in the previous section on overall course design for the last assignment in the course, students submit an essay that reflects their overall experience in the course. This writing task is significant as it allows students to compare their thinking and feeling before and after the program and to realize their own improvements.

Format of the On-demand Sessions

The previous section described three sessions in which students underwent pre-departure learning through an on-demand mode via Google Classroom. When we created the videos for on-demand assignments, we considered the following points:

- One session is designed for 90 minutes in total.
- Each video ranges between 25 to 50 minutes.
- Each video can be divided into short episodes.

Each video contains several episodes, allowing students to frequently stop to watch in short periods of time. However, this is not only an orientation prior to travel but also part of an academic course; thus, we retained the total estimated time for student engagement at 90 minutes per session.

Observations and Reflection

This teaching practice was implemented in the fall semester of 2023 as an intensive course. We provided face-to-face guidance in January, and the students completed the pre-departure learning in February before their programs took place from February to March 2024. We share our notes derived from observations and reflections from the perspectives of teachers.

Observations

By monitoring student submissions, it appeared that students found navigating Google Classroom—from logging in to submitting assignments—easy. Before traveling, some students, especially those living alone, visited their families, while others were engaged in club activities or part-time jobs. Despite their busy schedules, none of them missed assignments. All assignments were displayed on one page under the class tab in Google Classroom, so students could see their assignments as a to-do list. This likely made it easier for them to recognize their assignments, and reduced the likelihood of forgetting them.

Moreover, their scores in the quizzes suggested that they, in fact, watched the videos before taking the quizzes. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the quizzes asked students to identify what was true in the videos, a task that required watching and understanding the explanation.

In Google Classroom, instructors can set up both the timing for delivery of quizzes and automatic scoring for correct answers. Thus, quizzes were automatically administered and scored, which is timesaving for instructors in terms of marking and assessing students' understanding. However, for the writing task, we lacked such an automatic checking tool. Nonetheless, online collection and storage of papers proved useful, as instructors could access student submissions and monitor their performance.

Reflections

In summary, the teaching practice worked very well. Creating videos and setting up a course in Google Classroom were time-consuming processes. However, after creating the videos and the course, we can reuse the same materials and settings for other cohorts, which will save time in the long run. In terms of video content, although all information was intended to be helpful for students traveling and studying abroad, we observed a few points for improvement.

First, in the episode on immigration at an airport, students learned and practiced typical questions and answers. However, practicing the presented phrases may not always be necessary, because major airports now have installed electronic devices that enable people to enter a country without being asked any questions by an immigration officer. Instead of practicing traditional questions and answers for immigration, students may benefit more from learning how to ask for assistance when using unfamiliar self-service devices or when these machines malfunction.

Second, we made a video on academic English writing and introduced typical rules for formatting a paper completing writing assignments. While students evidently need this knowledge, some apply it more than others. However, English classes at language institutes abroad typically focus on communication skills, placing greater emphasis on listening and speaking rather than writing. In such cases, a video covering academic English speaking and listening—such as prior knowledge of public speaking or note-taking while listening may help students better connect feel pre-departure learning to their experiences abroad.

Conversely, videos on useful expressions for homestays or handling problems such as phrases to describe feeling sick or to report issues—were indispensable, as students should know how to express themselves clearly when they need help.

Discussion

Compared to a single mode of learning, pre-departure learning in a hybrid mode provides multiple benefits to students and instructors. First, we discuss the benefits in terms of time management and workload during the busy period of preparation prior to traveling and studying abroad. Second, we highlight how this approach provides an opportunity for the sharing of student performance among instructors and administrative staff in an efficient and effective manner.

Flexibility of Hybrid Sessions

From the students' perspectives, the hybrid sessions are beneficial because they allow students to maximize their free time while preparing to study abroad. When receiving instruction on assignments, guidance is provided in a face-to-face mode, which facilitates asking questions and provides an overview of pre-departure learning and

important tasks more effectively. Students simply need to open Google Classroom whenever they are available to study and submit assignments, instead of traveling to campus or attending video meetings.

As Nakazawa (2022) reported, students can watch video clips repeatedly, especially sections they do not understand well. The on-demand mode allows students with a sufficient amount of time to learn according to their level of understanding. This strategy is particularly useful for learning in areas where individual progress varies widely, such as language acquisition, cultural awareness, or self-reflection on perspectives.

From the instructors' perspective, the hybrid sessions are valuable, because they can be used to track student progress and submission simply by accessing Google Classroom. As mentioned in the previous section, although creating videos is initially time-consuming, time is saved by using the same videos or by updating with slight changes, if any, for future cohorts.

Establishing pre-departure learning online is possible even with guidance at the beginning. However, we believe the advantage of meeting in person at least once at the beginning of the course. Thus, we apply the face-to-face mode to the guidance phase to provide students with resources and support while introducing the instructors and staff in our team. This ensures that students can approach these personnel at any time if they need assistance with the course. Moreover, we expect that the face-to-face mode gives students a sense of engagement and responsibility in the course.

Potential Implications for Student Support

Thus far, this study has discussed the perspectives of students and instructors. We also present a suggestion for student support as a potential implication of this teaching practice. As Lemmons (2023) stated, pre-departure preparation typically includes logistics and visa information. In our case, we provided guidance on these processes and assisted students in independently applying for a passport, visa, and insurance. This aspect requires administrative staff to monitor each student's progress, which can occasionally lead to unnecessary trouble and confusion.

To avoid such trouble and confusion, we suggest using the assignment function in Google Classroom. Assignments can be presented in the form of a quiz or questionnaire, and students can submit the assignments along with the confirmation number of each application. In this manner, the administrative staff can easily track student progress and collect important information in one place without the need to contact students by email. In addition, it enables administrative staff to smoothly share student progress with other instructors, ensuring that all team members have access to shared information for providing support in both academic and administrative aspects.

Conclusion

This study has discussed how hybrid sessions benefit students and instructors in terms of time management and workload during the busy period of preparation prior to traveling and studying abroad. In addition, this approach allows instructors and administrative staff to share students' performance status.

For schools and educators applying this practice, our reflection in implementation suggest that the degree of familiarity of students with learning management systems and the extent of their capability to navigate these systems should be considered. In addition, setting reminders for each assignment is advisable for students because instructors and students may be preoccupied with the multiple tasks required during the preparation.

Finally, we recommend careful consideration of the schedule for pre-departure learning, particularly avoiding conflicts with school events such as final exams. At the same time, sufficient time to work must be given for assignments in pre-departure learning. If students are familiar with and ready to navigate learning management systems and pre-departure learning is adequately scheduled, the proposed approach in this study can be widely applied in higher education for effective preparation for study abroad programs. To elucidate the comprehensive effects and learning outcomes of this teaching approach, future research is needed on student feedback regarding pre-departure and post-training learning after the program.

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How to cite the article:

Yamamoto, Y. (2024). Analyzing a Japanese university student's narratives on study-abroad and careers. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 191–199. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-24>

Research Article

Analyzing a Japanese University Student's Narratives on Study-Abroad and Careers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how a Japanese university student, studying abroad in the U.S., connects her study-abroad experience with her career perspective in the interview narrative. By analyzing the narratives, the study revealed the following two key points: 1) The interviewee's study-abroad experience initially seemed unrelated to her career goal, but her experience in a different culture enhanced her pre-existing interest in social welfare and reshaped her career perspective, and 2) In her interaction with the interviewer, the interviewee constructed her identity as someone who consciously aligned her career choices with her personal values and experiences, viewing her time abroad as the key to defining her future professional path. This study suggests that studying abroad is not only an opportunity for language acquisition but also has the potential to significantly transform students' career outlooks.

本研究の目的は、米国留学中の日本人大学生1名のインタビュー・ナラティブを用い、彼女が自身の留学経験とキャリア観をどのように結びつけているかを検証することである。ナラティブ分析の結果、以下の2点が明らかになった。1) インタビューの留学経験は当初、彼女のキャリア目標とは無関係に思われたが、異文化での経験を通して彼女が元々持っていた福祉への関心が高まり、キャリア観が再構築された。2) インタビュアーとの対話の中で、インタビューは自分のキャリア選択を意識的に自分の個人的価値観や経験と一致させる人としてのアイデンティティを構築し、海外留学を将来の職業的進路を決定する鍵として捉えていた。本研究の分析結果は、大学生の海外留学が語学習得の機会であるだけでなく、学生のキャリア観を大きく変える可能性を秘めていることを示唆している。

This case study explores how a Japanese university student studying abroad reflects on her career, examining the connection between her study-abroad experience and professional aspirations. For the past few decades, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has promoted studying abroad and their campaign has increased the number of college students studying abroad to over 100,000 per year as of 2019 (MEXT, 2024). Although online programs have emerged as an alternative after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of students seeking overseas programs is expected to return to around 58,000 by 2022 (MEXT, 2024). Looking at the breakdown of the numbers, we can see that the majority of them stay overseas for a relatively short period within six months without acquiring an academic degree. Perhaps, reflecting this reality, “Tobitate!” the study abroad campaign website promoted by MEXT does not emphasize that students would acquire academic expertise, but instead, lists internal changes as the benefits of studying abroad: broadening one's perspective, raising interests in the world, increasing acceptance of diversity, nurturing Japanese identity, and so on (MEXT, n.d.). Since spending time in another country is unusual, it is likely that some impact will be seen, even if only for a short period of time. This study employs positioning theory (Bamberg, 1997; 2004; 2011) to find out how her career perspective was transformed by her study-abroad experience. I expect that this will be useful in understanding the status of the connection between studying abroad and career perspectives, and in considering future study-abroad programs.

Literature and Research Questions

Many qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted on the effects of studying abroad about inner thoughts, including career perspectives of Japanese university students. Quantitative surveys on this topic (Yokota, et al., 2016; Nejima & Fujiwara, 2017; Kawai Juku, 2018; Jasso, 2019; Goto et al., 2022) indicate that college students feel that studying abroad develops skills or mentalities useful for employment. While these studies are useful in depicting the effects of studying abroad as a whole, the experience can be different for each student. As Coleman (2013) argues, we should take the difference, often seen as a nuisance by study-abroad researchers, as part of understanding program participants' complex identities and relationships that shape their study-abroad experiences. Since quantitative studies have already shown the impact of studying abroad, it is necessary to examine in detail what these effects are, adding individuality, to find a better way for students to utilize study-abroad in employment, too. Although this is a case study

involving one person at a time, I believe that this study can contribute to this.

In qualitative studies, researchers have analyzed interview data in various ways. For example, Hanami (2006) and Iino (2019) attempted to use Life Story techniques to understand the inner thoughts of those who had studied abroad. Moreover, Okamura & Nukaga (2018) concluded that the study-abroad experience has a significant impact on college students' career perspectives through individual interviews with 38 students employing the Modified Grounded Theory approach. As for the exploration of identity, which this study also focuses upon, Nakagawa (2013) pursued one student's identity from the perspective of the transformation of the image of "study abroad" and "self" after one year study-abroad and Benthuyssen (2014) examined how second language identity is constructed from interviews and writings of one Japanese university student who studied abroad in the U.S. for three weeks. These qualitative studies reflect the reality of Japanese university students to some extent, but the studies only focus on the contents. Additionally, data is collected after the students return from the programs.

The originality of this study is that I focus on not only what the speaker said in the narratives, but also how she said it, so that we can discuss in-depth issues regarding identity that emerge while the speaker talks about inner thoughts. This study will explore the interviewee's identity construction, including, for example, the process by which she came to a certain idea and the interactions with the interviewer. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, there are no previous studies have interviewed Japanese university students studying abroad, and it would be valuable to hear what they feel in real time.

Based on the background and literature, this study set two research questions (RQ): 1) How does the interviewee narrate her study-abroad experience from a career perspective? 2) How does the interviewee construct her identity in the interactions with the interviewer? By exploring these points, this study aims to clarify how a person who has studied abroad views her experience and how it can be utilized in organizing thoughts or making employment decisions.

Methodology

This study will analyze one student's interview narratives. The focus of the analysis is what is said as well as how it is said, which refers to the content of the talk and the interaction between the speaker and the listener during the interview. Therefore, the analysis is conducted from a multimodal perspective, and includes fillers, pauses, and gestures. The interview data were collected following Goodwin (1981) and Holstein and Gubrium (1995), who state that interviews are active interactions between speakers and listeners and are constructed collaboratively by both parties in a here-and-now situation.

Data Collection and Participants

This study was a part of a longitudinal research project that began in 2021. Since then, I have individually collected interview data from 16 college English language learners talking about English-related topics. All interviews were conducted via the online conferencing system Zoom, as the project started when social distancing was required owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding transcripts, all utterances and the related gestures are transcribed verbatim.

The data used in this study were obtained from a semi-structured interviews conducted in February 2023. The total length of the recording is approximately one and a half hours (01:31:11), and the excerpt is approximately two minutes (00:49:12 - 00:51:39). As the interview was conducted in Japanese, I translated the verbal and nonverbal actions into English. The data are excerpted from one consecutive part of the narratives, which are presented divided in three as Transcript 1 to Transcript 3.

