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Contents

Invited Papers

Involving Everyone in Enhancing Quality of Life in Language Education: Explorations and Insights from Praxis

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Abstract

This paper probes the potential of practitioner research (specifically Exploratory Practice) to contribute to theoretical and practical developments in quality learning outcomes in language teaching for a globalized world. It considers approaches to learning, teaching and researching in language classrooms in diverse situations, and examines the ways in which practitioner researchers have worked towards their goals of encouraging quality learning outcomes. It concludes that there is no 'one solution for all', arguing instead that the highest quality learning outcomes must focus on motivation, agency, active learning, self-efficacy and the desire to continue learning. Successful outcomes are then predicated on the co-production of knowledge with/by learners, teachers, and researchers as they explore their own praxis.

Dedicated to the memory of Craig Smith. He was a warm and gentle man with delightful humor and keen intelligence. He is greatly missed.

Introduction

Debates around ensuring quality of learning outcomes in language teaching in an era of globalization are of urgent concern for the field. Yet until recently, the potential of

practitioner research to contribute to theoretical and practical developments has been overlooked. In this paper I orient my discussion to the theme of the 57th JACET Convention: '*Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education for Globalization.*' I examine how quality learning outcomes in English education might be encouraged and explore ways in which practitioner researchers around the world have worked towards this goal. In doing so, I highlight the fact that there is no one solution to fit all situations, but rather a range of contextually appropriate approaches which might productively be explored for and by the practitioners most affected by any changes: learners and teachers.

An initial question to consider concerns what is meant by quality learning outcomes. How quality is defined, how learning is defined, and how outcomes are decided upon and measured, are central to the debate. Each definition is at once influenced by, and a reflection of, a cultural construct: in other words, they reflect / are influenced by the ways in which quality of learning, and of outcomes, are constructed. I posit that the highest quality learning outcomes are integral to, and emanate from, highly motivated learners and teachers investigating praxis. Such outcomes include active learning, confident use of language, and the desire to continue. Quality learning outcomes, then, are enticing, empowering, and sustainable. They are intimately connected to notions of respect, mutual development, and collegiality as knowledge is co-produced with, by, and for the learners themselves.

These themes are explicitly expressed in the Exploratory Practice framework of principles for practitioner research as described below (Allwright & Hanks, 2009). This framework prioritizes enhancing quality of life and working for understanding as learners, teachers, and all those involved in language learning share their puzzles, their investigations, and their findings (see Hanks, 2017a, 2019). Including *all* participants (learners, teachers, curriculum developers, teacher educators and policy-makers) working together to investigate pedagogic practices in primary, secondary and tertiary education thus provides an innovative approach to analyzing the processes of learning and teaching.

Seven principles for inclusive practitioner research

The 'what' issues:

1. Focus on *quality of life* as the fundamental issue.

2. Work to *understand* it, before thinking about solving problems.

The 'who' issues:

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.

The 'how' issues:

6. Make it a *continuous* enterprise.

7. *Minimise the burden* by integrating the work for understanding into normal pedagogic

practice.

(Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 260)

This paper examines how we might involve everyone in enhancing not only *quality of learning* outcomes, but also *quality of life* in language education. It shines a light on the insights that practitioners have gained from exploring practices, and their contributions to theorizing their pedagogy in different institutions in different parts of the world. The paper encompasses work ongoing in in Brazil, China, Japan, Turkey, the UK and other geographically situated cultures. Concurrently, it includes *institutional* cultures: primary schools, secondary schools, universities and teacher training colleges (tertiary) and private language schools. The broader literature (see Hanks, 2019, for a state-of-the-art overview) encompasses a range of disciplinary cultures, e.g. teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL); English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), Second Language Acquisition, and Teacher Education as well as Business Studies, Healthcare, and

Psychology. Studies encompassing institutional and disciplinary distinctions are included, as I consider here the conference theme of ways in which quality learning outcomes in primary to tertiary education for globalization may be assured.