Interviewer (A) was an English language lecturer at Interviewee (B)'s university; however, they did not meet on campus. B, a sophomore student, belongs to a humanities department other than the Faculty of Foreign Languages or International Liberal Arts. At the time of the interview, B, who had wanted to study abroad since high school, was in a six-month study-abroad program in the U.S., with about one month left to go. She joined a program offered by her university that included the local university's academic classes. During her stay, she said that she tried to seek every opportunity to use English by attending clubs or events provided by local institutes or churches after class. Looking at her upbringing, she grew up in a rural area, which she described as relatively conventional, in Western Japan, and started living alone after college in a city in the Kansai area.

This is the second time that A interviewed B, which was conducted about a year after the previous interview. Although A and B only had opportunities to talk during the interviews, the talks were conducted in a friendly atmosphere owing to B's sociable nature. However, because B knows that A is an English teacher, the student-teacher relationship can affect B's responses in the interview.

Theoretical Background

This research employs positioning theory (Bamberg, 1997; 2004; 2011) to analyze narratives. I closely observed how the interviewee positions herself in the narratives to describe or differentiate herself in aligning with a certain group or contrasting against the other. The usefulness of the positioning theory is that it allows for an analysis

of a speaker's identity (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Following the recent trend that individual identities are either acquired by oneself or constructed spontaneously through social interactions, this study posits that identity emerges through individual characteristics or social interactions, and simultaneously refers to both the individual and the group (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). I would like to examine B's identity construction, which is assumed to be influenced by her study-abroad experience. The research subjects analyzed using positioning theory cover a wide range of topics such as immigrant, intersectionality, disaster and gender (Hata, 2020; Koba, 2023; Pontillas, 2023; Alhalwachi & McEntee-Atalianis, 2024).

Bamberg (1997; 2004) divided the positioning into three levels of analysis. Level 1 focuses on the taleworld, which refers to the episodes and experiences that are told in narratives and examines how the speaker describes his/herself and others as characters in the tale. Next, Level 2 analyzes the speaker's position in their relationship with the listener in the field of interaction. In these two, the speaker's positioning(s) in the conversation is revealed. Lastly, Level 3 draws on Levels 1 and 2 to examine the position of the transportable identity retained by the speaker even after leaving the interview setting.

By exploring how the study abroad experience affects the individual through a detailed examination of the process of identity construction, this research is expected to provide suggestions for discussions on studying abroad from the perspective of employment

Data Analysis

In a series of narratives from Transcript 1 to Transcript 3, the process by which B makes up her mind about her employment is narrated (please refer to the Appendix for the transcription symbols). First, Transcript 1 illustrates B's notions of her career perspectives and study abroad. In this scene, B answers A's questions about her career prospects and future jobs. This was mentioned after the excerpt, but she confessed that she wanted to work in the public welfare field.

Transcript 1

01. B: <えっと:: 私は::(.) あの公務員に なりたかつ(.)た ので:>
well, since I wanted to be a public servant
02. A: ((頷く))
nod
03. B: >だから 公務員に なりたいと 思ったら
so, if you want to be a public servant
04. 別に そんな 英語 喋れなくても なれるから:<
you don't have to speak English so much, so
05. 留学なんて: みたいな ことを 親には 言われたんです
you don't have to study abroad, said my parents
06. けど: でも アメリカに(.)
but, but, to America
07. だから マレーシアだ(.)の プログラムだったら あんまり お金 かからなかったんです=
so, if (I took) the program to Malaysia, it didn't cost much
08. A: =うん((頷きながら))=
yes nodding
09. B: =だから: ま 公務員になりたいけど 英語も ちょっと(.)とかって 思ってた:
so, I want to be a public servant, but learn English a little, too
10. でも このプログラム めっちゃ お金かかったから:
but this program costs so much, so
11. A: う:ん((頷く))=
I see nod
12. B: =え: どうしようみたいな なんか
what: it was like what should I do
13. 英語を 使って(.) もっと 働くべき(.)<か↓なあ> みたいな ふうには
should I work using English (in the future)

14. 思ったんですけど:
(I) thought like that, but
15. A: ((2、3回頷く))
nod a few times

In line 1, B talks about her aspirations to become a public servant for the first time. She also explains that this occupation does not require high English-speaking skills. Although there are a wide variety of positions in the civil service that require English, B says that she does not need a high level of English-speaking ability as a matter of course for the type of job she wants to be in. Therefore, her parents, who were aware of this, were reluctant to allow B to study abroad. In line 9, she considers her parents' opinion that she does not need to study abroad to apply for her preferred job. Regarding this matter, B originally planned to join a less expensive program in Asia but ended up choosing one in America, which costs much more, as shown in lines 6, 7 and 10. In this situation, B reveals that she once wondered if she should pursue a career that requires speaking in English, which would be worth the high cost (line 13). B's narrative shows hesitation regarding her future work.

In Transcript 2, B demonstrates her sense of location and how she values how she felt in that location.

Transcript 2

16. B: こっちに きて:(.) 物凄く:(.) この:
after coming here, really, this
17. じゃ いざ 英語を 勉強するって なった時に 自分は 別になんか(.)
well, now when (I) study English, I wasn't particularly
18. 英語(.)を 使いたい 動機が:
(my) motivation to use English was like
19. その(.) 文化とかを(.)知って実際 その人と 話したい(.)くらいの
merely I wanted to learn about the culture and talk with the people
20. <動機:>だったから:
(that was) the motivation I had, so
21. 別に英語を使ってもうバリバリ働きたい(.)みたいな(.)感情にはこっちではなくて=
(I) didn't just come to feel like working really hard with using English here
22. B: =うん=
I see

An intriguing point in this narrative is that she positions herself in contrast to the others. At the moment, her career options are to be "a public servant" and "a worker who frequently uses English." Applying this excerpt to Positioning Level 1, which examines one's position in the taleworld, B displays herself as the person who is reluctant to choose the latter option. She develops a narrative to evaluate her original motivation for studying abroad: She says that "(my) motivation to use English was like merely I wanted to learn about the culture and talk with the people" (lines 18–19). In this part, she used a weakened form, "くらいの (merely)" (line 19), expressing that her reasons for wanting to study abroad before coming to the U.S. were not enough in terms of a career using English.

In Positioning Level 2, which examines "here-and-now" interactions, B is developing a narrative that gives the impression that she is making the right decision based on her "sense of reality. In looking at her rhetoric, the word "こっち (here)" seems to play an important role. She uses the term "こっち (here)" (lines 16 & 21) to refer to her own location. The location called "こっち (here)" would indicate the U.S. or the city where she is currently staying. Technically, this word is an indicative word that refers to something physically close, but according to Sakuma (1983), it could also pertain to the speaker's own territory, which is distinct from that of the listener. It is evident that she is showing that she feels a strong sense of being in the U.S. B emphasizes her respect for her own feelings, which she realized only because of the move. Positioning Level 3, which argues for transportable identity, is addressed later in Discussion.

In Transcript 3, B describes the two types of episodes and later, she connects them to her aspired occupation.

Transcript 3

23. B: でそれよりは:なんか(.) その も やっぱ日本 アメリカ ものすごく
rather than that, well, Japan, America is tremendously

24. 資本主義の国だから：貧富の格差とかも すご：くて
capitalistic country, so the gap between rich and poor was huge
25. A: うん
yes
26. B: もう(.)街中に溢れるホームレス(.) もう物凄く 劣悪な(.) なんか(0.5)
full of homeless people in the city well extremely poor
27. と 環境みたいなのが(.)
kinda environment
28. A: うん
yes
29. B: もう目の当たりにすることの方が 多くて：
that was what I frequently saw in person
30. A: ((頷く))
nod
31. B: で それと同時に： すごく アメリカ 自由だから：
at the same time, because America is liberal
32. あの(.) クラブ活動とか参加するときに 自己紹介するときに：
well, when people introduce themselves to join a club or something
33. A: ((頷く))
nod
34. B: なんか(.) プロナウン(.) >だから< 自分は[シーハーですよとか]
like, pronoun, I mean, I am she/her, or
35. [((手の平を自分の方に動かして))]
moving a hand to herself
36. ヒーヒムです ヒズですみたいなのを
he/him or that kind of things
37. A: ((数回頷く))
nod several times
38. B: 絶対に ゆ：：(.)わなないといけなかったり とか ま そこらへんの(.) なんか
we had to present and that sort of things
39. あ：私はなんか その：社会福祉とかの方に 興味があったので：
oh, I was interested around social wellbeing
40. なんか(.) その 自分の人権を大切に 個性を豊かにみたいなところは(.)
well, points like valuing the human rights and enriching the individuality
41. すごい アメリカって すてきだな：と思って()だから
I've been thinking America is great on the points
42. その悪い面(.) 悪い面というかその
the drawback, or how to say,
43. そのホームレスが多いっていう 社会福祉的な面と：
the social wellbeing issue that there are many homeless people and
44. A: ((数回頷く))
nod several times
45. B: その(.) なんか(.) そのいろんな(.)人が 自分のアイデンティティを持って
that well, different people have their own identities

46. 自由に(.) こう生活してるっていうところが(0.5)
and live like what they want to,
47. A: ((数回頷く))
nod several times
48. B: やば [両方見たときに:]
still, when looking at both sides
49. [((手のひらを見せて 左右に広げて))]
showing hands spread in right and left
50. あ やっぱ 自分の興味は [ここら辺だな:]ていうのを <思っ(.)て>(2.0)
ah, I felt as I thought my interest is around here
51. [((手を軽く握って 顎の両側に上げて))]
raise lightly grasped hands to either side of chin
52. A: ((数回頷く))
nod several times
53. B: 私は きっと 公務員になります
I will be a public servant
54. な[ると思います
I think I will be
55. A: [@@@((数回頷きながら))
@@@ nodding several times
56. B: @@@
@@@

In Positioning Level 1, the taleworld narrated in Transcript 3, B reveals her position as one who renews her commitment to the profession she originally wanted to pursue, based on two episodes that she only discovered when she arrived in the U.S. Let me review these two episodes now. The first one (lines 23-30) is that B saw “a full of homeless people in the city” (line 26) in an “extremely poor kinda environment” (lines 26-27). The phrase “full of” indicates a high number, which must have been a shock to B, as seen from the way she tells the story. The second episode B shares (lines 31-41) was her experience of joining clubs outside the local university. She talks about presenting pronouns like she/her or they/them as a custom “when people introduce themselves to join a club or something” (line 32). She views these positive aspects of this as an attitude that values human rights. Then, she categorizes these two issues as welfare issues, her field of interest; thus, we can see that her story leads straight to her decision to become a public servant in the welfare sector. In the following part, she states, “I will be a public servant” (line 53). She speaks clearly and boldly. She picks up two eye-opening episodes from various topics and lays them out, clearly showing how they lead to the career she wants to pursue.

Next, we will look at Positioning Level 2, what B wanted to convey in the “here and now” interaction. In the first part talking about the two episodes (lines 23-41), the way she talks shows how she was shocked or influenced. When describing the “homeless” story, she uses the fillers six times, such as “なんか” (lines 23 & 26), “その” (line 23), “も” (line 23), and “もう” (lines 26 & 29), and more frequent prolonged pronunciation and pauses than the other parts. These are assumed to indicate the speakers’ difficulty in choosing words. Likewise, in the “pronoun” story, the way she narrates the story, using prolonged pronunciation and a micro pause between “ゆ (say)” and “わないといけなかった (had to)” (line 38), reveals her hesitation in word choice. Although the behavior was not unpleasant, it can be inferred that B felt forced to say it because it was not a practice in the culture in which she grew up in. Her expressions indicate the strong impact of the scenes she saw and the struggles she faced on novel occasions. Through these, she demonstrated a sincere attitude toward matters in the different cultures.

In the following part (lines 42-56), B presents the two episodes as powerful factors to explain her decision to become a public servant to A. In her explanation, with the gesture showing hands spread in right and left (line 49), she places the “homeless” episode on one side and the “pronoun” one on the other side. And then, she said “ah, I felt as I thought my interest is around here” (line 50) raising lightly grasped hands to either side of the chin (line 51). According to McNeill (1992), we can infer how the speaker imagines the matter being represented from these representational gestures. It is assumed that she presents these two stories as important events and tries to ultimately link them to her motivation for the job she wanted to pursue

Discussion

This study observed how a Japanese university student studying abroad talks about employment in the context of her study-abroad experience, using B's interview narratives.

For RQ1) How does the interviewee narrate her study-abroad experience from a career perspective? B was influenced by what she saw and experienced in her study-abroad, and reconsidered her career path, and used it as the basis for her decision. In Transcript 2, she uses the word “こっち (here)” and emphasizes that she only found out what she (does not) want because she actually came to the U.S. This could have been the starting point for her to consider her career. Furthermore, in Transcript 3, B cites two episodes of “homeless” and “pronoun,” and states that based on these episodes, she is convinced that the scope of her interest is welfare and that she will make a career decision.

This process is interesting because she, at first, felt no connection between studying abroad and her dreamed job as Transcript 1 shows; She said “if you want to be a public servant ... you don't have to speak English so much”(lines 3-4) and “I want to be a public servant, but learn English a little, too”(line 9). Even though she had no intention of utilizing the study-abroad experience for her careers, later, her experience in a foreign country facilitated her motivation for the future job. By seeing the actual situation and interacting with the people there, she constructed narratives from her own experiences, which firmly convinced her of the right career vision.

As of the answer for RQ2) How does the interviewee construct her identity in the interaction with the interviewer? B constructed her identity in the interaction with A as a person who makes career choices true to her vested interests. In her narratives, she tried to express logic and determination by incorporating social issues in the U.S. while maintaining a basic policy of focusing on her own experiences. Mezirow (1991), in a study on development in adulthood, argues that “experience strengthens our personal meaning system by refocusing or extending our expectations about how things are supposed to be” (p. 5). As for B, she rejected the notion that she did not need to learn English to be a civil servant, and that she should obtain a job that uses English to make the high cost of studying abroad worth it. She then construed her experience in the U.S. as a step toward the future career. Her narratives seem to re-evaluate what is taken for granted and the meaning of her own experiences.

Based on B's narrative, she was exposed to a different culture that influenced the way she constructed her identity. As Oberg (1960) argues, entering a different culture may lead to frustration and anxiety. However, one also has the chance to deal with unknown things or reflect on oneself. More importantly, it influences an individual's career outlook. By focusing not only on what was said, but also on how it was said, which was not done in previous studies, this study was able to reveal aspects of how study abroad experiences lead to a career outlook that is not linear.

Conclusion

This study has explored how studying abroad can contribute to career prospects through a single case study. Studying abroad not only improves language skills but also allows one to experience a different culture, which can lead to transformation. In B's case, although her experience abroad was not what she was initially looking for, she strengthened her interest in social welfare, which led to an increased awareness of her desired career. Thus, studying abroad provides a great opportunity to develop future perspectives.

Although this study investigated only one participant's narratives, the findings remain crucial. The process of making sense of studying abroad was investigated by exploring the narratives of the individual in detail, which could not be verified only by quantitative research alone. I would like to continue conducting case studies in the future and deepen my discussion on studying abroad and career prospects

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Appendix

Transcript Symbols

(.)	less than 1.0 second of silence]	end overlapping
(1.0)	number in parentheses indicates silence	=	latching
:	prolongation or stretching the sound	<-->	talk between them is slowed
h	exhalation	>--<	talk between them is rushed
@	laugh	()	uncertain utterance
[start overlapping	(())	descriptions of gestures

How to cite the article:

Sitler, T. (2024). What is a task: Using register analysis to inform task-based language teaching. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 200–209. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-25>

Research Article

What is a Task: Using Register Analysis to Inform Task-Based Language Teaching

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Abstract

This study sought to further inform the notion of “task” in Task-Based Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Assessment by performing a Register Analysis using lexical bundles on description, negotiation, and narration tasks found in the NICT-JLE Corpus. While the CAF framework is often used in TBLT studies, it has not provided much information on the specific language used in tasks. By using an RA methodology, it was found that each task type has different lexico-grammatical patterns that differ significantly from other tasks. For example, description tasks contain more prepositional phrases (e.g., in the box) than narration tasks, which include more verb phrases (e.g., I would like, I want to). Such specific descriptions of tasks can help educators evaluate student performance on task-based exams and give insights into task design and implementation.

この研究は、タスク中心の言語教育(TBLT)と評価における「タスク」の概念を明確化し、異なるタスクで使われる文法や語彙を比較します。従来のTBLT研究では、複雑性、正確性、流暢性(CAF)の枠組みが主に使用されましたが、文法や語彙との関連は十分に検討されていません。本研究では、コーパス言語学のレジスター分析を用いて、NICT-JLEコーパスに基づく記述、交渉、ナレーションタスクにおける学習者のパフォーマンスを分析しました。その結果、記述タスクにはナレーションタスクより多くの前置詞句(例: in the box)が含まれ、ナレーションタスクにはより多くの動詞句(例: I would like, I want to)が含まれていることが判明し、各タスクタイプに特定の文法構造の特徴があり、これがコミュニケーションの目的と直接関連していることが明らかになりました。タスクごとに特定の文法構造が存在することが伺え、教育評価に有益であることが示されました。

Task-Based Language Teaching has become one of the most widespread approaches to language teaching today (Jackson, 2022). Long and Ahmadian (2022, p. xxvi) argue that this is because of its relevance to real-world situations and use. Students gain a “functional command” of the L2, not just learn about it. Proficiency in the context of TBLT involves more than knowledge of specific structures but also the ability to meet the demands of the task (Bygate et al., 2022, p. 27). This extends to Task-Based Language Assessment (TBLA), in which students are evaluated on the extent to which they can perform a task.

Research on tasks within the TBLT tradition primarily uses the Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency (CAF) framework to evaluate student performance and proficiency (Jackson, 2022). However, this framework has come under criticism for two main reasons. The first is that, despite the emphasis on communication and meaning in the TBLT approach, the CAF framework provides no measurement of communicative success in any of its constructs (Pallotti, 2009). The second reason is that the CAF framework relies on holistic, omnibus measures to gather data (e.g. AS-Units, T-Units, etc.). This has been criticized for treating all syntactical features as the same and thus being unable to provide a description of how specific features are used in communication (Biber et al., 2020). Bygate (2020) has likewise criticized the framework for failing to provide teachers with specific information on the syntactical features to be used in a task.

As an alternative to the CAF framework, this study will perform a Register Analysis (RA) in order to investigate how specific grammatical structures function within a specific task. RA investigates how language is used differently in different registers, with register being defined as a “variety of language associated with a particular situation of use” (Biber & Conrad, 2019:6). Crawford and Zhang (2021) first proposed introducing RA into TBLT research because both research traditions emphasize context and functional uses of the language. The value of doing an RA over using CAF is that it can find specific grammatical features and then link these specific features to the overall objective of the register. This is something that CAF, with its reliance on holistic measures and its absence of a communicative dimension, cannot do.

Literature Review

This study will first define and explain TBLT before detailing more about the RA methodology to be used. Task-Based Language Teaching is, of course, centered around tasks. A central focus of a task is attaining an objective

through the use of language (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001). As such, there is an emphasis on meaning, rather than form. This interpretation of a task does not involve learning about a particular piece of grammar without then using it in a meaningful way, nor does it entail any kind of mechanical use, for example, by memorizing dialogues (Jackson, 2022).

There are, of course, a variety of different types of objectives a task can have, and thus many different types of tasks. While “there are as many different task types as there are people who have written on task-based language teaching” (Nunan, 2010), this study will examine the typology provided by Pica et al. (1993) as this typology shows how specific tasks are related to language learning. Only task types related to the tasks in the study below will be considered in the interest of space. First, information gap tasks will be considered. These tasks require the exchange of some kind of message or information. This can be a one-way exchange, in which one person asks for information and the other gives it, or it can be a two-way exchange if two people alternate roles. This task also has the potential to draw attention to the form of the language. Learners have to make sure that the information is accurate and understood, and in doing so, they must pay special attention to the form of the information (Pica et al., 2006).

Another type of task is a problem-solving task. Here, two or more people interact to resolve a problem. In this instance, information should flow in two directions to achieve the same outcome. However, Pica et al. (2006) note that these tasks could pose problems if one or the other learner lacks the required confidence or skill to offer solutions.

Of course, students must use language to complete the task, and to break things down further, certain syntactic forms are better suited than others to complete a specific task. The exact forms used by the students in another important dimension of task design. While students could theoretically use any form they wanted to to complete the task goal, it could be argued that certain forms are more essential than others in a specific context. Loschky and Bley-Vronman (1993) argue that a form could be considered essential, useful, or natural in regard to task completion.

Ortega (2007) argues that certain tasks will elicit certain grammatical features that are essential for that task. Teachers then can then plan a lesson with a specific task in order to practice the essential forms necessary to complete the task, all in the context of meaningful communication. For example, Schleppegrell (1998) found that describing animals requires using expanded complements (e.g., *the tiger's fur*). Tarone and Parrish (1988) found that narrative and interview tasks made different linguistic demands on students. Narrative tasks produced more definite articles while interviews required both definite and indefinite articles. In this instance, a teacher who would like to have students practice definite and indefinite articles would be better suited to have students perform interview tasks than description tasks. This kind of “form-function mappings” to tasks used in the classroom can help teachers design lessons to target specific forms (p. 186).

There is a lack of studies that have used large corpora in order to define the essential language of a task. This study will attempt to determine these form-function mappings on the task types described above. This will be done by using lexical bundles for a Register Analysis, which are defined here as strings of three or more words that appear frequently in a given discourse (Biber et al., 1990). These are a relatively under-researched though accessible way to perform an RA (Crawford and Zhang, 2021).

Biber et al. (2004) established the standard framework for performing an RA with lexical bundles. The study used the TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language Corpus (T2K-SWAL Corpus) based on university life in the United States. It includes samples from classroom teaching, textbooks, study groups, etc. Four-word lexical bundles were used. The study categorized the lexical bundles from this research into two different taxonomies: structural and functional. The structural taxonomy includes the main grammatical features of lexical bundles: verb phrase (VP), dependent clause (DC), and noun phrase / prepositional phrase (NP/PP) fragments. These main categories can be broken down into smaller categories, e.g., 1st person + VP fragments. The functional taxonomy corresponds to how a specific bundle was used. The main categories in the study were stance expressions, discourse organizers, and referential expressions. This was determined qualitatively by assessing the main communicative goals of the task.

One of the study's main findings was that specific categories were more common in some registers than in others. Speaking registers, such as classroom teaching and office hours, were dominated by VP bundles, whereas written registers were far more likely to contain NP/PP bundles. It was found that there was a close correlation between the structural category of a bundle and the functional category, with many bundles having “a primary function” (384). For example, 1st person + VP bundles were used primarily for stance expressions (e.g., I think it was, I don't want to).

These studies indicate that certain structural and functional fragments are more characteristic of some registers than others. The above study had a broad definition of register as either written or spoken. This study will refine the notion of register to the language spoken in a specific speaking task type. There is a lack of studies that have performed an RA on such a specific sub-register. By doing so, the essential task language can be extracted from each task.

This study had two main questions under investigation. The first was an analysis of the essential lexico-grammatical forms associated with description, negotiation, and narration tasks and how these forms differed from each other depending on the task. What are the essential forms associated with description tasks, negotiation tasks, and narration tasks? The second question concerned how these lexico-grammatical forms were related to the specific communicative goals of their respective tasks.

Methodology

NICT-JLE Corpus

The corpus used in this study was the NICT-JLE Corpus (Tono, 2007). It was funded and led by the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT) in Japan in 2001. It contains texts from 1,281 Japanese speakers of various ages and occupations and contains 1.2 million words. There is a total of nine different proficiency levels.

The test is structured as a one-on-one interview and lasts for fifteen minutes. There are five stages. This research will focus on stages two, three, and four and the corresponding task types since the first and the last stages are not tasks but consist of simple conversations. Task 2 is a description task type in which students are asked to describe a picture to the interviewer. Task 3 is a negotiation task type, in which students interact with the interviewer to get something. Examples include shopping, asking the landlord to fix something in the apartment, or returning something at the store. Task 4 is a narration task type in which students look at a series of pictures and create a story based on them.

Sub-Corpus

A sub-corpus was created for each task type. The bundles for each sub-corpus were categorized into structural and functional taxonomies. Biber et al.'s (2004) structural taxonomy was used since the structures found in this corpus were nearly identical. However, due to the differences in registers in Biber et al. (2004), a separate functional taxonomy was created. This was done by determining each task's communicative goals, identifying the task's most salient structural features, and then interpreting the concordance lines of the various structures in the task to understand how those structures functioned.

Each proficiency level is represented in each task; however, in this study, they were not marked. This is because the goal of this study is to first give an idea of all the possible linguistic choices a speaker can make in the task, and then to generalize from these the most common choices. The most common bundles can be inferred to be essential to the completion of the task. While advanced learners may be able to use complex grammar to complete a task objective, it is not necessary for them to do so. Instead, the focus here is on finding the essential task language. All the interviewer's words were manually deleted, and only the students' words were studied.

Bundle Extraction

Four-word lexical bundles were chosen for ease of comparison with the above studies. AntConc (Anthony, 2020) was used to extract bundles. The token numbers for tasks 2, 3, and 4 are 376,867, 603,081, and 454,842, respectively (Table 1). The cut-off frequency, which determines how many bundles are to be included in the analysis, was set to 20 times per million words, as this is often used in studies of large corpora, such as Biber et al. (2004). Another criterion is the dispersion threshold or the extent to which a bundle appears in multiple texts. Including a dispersion threshold can help to avoid including a speaker's idiosyncratic style in the analysis. It was set to three texts in this study. Bundles that were grammatically incorrect were not counted. This was done to get a description of the accurate, standardized language needed to complete a task.

Bundle Coding

Structural categories were coded according to the dominant grammatical form in the bundle. Functional categories were decided by examining how bundles functioned in the context of the task. This involved considering the overall goal of the task type, as defined above, and then interpreting how the structural bundles achieved the goal of the task type. Concordance lines were examined when bundles were ambiguous.