Quality of learning outcomes; Quality of life

Historically, the field has moved from ideas about teachers researching their classrooms as part of curriculum development (Stenhouse, 1975), to those linking research and pedagogy (Prabhu, 1987; Allwright, 1993; Hanks, 2017b). Powerful arguments have been made for the value of practitioner research (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001; Johnson & Golombek, 2011), since it is contextually relevant to educators and theoretically grounded, tethering theory to practice.

Borg (2013) rightly suggests that practitioner research "has undeniable transformative potential to enrich and improve the work of teachers, the experience of learners, and the effectiveness and credibility of organizations" (p. 230). However, Borg's focus is narrow, focusing only on the contribution of teachers as practitioner-researchers. He overlooks the agency potential (Gieve & Miller, 2006) of learners involved in learning and teaching. We know, for example, that learners are "not just communicators and problem solvers, but whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities" (Kramsch, 2006, p. 251). This has begun to have a significant impact on the way we now view learning, teaching, and practitioner research. Arguably, the quality of learning outcomes is governed by the commitment of practitioners to fully engaging with pedagogy, and exploring their praxis to the fullest, with curious and open minds.

In the search for enhanced quality of learning outcomes, the notion of competence in language teaching and learning has frequently been cited. The field has moved from a focus on communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) which dominated discussions in Applied Linguistics for decades, and remains relevant in language teaching/learning today, to symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2006) and intercultural competence. Understanding

intercultural competence is part of a complex, nuanced view of the world which encompasses classrooms, and language classrooms in particular. As Kramsch (2011) argues that "While communicative competence is characterized by the negotiation of intended meanings in authentic contexts of language use, intercultural competence has to do with far less negotiable discourse worlds"(p. 354).

For quality learning outcomes in language teaching/learning to be assured, these different competences need to be kept in play. Learners, and their teachers, navigate their way through these 'less negotiable discourse worlds' with difficulty, if they attempt to do so separately as individuals. If, on the other hand, we can acknowledge the complexities of this matrix, and collaborate actively, then there is a greater chance of success in the attempts of learners, teachers and researchers to understand these dynamic interactions.

Such a perspective is influenced by recent work on intercultural communication (Holliday et al., 2010). Holliday (2013) posits that 'small cultures' are created by people locally, where they co-create rules of behavior, in keeping with their (newly formed) social group. Language classes are examples of such small cultures in the process of formation. Each class is unique in terms of the people within it, their interests, concerns and enthusiasms. They may accept international, national, and institutional assumptions about what constitutes a 'class' or what consists of appropriate classroom behavior from learners or teachers. And they create their own rules of behavior and interaction. These are unique to each group of people as they work co-operatively to co-produce their knowledge of learning and teaching.

As Allwright and Hanks (2009) argue, "learners are both unique individuals and social beings who are capable of taking learning seriously, of taking independent decisions, and of developing as practitioners of learning" (p. 15). This proposition foregrounds the agency of learners in assuring quality learning outcomes in language education. It is only with or through the learners' contributions that learning/teaching goals can be achieved. In other

words, the learners, alongside the teachers (and others), make a significant contribution to the ways in which a class is conducted, hence to the learning and teaching within it, and thus to the quality of learning outcomes.

The notion of teachers and learners working together as practitioners who are not the *objects* of study, but rather active agents in developing understandings of learning and teaching (see Allwright, 2003; Tajino, 2009) is crucial if learning outcomes are to go beyond mechanical (and possibly unrealistic) statements of 'by the end of the lesson they will have learned the present perfect' or similar. Co-production of knowledge, with the aim of developing mutual understandings, is encapsulated in Exploratory Practice, where "students and teachers [and others] engage in constructing rules of interaction, social positioning and social interaction, and mutually acceptable/ understandable ways of behaving" (Hanks, 2017a, p. 276). As they do so, and as they begin to articulate their ideas to one another, practitioners are "developing an enriched 'classroom awareness', by which the nature of the experience of classroom life becomes positively enhanced" (Gieve & Miller, 2006, p. 41). Hence the drive for all those involved in language education to develop their understandings *from* practice; and share their understandings *for* practice (see Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Yoshida et al., 2009). The goal of 'quality learning outcomes', then, is nothing less than enhanced Quality of Life in the classroom, for quality of life, in the shape of motivation (Ushioda, 2016), self-efficacy (Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2015) and wellbeing (Hanks, 2019) is the key to learning effectively.