Table 1

Token Number, Dispersion Threshold, and Cut-Off Frequency for Task Types

Criteria	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4
Token Number	376,867	603,081	454,842
Dispersion Threshold	3	3	3
Cut-Off Frequency	8	12	9

Results

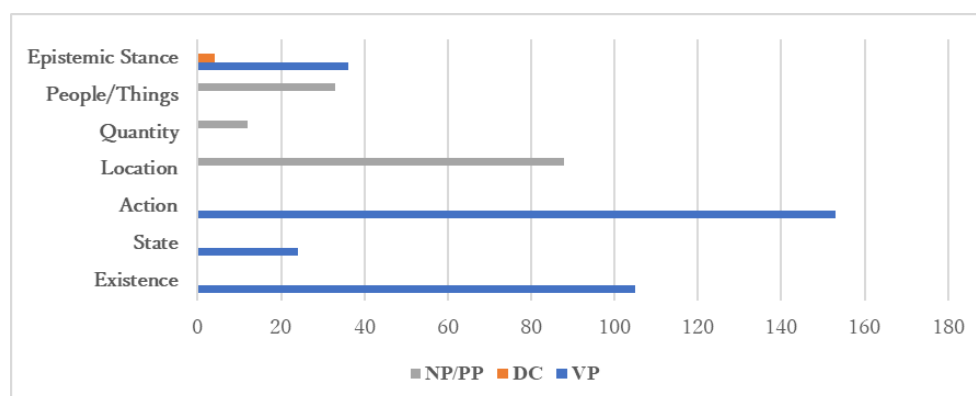
The first task to be examined was a description task in which students described a picture containing various people doing various things. As an information gap task, the overarching goal of the task is to communicate the various objects in the picture to the listener. After looking up concordance lines when needed, seven functional categories

were determined: 1. Epistemic Stance; 2. People/Things; 3. Quantity; 4. Location 5. Action; 6. State; 7. Existence. All the bundles within this task were determined to fit into one of these seven functions.

Figure 1 shows the structural bundles sorted into the functional category in which they are used. VP fragments are the most common structural category, and Action is the most common functional category in this task. Each structural bundle also seems to fit nicely into a single functional category. Verb phrases were used to describe existence (*there is a girl*), states (*It is a sunny day*), and actions (*a man is running*). Noun phrases and prepositional phrases are used to describe people/things (*the boy next to her*), quantity (*a lot of people*), and location (*in a big house*). Only one category, epistemic stance, used two structural bundles: dependent clause (*I don't know what*) and verb phrases (*I think I see*).

Figure 1

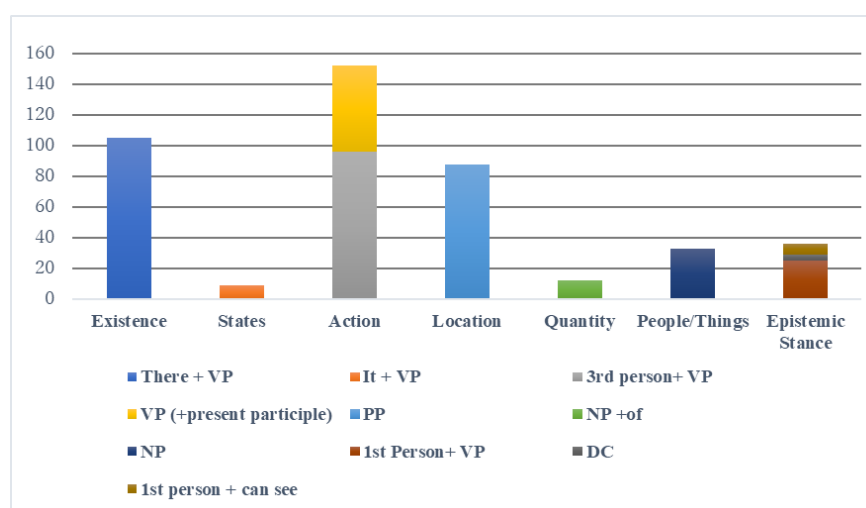
Structural Distribution of Task 2 Description



In addition, Figure 1 also shows a general look at the structural distribution. It is possible to examine the structural categories further, as seen in Figure 2. For example, the structural bundle *There + VP* is the most used to describe existence. Likewise, *NP + of* is the most common structural bundle for describing quantity: e.g., *most of the students*. Figure 2 shows a more fine-grained picture of the data, showing each category's most common structural bundle. The category of action had two common structures, so both were included. A complete breakdown of the distribution of structures based on their functional category can be seen in Table 2 (Appendix A).

Figure 2

Specific Bundles Used in Task 2 Description



It can still be seen that all functional categories, except Epistemic Stance and Action, comprise one type of structural bundle. The category of Action contained many present participles (*playing with a ball*) in addition to 3rd person pronoun + VP (*She was walking to*). PP phrases also figured prominently to describe location (*in front of the*).

Task 3: Negotiation

In this task, students negotiate with someone to get something, such as a refund for a pair of jeans at a clothing store. The functional requirements for this task were determined to be: 1. Expressing one's desire; 2. Asking

questions; 3. Explaining the reason for the negotiation; 4. Epistemic stance. There is a wider structural variety for each function. For example, the functional category explanation includes six different types of structural bundle.

Figure 3

Structural Distribution of Task 3 Negotiation

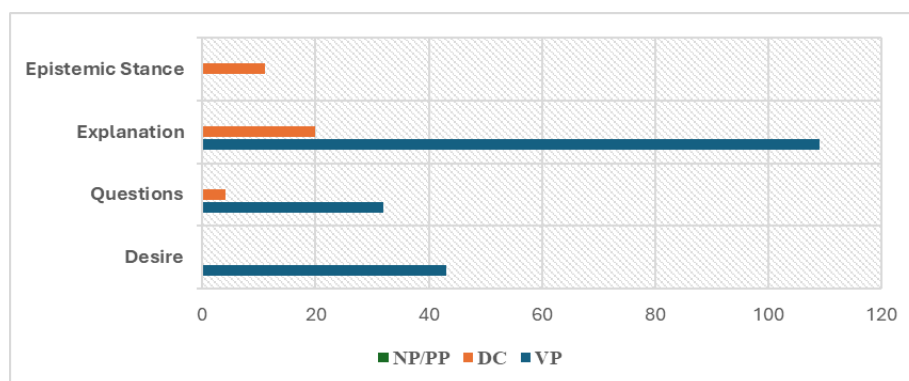
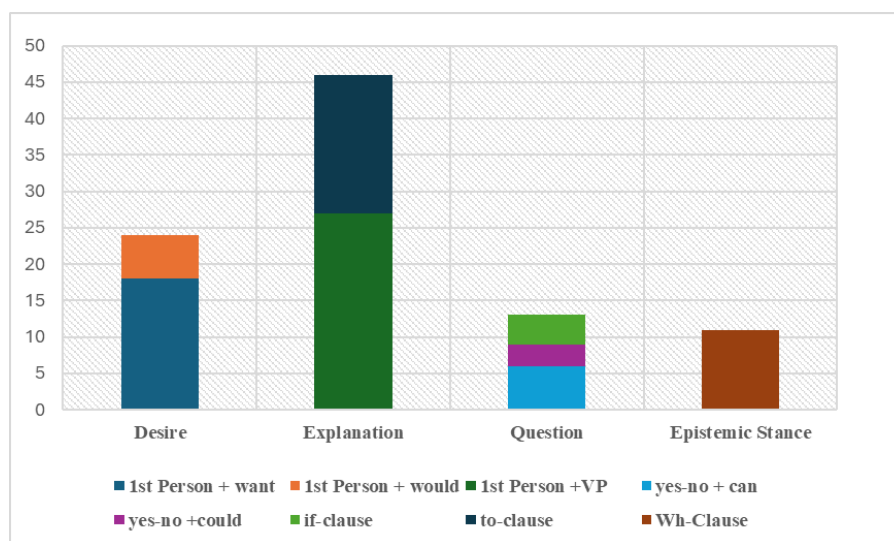


Figure 3 shows the breakdown of structural bundles into their functional categories. While there are a lot of VP fragments in this task, there is also a fair amount of DC fragments, which are primarily used for explaining one's reason during the negotiation. For example, when attempting to get a refund, a speaker used an adverbial phrase to explain why they wanted it, e.g., *when I took it home, it didn't fit*. Desire is primarily expressed using the bundle I + want to, e.g., *I want to buy, I want to return*. This is also expressed through the conjunction of I and would, e.g., *I'd like to buy*. Figure 4 shows a more fine-grained analysis; a complete analysis for this task can be found in Table 3 (Appendix B).

Figure 4

Specific Bundles Used in Task 3 Negotiation



Here, it can be seen that there is a greater variety of bundles for each functional category. A fair number of if-clauses are used in the Functional Category of "Question". A closer examination of the concordance lines reveals that these questions are often used to propose a solution or proposition to the conversation partner: *if it is possible; if I can exchange*. However, in contrast to task 2 above, NP/PP fragments are noticeably absent and appear to have not been needed for this task.

Task 4: Narration

The following functional categories were determined for the narration tasks: 1. Epistemic stance; 2. Time/ Location/Direction; 3. Quantity; 4. Desire; Action; Existence. While VP fragments are once again the dominant structural category, there are also a fair amount of NP/PP fragments, which are most often used to describe time (*and at that time*), location (*in my house and*), and direction (*back to the home*).

It can be seen (Figure 5) that while various bundles are used, NP/PP fragments are quite dominant and essential in the narration task, as describing the time, place, and direction is a vital communicative goal of any such

task. There are very few bundles for the existence category, and most VP fragments are used to describe Action with a 3rd person pronoun (Figure 6). The complete breakdown of the task can be found in Table 4 (Appendix C).

Figure 5

Structural Distribution of Task 4 Narration

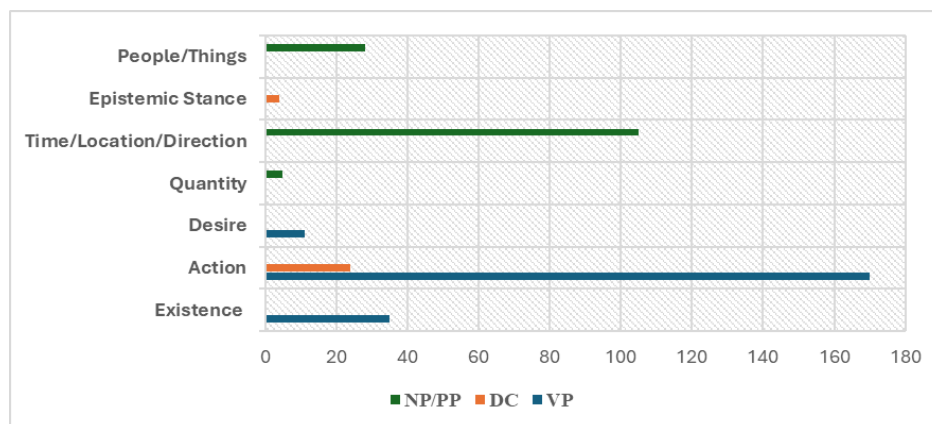
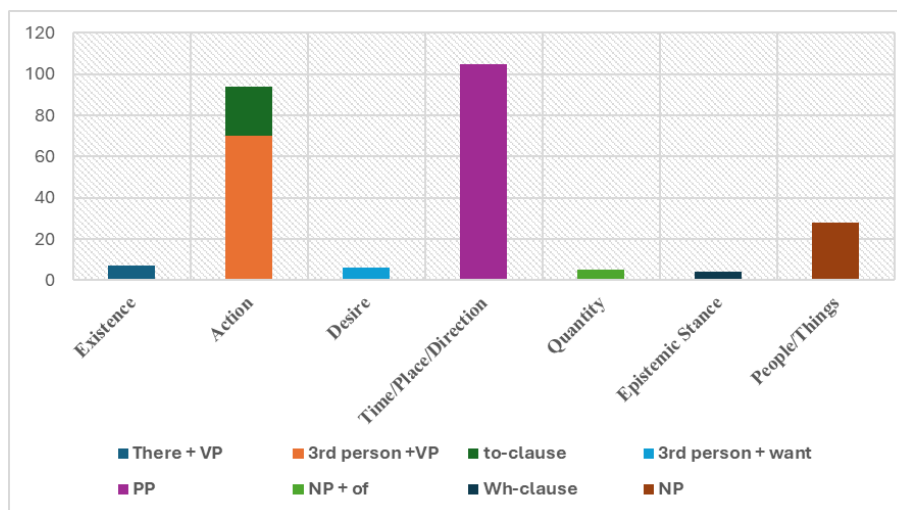


Figure 6 shows that most structural categories in the task perform one specific function, with the exception of the functional category Action, which includes both 3rd person + VP (she bought it and) and to-clauses (to take care of). The distribution of bundles in task 4 is more similar to task 2, with both tasks containing more NP/PP phrases than task 3. The functional categories are also similar, which may be the reason for the similar distribution of structural bundles.

Figure 6

Specific Bundles Used in Task 4 Narration



Discussion

The first research question asked which forms were essential to each task type. This can be inferred from the most common categories of lexical bundles from each task. For description based tasks, based on the data, it can be argued that the essential language in this task is the use of There + VP and 3rd person + VP, as these are the most common structural categories. Prepositional phrases are also widely used and can be deemed essential as well.

The second research question asked about the function of these structures, or simply why they were used here. The main goal of an information gap task is for information to be communicated from one person to the other, in this case the learner is communicating information about a picture to the interviewer. How specific structures in this task were used can be inferred from how the structural categories mapped onto the functional categories, which can be seen in Figure 2. There + VP was needed to communicate the existence of various objects and people. 3rd person + VP was needed to communicate what these objects were doing in the picture. Finally, prepositional phrases were needed to describe how these objects were located in space. These forms can be inferred to be essential to the task.

Next, the negotiation task will be considered. As seen in Figure 3, the most common structure was 1st person + VP, with the VP often involving the word “want”. Another important structure were questions, the most popular

being “yes-no” questions, but if-clauses were also often used. In contrast to the description task above, prepositional phrases were notably absent.

The main goal of a negotiation task is to solve a problem with the communication partner by coming up with a solution. A large part of this is communicating one’s own desire as well as explaining the situation one is in. According to this data, this was often done using 1st person + VP structures, especially with the verb *want*, as it can be used to communicate one’s desire in a situation. Questions and question verbs were used to offer potential solutions to the problem in the task.

Finally, narration tasks are quite similar to description tasks in that they are both information gap tasks and have the same goal of communicating information from the learner to the interviewer. As seen in Figure 6, structurally, they are similar as well, containing many 3rd person + VP structures in addition to PP-based bundles. However, *There* + VP-based bundles are used much less frequently than picture description tasks. So infrequently that they can be inferred to be non-essential to this particular task.

The differences between the two can be further elucidated by considering the overall goal of the task as well as the functional categories. As an information gap task, the goal is to communicate information, however a narrative involves communicating far more action in order to progress the story. This entails the use of 3rd person + VP, though *There* + VP is far less important, as this does not move the action forward. Furthermore, PP-based fragments were used to describe not simply location but also time, place, and direction, which are elements needed to progress a story. It can be seen then that even within the same task type, there are important structural and functional differences in tasks, which influence which structures can be considered essential.

As a final note, all tasks did include the category of epistemic stance, which was used to indicate that the learner was unsure of how to say something. However, this is still a minor category, and unlikely to be absolutely essential to the completion of any task.

Conclusion

This study performed an RA with lexical bundles as a framework for measuring and defining proficiency in TBLT and TBLA research. The TBLT approach places a great deal of emphasis on the student’s functional command of the L2, and the framework used in this study could provide information on how specific lexico-grammatical structures could lead to a functional command of the language in a specific task. It was found that by treating a task type as a specific register, structural and functional taxonomies could be created, which provided detailed information about specific grammatical structures used while giving them a functional interpretation. This level of structural detail would be missing in a CAF study that utilized holistic measures. The data found in this study can inform task design by providing teachers with specific information about the essential language appropriate for the examined task types.

This study was not without its limitations. Many of the tasks, including the picture description in Task 2 and the narration in Task 4, are not very indicative of tasks that a learner could encounter outside of the classroom. Future research can examine a corpus of tasks with more situational authenticity, such as those coming out of a Needs Analysis, as Long (2015) recommends.

This research also only included grammatically accurate bundles, leaving out descriptions of non-standard structures a learner might use. Future research could include an investigation of the different kinds of lexical bundles learners use at different proficiency levels. Such an investigation could provide insights into developmental progress within the context of a particular task. For example, it was found that 3rd person + VP was a common, and an inferred essential, structure in description tasks. Variations in how an advanced learner uses this structure (e.g. *He seems to be sleeping*) as opposed to a beginner learner (e.g. *He is sleep*) can show which specific grammatical structures are characteristic of higher proficiency levels. This linguistic description of proficiency levels can further inform the notion of proficiency in regards to specific tasks.

On the whole, however, an RA with lexical bundles was able to provide detailed lexico-grammatical information about student performance. Importantly, this information is still within the context of the task’s functional goals. Bygate (2020) claimed this was precisely what was missing in current TBLT research, as the CAF framework’s emphasis on general measures could not provide specific information on grammar. Certain interpretations of TBLT, such as Long (2015), claim that TBLT should not be taught alongside a grammar syllabus. However, by using an RA approach, this study was able to provide information on the essential language associated with a particular task type and task, and then tie the use of that language to a particular task objective. Teachers who wish to focus on meaning based communication can use this information to teach specific structures as well.

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Appendix A

Table 2: Distribution of Structures According to Functional Category in Task 2 (Description Task)

Functional Category	Amount	Structural Bundle	Distribution
1. Existence	105		
		a. There + VP: there is a girl	105
2. States	24		
		a. It + present tense copula: It is a sunny day	9
		b. It + looks like	1
		c. present tense copula + noun/adjective: is a big house,	14
3. Action	153		
		a. 3rd person + present tense VP: a man is	96
		b. present tense VP (+past participle): is	23
		c. past participle + Prepositional Phrase:	33
		d. Other	1
4. Location	88		
		a. Prepositional Phrase: in a big house, in front of the	88
5. Quantity	12		
		a. Noun Phrase + of: a lot of people	12
6. Epistemic Stance	36		
		a. 1st person + think / VP think	18
		b. 1st person / we + can see	7
		c. Seems to be	2
		d. I don 't know + WH clause	4
		e. Other expressions	5
7. People/Things	33		
		a. Noun + and	33

Appendix B

Table 3: Distribution of Structures According to Functional Category in Task 3 (Negotiation Task)

Functional Category	Amount	Structural Bundle	Distribution
1. Desire	43		
		a. There + VP: there is a girl	18
		b. 1st person + would: I'd like to buy	6
		c. Other 1st person + VP: I'll take this one	4
		d. would/want/like VP: want to return it, like to return it	15

Functional Category	Amount	Structural Bundle	Distribution
2. Questions	40		
		a. yes-no questions with can: can I buy it	6
		b. yes-no questions with do: do you have that	5
		c. yes-no question with could: could you talk to	3
		d. yes-no questions with would: would it be	1
		e. other yes-no questions: is it possible to	5
		f. WH-Questions: how much is it	16
		g. If-clause: if it is possible	4
3. Explanation	129		
		a. 1st person + past tense VP: I didn't use this	17
		b. 1st person + present tense VP: I don't like this	10
		e. 1st person + VP: I change my mind	53
		f. VP: go to movie with	29
		h. Adverbial Clause: when I bought this	1
		j. to-phrase: to buy a ticket	19
4. Epistemic	11		
		a. Wh-Clause: I don't know why	11

Appendix C

Table 4: Distribution of Structures According to Functional Category in Task 4 Narration Task

Functional Category	Amount	Structural Bundle	Distribution
1. Existence	7		
		a. There + copula: There was a cat	7
2. Action	194		
		a. 1st person + VP: I went to the	26
		b. 3rd person + past tense VP: she bought it and	70
		c. VP with past participle: were walking on the	6
		d. past participle + pp: walking on the street	5
		e. VP: pick up the cat	63
		f. To-clause fragment: to take care of	24
3. Desire	11		
		a. 3rd person pronoun + want: she wanted to take	6
		b. Want(ed) to VP: wanted to take care	5
4. Time/Place/Direction	105		
		a. PP: in the car and	105
5. People/Things	28		
		a. NP: my father's birthday present	28
6. Quantity	5		
		a. A lot of + Noun	5
7. Epistemic Stance	6		
		a. I don't know + WH-clausee	4
		b. Other expressions	2

How to cite the article:

Walsh, N. & Filer, B. (2024). What goes on in there? An observer's perspective on classroom observation. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 210–217. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-26>

Research Article

What Goes on in There? An Observer's Perspective on Classroom Observation

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Abstract

One mechanism for conducting reflective practice (RP) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms is through observations. Existing literature on classroom observations (Farrell, 2018a; O'Leary, 2020; Reed & Bergemann, 2001) provides comprehensive insights into the issues surrounding this practice. However, there is less commentary on classroom observations in a Japanese university context, especially from the observer's perspective. To counter this lack of empirical data, fifty-four EFL teachers in Japanese universities responded to a survey about their engagement with classroom observations and their attitudes towards them. The results indicate that while more than half the respondents observed another teacher's class at the university level, a substantial number did not. Additionally, the number of times respondents observed another professional's class was limited. The data also offered interesting insights into their encounters with classroom observation and the perceived benefits from the observer's standpoint.

外国語としての英語 (EFL) の教室でリフレクティブ・プラクティス (RP) を実施するための1つのメカニズムは、観察である。授業観察に関する既存の文献 (Farrell, 2018a; O'Leary, 2020; Reed & Bergemann, 2001) は、この実践をめぐる問題について包括的な洞察を提供している。しかし、日本の大学の文脈における授業観察、特に観察者の視点からの解説は少ない。このような実証的データの不足を補うため、日本の大学のEFL教員54名が、授業参観の実施状況や参観に対する意識についてアンケートに回答した。その結果、半数以上の回答者が大学レベルで他の教員の授業を参観している一方で、参観していない教員も相当数いることがわかった。さらに、回答者が他の専門家の授業を参観した回数は限られていた。また、データからは、授業参観との出会いや、参観者の立場から見た利点についても興味深い洞察が得られた。

In response to the continuing demand for quality English language teaching worldwide in various situations, conscientious language practitioners and institutions must strive to uphold standards and develop their teaching practices through professional development. Professional development is multifaceted, and activities such as continuing education, language conferences and reflective practice present opportunities for language educators to hone and upgrade their skills. One of the most direct, immediate, and collaborative methods for language teachers to analyze and develop their practical pedagogical implementation in the classroom is through classroom observation.

Classroom observations feature heavily in pre-service training initiatives, with novice teachers learning from more experienced ones. This hierarchical framework typically involves senior professionals mentoring new entrants by engaging in pre-lesson discussions before observing and analysing a lesson or a series of lessons and providing feedback. Under the right conditions, observations allow teachers to explore classroom anxieties, resolve issues with a particular class, identify areas for improvement, procure another perspective on practical teaching skills and foster an environment of trust and collegiality among coworkers.

While much attention has been given to classroom observations as a mechanism for reflective practice over the past thirty years (see Farrell, 2018a; O'Leary, 2020; Reed & Bergemann, 2001), there remains a paucity of empirical research on the extent of them within EFL university settings in Japan. Additionally, limited attention is dedicated to the amount of continuing in-service peer observations as educators progress through their careers. This is surprising as teachers observing another's classroom should be considered avenues for professional development.

This study addresses the dearth of documentation on university English language teachers in Japan's experiences of classroom observations. Specifically, it targets the role of the observer in a fellow professional's classroom and reports on their attitudes towards this practice. It aims to reveal the frequency of classroom observations, the relationship between the observer and the teacher being observed and the observer's perspective on the process and is guided by the following two research questions: Have university English teachers in Japan observed other teachers? How was the experience of being an observer?

Literature Review

In order to develop professionally, it is important that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers continue to reflect on their pedagogy and build awareness of their instructional processes. One vehicle for optimising teaching style and performance is through classroom observation which is a feature of reflective practice (RP). Dewey (1933) describes RP practice as “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of grounds that support it and the future conclusions to which it leads” (p. 9). Reflective practice involves a deliberate effort to collect data, engage in dialogue with others, critically analyse and reflect on the data and instigate changes inside and outside the classroom (Farrell, 2015). RP is a complex process as it requires educators to disconnect themselves in a controlled and unemotional manner from their emotions and engage in a process of critical self-reflection.

However, while most literature advocates for the necessity of RP in professional development, there is also considerable awareness of its limitations. One criticism levelled at RP is that language teachers often approach it with suspicion, perceiving it as a tool for institutional evaluation (Filer & Walsh, 2024; Mann & Walsh, 2017; Walsh, 2013). This idea that RP is an evaluative tool is deeply ingrained in teachers’ beliefs, making it challenging to alter this mindset.

Some critics also argue that RP in its current form has become stagnant, with Walsh (2013) concerned that it has become “tired, overused and outdated” and is “currently only operating in a limited, rather superficial way” (p.112). To revitalise RP, Walsh (2013), like other commentators (see Bradbury et al., 2010; Johns, 2000), advises that reflective practice should be a dialogic activity involving multiple respondents.

Subsequently, there has been a move towards a more language-mediated approach to RP. Mann and Walsh (2017) suggest that RP should manifest in many forms, including ad hoc self-observation, online discussion forums, critical incident analysis, structured reflection, and video and dialogic reflection (p. 225). Each of these allows educators to exchange and gain insights into various aspects of language teaching and systematically reflect on their teaching methods and student learning outcomes. If implemented correctly, they can foster collaboration and nurture learning communities within an organisation.

An effective mechanism for fostering dialogue and collaboration in the EFL context is through classroom observations. Walsh (2013) emphasises that observation is a highly efficacious way to encourage dialogue and reflection grounded in evidence. In this context, language professionals engage with each other to critique their performance based on data collected during an observation. Day (1990) explains that this practice allows teachers to identify effective and ineffective classroom practices. Classroom observations, though complex and time-consuming, offer potential benefits to teachers when well implemented. Farrell (2018b) lists nine attributes, including developing awareness of one’s teaching, a mechanism for collecting information about pedagogical processes, an opportunity to view other teaching styles, data collection, learning effective teaching strategies and building collegiality.

In many EFL teaching contexts in Japan and around the world, novice teachers at language schools or large institutions are often mentored by more experienced educators, with classroom observations a key feature of their pre-service training. This hierarchical system is also maintained at in-service training events or performance evaluations. However, some critics argue against this top-down approach (see Cosh, 1999; Fanselow, 1988). Fanselow (1988) believes that observations should be seen as a process, not a product. He argues for a perspective where the goal is “self-exploration” for all individuals involved in classroom observations rather than just a “helping” function. Cosh (1999) concurs and stresses that during the practice, teachers should not be passive recipients of feedback but involved in “a process of active self-development through reflection and self-awareness” (p. 23). Unfortunately, in recent times, these hierarchical structures persist as, according to Farrell (2018b), classroom observations continue to be unnerving for observed teachers as many observers are there to provide a summative assessment of their teaching.

O’Leary (2020) recommends that observations be a professional development feature for all educators regardless of their position within an organization and advocates for peer observations. However, he laments that a major pitfall in peer observation is that “most teachers rarely observe others or are rarely observed by their peers” (O’Leary, 2020, p. 158). The extent of peer observations in Japanese EFL university settings is difficult to verify as, apart from anecdotal evidence, little is known about the practice. This lack of documentation prompted Filer and Walsh (2024) to survey 54 English teachers at universities in Japan on their classroom observation experiences. The data indicated that observations were not a significant part of their working environment. Interestingly, while many respondents were sceptical of their purpose, the majority conceded that they are a necessary part of professional development.

Much of the literature on classroom observations often focuses on the perspective of the observed and their mentoring with feedback and advice on their performance. However, as Wajnryb (1992) suggests, classroom observation is an opportunity for all educators to develop their professional growth. Despite the involvement of both observers and those being observed, the observer’s records of this practice are less well documented. The following study aims to rectify this lack of information by chronicling the experiences of EFL teachers as observers of other teachers’ classes in Japanese universities.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the lived experiences of classroom observations

of EFL teachers at university in Japan. The methodology is divided into two main components: data collection, and data analysis.

Data Collection

The study involved 54 university teachers based in Japan. The respondents were recruited through word of mouth, announcements on social media, and connections through existing language teaching communities. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using digital platforms, including email and online survey tools. A Google Forms questionnaire (Appendix A) was distributed to interested teachers, allowing for easy distribution and collection of responses. The survey was designed to primarily provide an overview of the situation regarding classroom observation among university teachers in Japan. The instruments used included both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data.

The survey began by asking respondents about their teaching history at universities in Japan. To address RQ1, respondents were then asked whether they had ever observed another English class and, if so, how many times.

To provide answers to RQ2, respondents rated how useful they had found observing classes at the university level, on a Likert scale from 1 (not at all useful) to 5 (very useful). The questionnaires also included open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide detailed feedback on their experiences by observing three subsets of teachers. These subsets were for teachers who had observed: junior teachers (teachers with less experience at university), fellow English teachers (at the same or similar level) and senior English teachers (supervisors or managers). These questions aimed to gather insights into what aspects of observing other teachers were of note

Data Analysis

Integrating quantitative and qualitative data provides balanced insight into classroom observation from the observer's perspective. The quantitative results were simply analysed using charts and graphs, as seen in the results section below. The qualitative results were analysed by organising the comments into three sections: generally positive, neutral, and generally negative. The findings from this study are expected to offer valuable insights for educators when they may be considering professional development, especially implementing some form of classroom observation.

Results

Overall, 54 respondents replied to the survey. As can be seen in Table 1, the respondents have varying years of experience teaching at the university level in Japan. As the questions were optional, one respondent failed to reply to this question.

Table 1

Participant Experience Teaching at Universities in Japan

0-5 years experience	6-10 years experience	11-15 years experience	16-20 years experience	21+ years experience	TOTAL
11	19	8	5	10	53

The following are the results of the question: Have you ever observed another English teacher's class at a university in Japan? 34 (63%) answered "Yes" they had observed, and 20 (37%) answered "No" they had not observed another teacher's class.

Respondents were then asked to provide more detailed information about these observations. The results were organised into three categories for the three separate subsets of observed teachers. Respondents were also required to say how many times they had observed these groups of teachers. The results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant Amount of Experience of Observing an English Language Class

Teacher Observed	Never	1-3 times	4-6 times	7-9 times	10 or more times	Total Observations	Median Number of Observations
Senior English Teacher	6	14	1	0	3	63	3
Fellow English Teacher	5	15	8	0	5	120	5
Junior English Teacher	3	8	1	0	2	41	2

The data in Table 2 reveals that the most frequent type of observation that has taken place among the respondents is between fellow teachers compared to the other two subsets. Of the 54 respondents, they have observed a fellow English teacher a median of five times in their career compared to three times for a senior teacher and two times for a junior teacher.

Respondents were then asked to consider how useful they had found being an observer in these classroom observations. The results can be seen in Table 3 and are related to the following survey question: On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being very useful, how useful was this for you in terms of professional development?

Table 3

Participant Quantitative Feedback on Observing an English Language Class

Teacher Observed	Number of Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Senior English Teacher	17	2 (12%)	2 (12%)	9 (53%)	0 (0%)	4 (23%)	3.10
Fellow English Teacher	29	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	6 (21%)	10 (35%)	9 (31%)	3.80
Junior English Teacher	12	0 (0%)	3 (25%)	4 (33.5%)	4 (33.5%)	1 (8%)	3.25

From the results in Table 3, we can see that there is a difference in how useful being an observer is depending on who is being observed. The average score of 3.8 for observing a fellow teacher is higher than both other subsets: senior teacher (3.1) and junior teacher (3.25). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the maximum score of 5 was selected more often for fellow teachers (31%) than the other two groups.

Respondents were asked to comment on their experiences of observing the three subsets of teachers. The results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Qualitative Feedback on Observing an English Language Class

Teacher Observed	Number of Respondents	Positive Feedback	Neutral Feedback	Negative Feedback
Senior English Teacher	15	8 (53%)	4 (27%)	3 (20%)
Fellow English Teacher	23	21 (91%)	2 (9%)	0 (0%)
Junior English Teacher	9	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	0 (0%)

Fifteen respondents provided feedback related to their experiences of observing a senior teacher. Analysis of these comments reveals that 8/15 (53%) were positive with 4/15 (27%) being neutral and 3/15 (20%) negative. One positive comment, as can be seen in Table 5, mentions how observing a senior teacher “forms part of reflective practice for me” (Respondent A). However, the comment from Respondent C, who claims to have “got absolutely nothing from the observation” outlines one possible negative side of observing a senior teacher.

Twenty-three teachers provided responses about observing a fellow English teacher. Upon analysis of the results, the comments can be categorised as follows: 21/23 (91%) were positive, 8/23 (9%) were neutral, and 0/23 (0%) were negative. From the overwhelmingly positive comments, Respondent D mentioned how useful it is as they “always come out with new ideas”. Respondent G goes into more specific detail by commenting how they “learned techniques for increasing motivation...tips for improving rapport with students”.

Nine of the respondents provided feedback on their experiences of observing a junior teacher. From this group, we can see that 5/9 (56%) were positive with 4/9 (46%) being neutral and no negative comments. Among the neutral comments Respondent I said that they “made them nervous but was able to pass on some advice”.

Table 5

Selected Participant Responses Relating to Observing an English Language Class

Respondent (Teacher Observed)	Comment
Respondent A (Supervisor)	Watching another teacher's class is helpful to see in-class relationships and behaviours. It also forms part of reflective practice for me.
Respondent B (Supervisor)	It was good because I realized that the supervisor wasn't perfect!

Respondent (Teacher Observed)	Comment
Respondent C (Supervisor)	I got absolutely nothing from the observation other than a shock that classes can be taught like that by someone with decades of experience.
Respondent D (Fellow)	Very useful. I always come out with new ideas.
Respondent E (Fellow)	Peers are usually the best to learn from because they give a damn about what they are teaching.
Respondent F (Fellow)	Occasionally you see something that will fit nicely into your own teaching repertoire or an alternative or extension to something you already do. Additionally, observations have quite a reassuring aspect in that you see teachers meeting the same challenges you do.
Respondent G (Fellow)	I learned techniques for increasing student motivation. I learned tips for improving rapport with students.
Respondent H (Junior)	I saw a couple things that gave me inspiration for my own teaching.
Respondent I (Junior)	I made them nervous but was able to pass on some advice

Discussion

RQ1. Have university English teachers in Japan observed other teachers?

This study's results indicate that the majority of respondents have observed an English language lesson. However, it is surprising that more than one-third of respondents have never had the experience of observing a fellow teacher's class. Therefore, this supports O'Leary's (2020) contention that there may be a lack of engagement in classroom observations. This does present a concerning situation that there are plenty of teachers in the Japanese university education system whose professional development may not be fully realised due to never observing another teacher's class. It could be argued that those teachers are not gaining alternative perspectives which can help teachers to continue to develop and hone their craft.

From the respondents who had observed other teachers' classes, the breakdown of who and how many times they had observed reveals some interesting points. Firstly, it is notable that by a clear margin the respondents had observed fellow teachers more often than the other groups. One plausible reason for this could be that there are more teachers the respondents consider "fellow" teachers at their institution than "senior" and "junior" teachers. Therefore, there could be a statistically higher chance of this type of observation taking place. However, another reason could be that these are the types of observation relationships that teachers find the most productive, as the results relating to RQ2 suggest. If teachers are able to be in control of observing classrooms themselves, it seems that observing peers, or "fellow" teachers is the most popular option. This may be because it removes any sense of hierarchy and therefore the potential for feelings of being judged the observed teacher may experience, and the feelings of having to evaluate and guide the senior teacher may be inclined to do.

RQ2. How was the experience of being an observer?

To support the previous point about the frequency of observations of fellow teachers being higher than the other subsets, it is no surprise to see the results reveal that this combination was seen to be the most useful to the observer. The results in both the quantitative and qualitative sections of the survey show that the teachers involved prefer to observe fellow teachers to senior and junior teachers. In particular, it is notable that the comments from the respondents were extremely positive (91%) which points to how teachers view this form of observation as more effective than others.

Results for observing both senior and junior teachers appear to be less favourable, as highlighted by Respondent C's comments. These reactions to observing senior teachers might not be in the majority, but they do indicate a negative feeling that should not be ignored. However, despite this, it is important to accept that classroom observation, in any form, can have positive results for the observer as long as it is conducted in a positive manner. Teachers can be sensitive regarding their classes being observed and the notion of being judged by another teacher may lead to anxiety. Therefore, to make classroom observations be seen more positively, in all situations, careful feedback and discussion between the observer and teacher is essential. This should lead to both parties feeling more relaxed and able to focus on the developmental, and collegiate aspects of the observation, rather than an evaluative process which could create an uncomfortable atmosphere and result in a negative impression of classroom observations.

The positive comments from this research reinforce the notion that once teachers are comfortable observing one another, it is a process that is ideally conducted regularly. Conducting classroom observations could lead to more

opportunities for the observer to, as Respondent D comments, “come out with new ideas”. There should be no limit on the number of times this is done because there will always be opportunities to learn, and then bring that knowledge into their own classroom practice.

This research seems to suggest that there is a benefit for EFL teachers in observing other teachers. The results of this study indicate a relatively high level of positivity in observing others, especially fellow teachers. As a result, there should be a greater focus, than is currently the case, on the advantages of classroom observation for the observer compared to the teacher being observed because it is clearly a mutually beneficial process when done with sensitivity and professionalism.

Implications

The findings of this study carry implications for university language professionals and administrators throughout Japan who seek to prioritise classroom observation as a mechanism for continuous professional development. This cohort of EFL university teachers indicates that reflective practice in the guise of classroom observations does not feature prominently and more is needed.

First, while hierarchical observations are plausible for novice teachers being mentored by more experienced educators, the focus should shift to a more collaborative peer observation experience as teachers progress through their careers. Institutions should implement strategies that detach evaluations as a function of peer observation and develop trust, collegiality, and a shared vision. This chimes with Richards (1998), echoing the perspectives of Fanselow (1988) and Cosh (1999), who advocate for a more balanced devolution of power among respondents. He recommends that teachers view themselves as co-researchers in the context of peer observations (Richards, 1998). However, universities or groups of teachers embarking on classroom observations must proceed cautiously, as the perception that classroom observations equate to evaluation seems to be deeply embedded in people’s minds.

Another practical challenge universities should consider when implementing classroom observations is scheduling conflicts, particularly when educators teach simultaneously and are prevented from visiting another class. However, this barrier should not be insurmountable as teachers or administrators can employ other methods of dialogic reflection mediated by collaboration. Mann and Walsh (2017) propose several tools such as ad hoc self-observation, online discussion forums, critical incident analysis, structured reflection and video and dialogic reflection (p. 225). These alternatives can enable practitioners to critically assess their pedagogy at times convenient for all involved.

Limitations

Despite the findings, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample size was limited to 54 respondents teaching at universities in Japan and is not representative of the entire university EFL industry in Japan. Future studies should include more teachers in tertiary education. Second, some questionnaire items were optional, leading to missing responses. Additionally, this study did not ascertain the specific motivations for observers’ participation in classroom observations. These could have been conducted voluntarily, as an evaluation process or within the framework of a university-wide program. Further studies should clarify these underlying motivations.

Furthermore, certain terms used in the survey lacked precision. For example, the meanings of only two points on the Likert Scale were explained and all points should be clarified in future research. Also, the term ‘Junior teacher’ never defined the intended meaning of ‘Junior’ as the overall years of experience as a teacher, and could have been misinterpreted by respondents. Finally, this study did not account for variables such as respondents’ age, levels of formal teacher training, range of institutions involved and how these institutions approach classroom observations. Subsequent research might consider these factors, as they are likely to influence the findings.

Conclusion

This study provides some insights into the prevalence of classroom observations and the lived experiences of EFL university practitioners in Japan. The results are consistent with previous commentary about the lack of engagement in classroom observations. However, these findings can inform universities’ decision-making processes regarding integrating classroom observation into ongoing reflective practice initiatives, especially peer observation.

Focusing on the observer’s role instead of the teacher being observed also takes a less common approach to a subject that has been studied more often. This will hopefully lead to more teachers realising the benefits and challenges of the practice for both parties involved. A broader understanding of the issues surrounding classroom observations could contribute to more positive perceptions of their potential to support professional development and engagement within the teaching community.

In summary, classroom observations as a mechanism for reflective practice appear to be underutilised and inconsistently applied within the Japanese EFL university context. While most respondents have observed another teacher’s class, many have not engaged in such practices. Moreover, the frequency of these observation visits is notably low. To address these shortcomings, universities in Japan should consider implementing collaborative and dialogic reflection among peers that distribute power equally among instructors. Realising the potential benefits of classroom

observations, it may be necessary for institutions to provide sustained support and allocate time for a framework built on trust and collegiality. If these conditions are met, universities and their educators could create a more robust foundation for fostering reflective teaching practices.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. How long have you been teaching English at university level in Japan?
2. Have you ever observed another English teacher's class at a university in Japan?
3. How many times have you observed another English teacher's class at a university in Japan and who have you observed?

	Never observed	1-3 times	4-6 times	7-9 times	10 or more
Senior English Teacher					
Fellow English Teacher					
Junior English Teacher					

4. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all and 5 very useful, how useful was this for you in terms of professional development?

	1	2	3	4	5
Senior English Teacher					
Fellow English Teacher					
Junior English Teacher					

5. If you have been observed by a "Senior English teacher", please comment on how the experience was for you.
6. If you have been observed by a "Fellow English teacher", please comment on how the experience was for you.
7. If you have been observed by a "Junior English teacher", please comment on how the experience was for you.

How to cite the article:

Vaivrand, C. V. B. (2024). Translanguaging effects on anxiety and participation in young eikaiwa students. *PanSIG Journal*, 10(1), 218–226. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPanSIGJ10.1-27>

Research Article

Translanguaging Effects on Anxiety and Participation in Young Eikaiwa Students

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of using multiple languages in English language classrooms for Japanese students and the benefits of translanguaging, highlighting its potential to reduce anxiety, increase student participation, and enhance learning outcomes. Factors such as student motivation, classroom environment, and individual abilities are considered in relation to active participation and enjoyment in language learning. Questionnaires were used to gauge reactions of 22 participants. Findings suggest that, while translanguaging can be a valuable tool for scaffolding English knowledge and motivating learners, caution is necessary to prevent overreliance on students' native language. Given the limited sample size, the study calls for further research involving larger and more diverse participants to deepen the understanding of translanguaging's effects on academic growth and communication abilities. By addressing the limitations and leveraging the benefits of translanguaging, educators can optimize language learning experiences for young English learners in *eikaiwa* (English conversation school) settings.

本研究では、英会話を学ぶ小中学生を対象に、トランスランゲージングの学習効果を検証した。その結果、トランスランゲージングは生徒の不安を軽減し、参加意欲を高め、学習成果を向上させる可能性が示唆された。さらに、生徒のモチベーションや教室の環境、個々の能力などが、言語学習における積極的な参加と楽しさとの関連性に影響を与えることも考察された。このように、トランスランゲージングは英語学習の基盤を支え、学習者のモチベーションを促進する有力な手法である。一方で、生徒が母国語に過度に依存しないよう配慮する必要がある。今後は、さらに多様な参加者を含む研究を進めることで、トランスランゲージングが学力向上やコミュニケーション能力に与える影響を理解するための基盤を築いていく必要がある。

There has been much debate surrounding which is the best method for teaching Japanese students English. In 2017, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) revised the Course of Study, urging teachers to conduct English lessons entirely in English, minimizing the use of students' native language (L1). MEXT also advocated a transition from the traditional grammar-translation method to a communicative approach ("All-English" approach), which differs significantly from the previous Course of Study (MEXT, 2008). Although MEXT advocated minimal L1 use, recent research suggests that an entirely English-only approach may not be the most effective for Japanese students (Mizukura, 2020; Torikai, 2017; Weschler, 1997). Furthermore, Japanese teachers of English may not be capable of English-only lessons, as they may not have had the training needed for that teaching style. Incorporating translanguaging—the concept of utilizing learners' full linguistic repertoire in the classroom instruction—could provide a more balanced and effective method.

Several pedagogical practices and terms currently involve using L1 in teaching English to English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, e.g., code-switching and L1/L2 usage. Some examples of L1 use include translating words or sentences from English into the learner's L1. However, in the current study, we adopted the term pedagogical translanguaging for two reasons. First, this concept challenges the traditional view that languages should be kept separate, encouraging the use of multiple languages in the classroom. Second, if the goal is for Japanese learners to speak English, ignoring students' linguistic resources through a monolingual approach appears counterproductive (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020), especially if the aim is to develop multilingual skills, as recommended by MEXT. Alongside the two reasons given, translanguaging can also foster the creation of translanguaging spaces, which reduce learners' language-learning anxiety and promote a greater sense of belonging within the classroom (Back et al., 2020).

Despite MEXT advocating an "All-English" approach, empirical research on its effectiveness for Japanese learners, particularly younger students, is limited. Previous studies demonstrate translanguaging's positive effects on high school and adult learners in Japan (Aoyama, 2020; Azami & Yamaguchi, 2015; Sakai & Shimura, 2019). However, research on how translanguaging impacts younger learners in *eikaiwa* (English conversation school) settings is scarce. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating how translanguaging affects the attitudes of young learners in *eikaiwa* schools and identifying factors influencing their enjoyment and active classroom participation.

We aim to suggest possible translanguaging pedagogical directions for teachers of young learners and highlight points of caution when adopting translanguaging. This contribution deepens the understanding of the translanguaging literature. The current study is relevant given the limited research on translanguaging in Japanese contexts, particularly in eikaiwa settings targeting young English language learners.

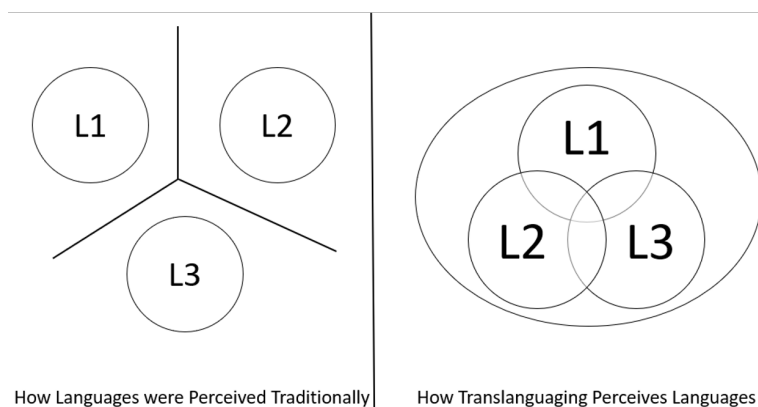
Literature Review

The literature review will be organized into three sections. The first paragraph provides a brief overview of translanguaging, while the second paragraph examines learner anxiety and explores how translanguaging has supported learners in various contexts. The final paragraph focuses on the application of translanguaging within Japanese contexts.

Translanguaging was first conceptualized by Williams (1994) in his doctoral thesis after observing Welsh bilingual education in schools, where translanguaging referred to a pedagogical practice that “deliberately switches the language mode of input and output in bilingual classrooms” (Lewis et al., 2012, p.663). Williams (2002) defined translanguaging as “receiving information in one language and then using it in the other language” (p.42). Since then, various definitions have emerged (Leung & Valadés, 2019; Vogel & Garcia, 2017; Wei, 2018a; Wei, 2018b), covering both pedagogical practices and sociolinguistics. Garcia and Wei (2014) offered an accessible definition, describing translanguaging as an approach to language use and bilingual education that views bilingualism not as two distinct language systems but as a single linguistic repertoire with features socially constructed as belonging to separate languages. Cenoz and Gorter (2020) added that, while languages are distinct, they are fluid and holistic with no clear boundaries (see also Leung & Valadés, 2019). This definition is visualized in Figure 1, depicting the traditional perception of languages before the emergence of translanguaging and the current view when observed through a translanguaging lens.

Figure 1

Traditional Language Perception Versus Translanguaging Perspective



Foreign language anxiety was first identified by Horwitz et al. (1986). According to Song (2024), foreign-language anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon arising from the “particularities of the language learning process and its connection to classroom language acquisition” (p.795). Consequently, it cannot be attributed to a single, easily identifiable factor. Nonetheless, in the context of translanguaging, empirical studies have demonstrated that incorporating translanguaging into classroom instruction reassures learners, enhances their confidence, and reduces anxiety and emotional stress (Back et al., 2020; Dryden et al., 2021; Sanjaya et al., 2023).

Empirical studies in Japan have explored the effects of using students’ L1 in English classes for Japanese EFL learners. Azami and Yamaguchi (2015) assessed 240 high school students, finding that, while English-only classes were challenging to understand, they improved students’ four language skills. However, the use of L1 was beneficial for understanding complex concepts such as grammar. Sakai and Shimura (2019) found that, over three years, high school students supported L1 use in English classes, particularly for explaining language structures, which deepened their understanding of L2. Aoyama (2020) observed that high school students used L1 during L2 communication activities not due to a lack of linguistic resources but to aid peers’ comprehension. Aoyama concluded that L1 use indicated a desire to employ L2 more effectively.

Thus, previous studies in both global and Japanese contexts have demonstrated translanguaging’s positive effects on Japanese EFL learners’ attitudes and learning outcomes in high school students. Given these findings, eikaiwa businesses that emphasize English-only instruction might benefit from implementing translanguaging, as this could be more advantageous for students given it can help scaffold the learners’ learning and lower the learners’ language-learning anxiety. However, while translanguaging has displayed promise for high-school—and older—students, its effects on younger students have not been examined, since literature assessing learners’ anxiety and participation in Japanese eikaiwa contexts is scarce. Additionally, the effects of L1 usage on young learners remain under explored,

hence this study's aim to investigate translanguaging's impact on young learners attending eikaiwa schools. Specifically, this study addresses these two gaps in the literature with the following research questions: How does translanguaging affect the attitudes and anxiety of young learners of English who attend eikaiwa schools over six months? What learner and class factors influence enjoyment and active participation within the class when adopting translanguaging?

Methodology

A quantitative approach was employed to investigate the effects of translanguaging on young learners. Before conducting the study—spread over six months, from October 2023 to March 2024—the researcher obtained consent from students, parents, and the school. The study participants comprised 22 language learners ranging from those below Eiken 5th grade (below CEFR A1) to those who had achieved Eiken 2nd grade (CEFR A2–B1). The students were aged from 9 (elementary school third grade) to 14 years (junior high school second grade), with an average age of 11.1 years. The researcher taught all participants, who had been attending the eikaiwa school since April 2023 and had studied English for at least six months. Based on their Eiken proficiency and language level, the students were divided into three categories: beginner (Eiken 5th grade or below, $n = 13$), intermediate (Eiken 4th grade, $n = 4$), and advanced (Eiken 3rd grade or above, $n = 5$). The lessons were conducted primarily in English, with translanguaging used to scaffold students' understanding of the content (e.g., translating vocabulary and passages, and providing instructions). To ensure honesty and accuracy in self-reported data, the researcher informed the eikaiwa school of the teaching methods and explained the new classroom environment to all students to prevent any surprises.

Data Collection

Data were collected using the following three primary methods to provide a deeper understanding of translanguaging's effect on young learners: 1) pre-and post-test questionnaires, 2) vocabulary tests conducted by the eikaiwa school, and 3) reflection sheets along with audio recordings for every class held over the six-month period.

Pre-test and Post-test Questionnaire

The students were asked to fill out the questionnaire in October 2023 and again in March 2024. These questionnaires served as pre- and post-tests to gauge students' reactions to translanguaging and its implementation. The questionnaires included seven factors: foreign language aptitude, difficulty of language learning, nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, motivation and expectations, anxiety, and self-efficacy. The first five factors were adapted from Yamada (2020), the sixth from Kumada and Okumura (2017), and the seventh from Kashiwahara et al. (2017). All questionnaires used a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicating 'strongly agree.' Additionally, while the original questionnaires were in Japanese, the language used was modified (e.g., rephrased in simpler terms or sentences) to match the learners' proficiency levels in Japanese, as the participants were young learners with limited vocabulary.

Vocabulary Tests

The eikaiwa school where the study was conducted used vocabulary tests to assess students' proficiency and encourage English vocabulary study at home. Students received a list of approximately 100 vocabulary words in October and again in January. These words, selected by the eikaiwa school, were basic vocabulary items that would appear on the Eiken grade 5 (below CEFR A1 Level) test. Vocabulary tests were then conducted approximately two to three months later to assess students' abilities. The word list distributed in October was tested in December, and the January list was tested in March. The maximum possible score on the tests was 100. The average score of the participants for the December test was 63.2, while that for the March test was 52.9. Due to privacy considerations, the complete tests cannot be disclosed. However, to provide readers with an understanding of the test format, examples of the vocabulary included topics such as colors, days of the week, and weather. The tests required students to perform tasks such as writing the meanings of target vocabulary words in either English or Japanese, matching vocabulary words to their correct meanings, and identifying the appropriate words from a list of options based on corresponding images.

Reflection Sheet

Reflection sheets were employed in each class to examine how students reacted to translanguaging. Adapted from Baba (2012), the reflection sheets were designed to assess active participation, class enjoyment, learning outcomes, and difficulties encountered, while including space for comments or questions.

Audio Recordings

From October 2023 onwards, the researcher taught eight classes, totaling 140 lessons, all of which were recorded using a voice recorder. The voice recorder was placed at the center of the classroom table to capture as many learner

voices and utterances as possible. To measure the ratio of English to Japanese spoken in each lesson, the researcher listened to each recording and used stopwatches to time the duration of English and Japanese spoken by the teacher manually, following Kaneko (1992). The total spoken time (in seconds) of English and that of Japanese were calculated separately and then added together. Finally, the ratio of English to Japanese spoken time was determined by dividing the total time of English by the combined total time, following a method from Kaneko (1992) which was adapted. For instance, the teacher spoke for a total of 1,065.26 seconds, 398.20 seconds of which were in English, with 667.06 seconds in Japanese. By dividing the total speaking time (1,065.26 seconds) by the time spoken in English (398.20 seconds), it was calculated that English accounted for 37% of the teacher's speech, while Japanese comprised the remaining 63%.

Data Analysis

To address research question 1 (RQ1), pre- and post-test results from the questionnaire were analyzed using JASP software, employing paired t-tests to assess significance. Cohen's d was used to evaluate effect sizes, categorized as 0.2 for small, 0.5 for medium, and 0.7 for large effects. Given the relatively small sample size, significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for significant findings and $p < 0.1$ for potential trends when implementing translanguaging. This study aimed to identify measurable trends and relationships, and so a quantitative framework was necessary.

For research question 2 (RQ2), a generalized linear mixed model (GLMM) analysis was chosen using R. The fixed factors included active participation and enjoyment, derived from student responses on reflection sheets. The following eight factors were considered as random effects: class level, class order, English ratio, duration of English spoken, student age, study time at home, vocabulary test scores, and Eiken proficiency levels. Significance thresholds were set at $p < 0.05$ for significant results and $p < 0.1$ for possible trends.

Results

Questionnaire Results

As regards to analyzing translanguaging's effects on students, due to the limited space, only factors with $p < 0.1$ that were relevant to the study were included, while non-significant results from the questionnaire were omitted. The following section focuses on the significant factors related to the research questions from the paired t-test, followed by the GLMM results.

Difficulty of Language Learning

The results in Table 1 reveal several interesting outcomes regarding students' beliefs. Q4 indicates that translanguaging significantly reduced students' perception that learning English is difficult. The drop in the mean is meaningful as the results indicate that implementing translanguaging significantly decreases the perception that English is difficult. These results suggest that translanguaging positively affects reducing the students' belief that learning English is challenging.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Participants' FLSA score

Questionnaire Question	Mean		p	Cohen's d	SE Cohen's d
	Pre-test	Post-test			
Q4 English is a difficult language to learn	3.909	3.500	**0.047	0.45	0.209

Note. All questions included in the table were originally in Japanese and translated by the researcher.

** $p < 0.05$

Learning and Communication Strategies

Table 2 presents the results from the questionnaire on learning and communication strategies. Statistics indicate that, after experiencing translanguaging, students considered speaking English with good pronunciation and practicing pronunciation by repeating after a recorded native speaker to be less important. Additionally, students began to believe that on-the-spot practice and guessing the meaning of words were sufficient, rather than relying on repetitive practice. This suggests that translanguaging may influence how students perceive and approach communication in English.

Table 2

Pre-test and Post-test Questionnaire Results for Learning and Communication Strategies

Questionnaire Question	Mean		<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	SE Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Pre-test	Post-test			
Q7 Speaking English with good pronunciation is important	4.591	3.773	**0.006	0.650	0.322
Q13 If you do not know a word, guessing its meaning is fine	3.091	3.636	*0.076	−0.398	0.333
Q17 Practicing repeatedly is important	4.500	4.273	*0.096	0.371	0.205
Q24 Listening to pronunciation from a CD and practicing is important	4.409	3.955	**0.005	0.677	0.199

Note. All questions included in the table were originally in Japanese and translated by the researcher.

p*<0.1, *p*<0.05

Anxiety

The questionnaire results revealed that students experienced anxiety when they did not understand the teacher's instructions during class. Furthermore, students appeared to feel safer when their native language was used in the class. Interestingly, a trend seemed to exist whereby students did not feel scared to make mistakes in the English classroom, which could be considered one of the positive aspects of adopting translanguaging.

Table 3

Pre-test and Post-test Questionnaire Results for Anxiety

Questionnaire Question	Mean		<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	SE Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Pre-test	Post-test			
Q1 I get scared if I cannot understand the teacher's instructions during class	3.000	3.500	**0.031	−0.494	0.198
Q3 I am not afraid of committing mistakes in English class	2.818	3.409	*0.056	−0.432	0.267
Q10 I feel reassured when Japanese is used in the English class	3.846	4.182	*0.069	−0.408	0.220

Note. All questions included in the table were originally in Japanese and translated by the researcher.

p*<0.1, *p*<0.05

GLMM Factor Analysis

Results regarding the factors influencing active participation and enjoyment in the class are discussed in this section. Although seven factors were analyzed, only the amount of time the teacher spoke in English exhibited significant results for active participation and enjoyment (Table 4), with the plot model indicating negative results. These findings suggest that excessive teacher talk, even in the target language, leads to lower active participation and enjoyment in the class.

Table 4

Students' Active Participation and Enjoyment in Class

Factors	Active Participation <i>p</i>	Plot Model Effect	Enjoyment <i>p</i>	Plot Model Effect
English spoken time (Sec.)	**0.013	Negative	**0.047	Negative

Note. All intercepts were *p*<0.001.

***p*<0.05

The one-way factor analysis revealed the factors negatively affecting active participation and enjoyment. To determine the factors positively influencing active participation and enjoyment, further factor analysis tests were conducted using the GLMM. The final results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Factors Influencing Active Participation and Enjoyment

Interaction	Active Participation <i>p</i>	Enjoyment <i>p</i>
Level of class	**0.026	*0.076
Individual student characteristics	**0.001	**0.013
Level of class × individual student characteristics	**0.003	**0.016
Vocabulary test score	**0.019	**0.019
Individual student characteristics	**0.020	*0.056
Vocabulary test score × individual student characteristics	**0.035	*0.065
Level of class	*0.067	0.183
Vocabulary test score	**0.018	**0.014
Level of class × vocabulary test score	**0.047	0.103

Note. All intercepts were $p < 0.001$ and were positive on the plot model.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$

The results indicate that three factors, 1) class level, 2) individual student characteristics, and 3) vocabulary test scores, significantly influence active participation and enjoyment. These findings suggest that, for students to actively participate and enjoy the class, they need to both match the class level they are in and maintain that level while studying with others.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine translanguaging's effects on students and factors influencing active class participation and enjoyment in the class. Regarding RQ1, the study's results indicated that translanguaging helps reduce students' anxiety, negative perceptions and attitudes toward learning English. They also revealed that students expect teachers to use their L1 in the classroom. These findings align with those of Aoyama (2020) and Sakai and Shimura (2019), which emphasize the effectiveness of using L1. However, the study identified some drawbacks: students indicated that repetitive practice was unnecessary, and correct pronunciation was less important. This may be because adopting translanguaging does not forbid the use of L1, allowing students to rely on their L1 when they do not understand each other. Additionally, as students primarily communicated with the teacher and their peers, these familiar listeners could understand them despite their accents. Another factor regarding these results could be that the teacher did not emphasize the importance of pronunciation, instead encouraging students to increase their overall use of the language.

The results imply that implementing translanguaging in the English classroom can shift students' focus from form to meaning. While this aligns with the overall goal of the MEXT (2017) Course of Study, it raises the question of whether this result is beneficial for students' future intelligibility and comprehensibility. Japanese students who use translanguaging may achieve comprehensibility among their peers, but their intelligibility when speaking to native English speakers might be compromised, as the native speakers may not be familiar with the Japanese pronunciation of English words.

While pedagogical translanguaging's greatest merit is the use and transaction between the student's mother tongue and the target language, this can also be its biggest pitfall. Williams (2002) contended that, for translanguaging to be effective, both teachers and learners must be familiar and proficient with the student's mother tongue and the target language to some extent. In the eikaiwa environment, where students are fluent in both English (to the extent they know it) and Japanese, they may tend to overly rely on their L1. While translanguaging can help scaffold students' learning, it could potentially become a crutch if students rely on their L1 excessively. This reliance could pose challenges for students' future interactions with non-Japanese speakers. Thus, careful consideration of L1 reliance is essential when implementing translanguaging in the classroom. Strategies to prevent L1 overreliance include maintaining a consistent class flow and using set phrases and instructions in L2 that students hear frequently in class.

Regarding RQ2, the GLMM results indicated that excessive teacher talk decreases both students' active participation and enjoyment in the class. This is understandable, as excessive teacher talk can render learners passive and uninterested (Pawlak et al., 2020). Further factor analysis identified three components contributing to active participation and enjoyment: the classroom environment, individual student characteristics, and student academic ability. These findings align with those of other empirical studies (Abdullah et al., 2012; Sakka et al., 2022). Abdullah et al. (2012) summarized several factors influencing positive student learning, including student personality, instructor skills, classroom environment, and peer interactions. Sakka et al. (2022) additionally concluded that teacher talk influences the student learning process, underscoring teachers' significant role in shaping the classroom environment. While many studies and teachers stress the importance of exposing students to extensive English input, this study's results suggest that exposure should not solely rely on teachers, as the GLMM yielded negative results. Instead, this

study suggests the importance of diversifying English exposure through methods such as worksheets, textbooks, communication activities, and video clips (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016).

Conclusion

This study investigated translanguaging's effects on students' attitudes within eikaiwa schools, examining the factors affecting students' active participation and enjoyment. The findings indicated that translanguaging positively affects students by lowering their anxiety levels and the perception that learning English is challenging. However, the results also indicated that translanguaging may have potentially become a crutch for students in the long run, yielding overreliance on their L1, which could hinder their language development.

This study offers several pedagogical implications for EFL English educators and eikaiwa teachers, highlighting both the potential benefits and points of caution when implementing translanguaging. The study demonstrated that translanguaging can help learners become more open to the idea that English is not difficult and reduce their anxiety in eikaiwa contexts. Using students' L1 can motivate learners and scaffold their English knowledge. For example, it can support learners striving beyond their current English level or facing challenging units, potentially shifting negative perceptions over time. The results also indicated that active participation and enjoyment vary depending on the learner's proficiency. Thus, for advanced learners, increasing the use of L2 is advisable. However, while translanguaging offers several advantages, it risks becoming a crutch that hampers student progress. Therefore, when educators implement translanguaging, understanding its potential benefits, limitations, and possible after-effects on learners is important, as translanguaging can be a double-edged sword.

Although this study focused on eikaiwa school students, its findings can also be applied to other EFL contexts. For instance, as this study showed the benefits of employing L1, using more of the students' L1 within the EFL classroom when instructing for lessons or activities is advisable. Additionally, reducing the amount of teacher talk to increase target language exposure is recommended, as is adjusting the L1 to L2 ratio depending on individual learner abilities and the classroom environment.

Despite yielding positive outcomes, the study has several limitations. First, the participants were limited to only 22 students, restricting the results' generalizability. Second, the study spanned only six months, which may not capture translanguaging's full effects over the long term. Finally, the study focused solely on how translanguaging affects students' learning attitudes and did not consider their academic growth.

Future research should address these limitations by including a larger, more diverse sample with participants from multiple eikaiwa institutions. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the effects of translanguaging and its benefits and after-effects on EFL learners would provide deeper insights into pedagogical translanguaging. Furthermore, collecting qualitative data through interviews to understand students' reactions to translanguaging could yield deeper insights. Transcribing and coding lessons that were recorded to examine how teachers implement translanguaging in the classroom would also be necessary for further analysis to effectively portray translanguaging for students.

In conclusion, while translanguaging has its demerits, its benefits are immense. Acknowledging the limitations and the possible after-effects translanguaging may have on the learner allows teachers to realize its full potential. By addressing the limitations and building on the findings from this study, future research can further advance the understanding of translanguaging and its potential outcomes, ultimately contributing to more successful language learning outcomes for young English learners in general.

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2024

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VOLUME 10



PanSIG Journal
Selected articles from the PanSIG 2024 Conference
Edited by the PanSIG Journal Editorial Board
www.pansig.org | www.jalt.org
ISSN: 2759-9965