The following section discusses examples of studies which involved learners, teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers in different institutions around the world. Ranging from primary to secondary to tertiary education, and including curriculum design and teacher education as well as learning and teaching in EAP, EFL, and MFL, the studies show learners and teachers using their agency to theorize their own practice, whilst prioritizing learning and teaching.

Methodology

The methodology used in these Exploratory Practice studies was flexible and adaptable enough to be contextually appropriate for each setting. Essentially qualitative in conception, the approach exemplifies van Manen's (1990) argument that "to do research is always to question the way we experience the world" (p. 5), and to "investigate experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it" (p. 30). It welcomes the "socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13), and this results in the prize of "messy, uncertain, multivoiced texts" (p. 38) which reflect the complexities of research in language education.

As a methodological approach, Exploratory Practice also builds on Soft Systems Methodology or SSM (see Checkland & Poulter, 2006; Tajino, 2019). The latter promotes a flexible and culturally sensitive approach to research which is deliberately holistic. According to Tajino & Smith (2005), SSM encourages a view of research methodology which emphasizes people and processes as complex and dynamic, and which includes all rather than selecting a few. As Kato and Dalsky (2019) point out, SSM has clear resonances with Exploratory Practice: they both share "respect for the participants and seek to elicit their voices in the process of creating a shared understanding among them" (Kato & Dalsky, 2019, p. 125). Developing understanding is prioritized as a guiding principle of Exploratory Practice, as Hanks (1999; 2009; 2017a) has elucidated, with the aim of encouraging curiosity-driven, practitioner-led research which inquires into contextually-appropriate puzzles set by the learners and teachers themselves.

Exploratory Practice aims to integrate research and pedagogy (see Hanks, 2017b) so that learning and teaching are not interrupted, but are rather foregrounded as practitioners (learners and teachers, curriculum designers, and others) use their normal pedagogic activities

to include puzzlement and explorations. This is done by using 'Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities' or PEPAs, as explained by Moraes Bezerra & Miller (2015). By taking a familiar classroom activity such as a class survey or poster presentation, and re-purposing it to illuminate a puzzle as identified and investigated by the practitioners themselves, enquiries are qualitatively and creatively conducted to gain deeper understanding of the issue at hand (see also Miller, 2009; Soares, 2008). In the case studies below, I will explore the methods used and the insights gained as practitioners engage in this process-oriented form of research.

Exploratory Practice, then, is a methodological innovation: one whereby, in an actively co-produced enterprise, practitioners set the research agenda, work together to investigate what puzzles them, collaborate on collating and analyzing the findings, and discuss their interpretations. Phenomenological and interpretive in conception, it is subtly radical in the way it levels the playing field to include learners as well as teachers to abrogate the act of research and own not only the methods, but also the findings (see Wyatt et al., 2016). Exploratory Practice is a developmental step on from Freire's (1973) ideas of critical pedagogy in that despite its mild appearance, Exploratory Practice promises a radical re-think of the ontology and epistemology of research itself.

In each of the cases discussed below, practitioners were invited to provide their accounts of their research. They started by puzzling about their own experiences of language learning or teaching and began to form research questions. This enacts Principle 2 above "Work to *understand* [classroom life], before thinking about solving problems" (Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 260). In line with Principles 5, 6 and 7, participants then worked "cooperatively for mutual development" making it a sustainable and ongoing activity which was integrated into their "normal pedagogic practice" (Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 260). Practitioners talked about, and in many cases wrote about, their work in a thoroughly dialogic (see Bakhtin, 1986) approach to collaboratively analyzing and disseminating their findings.

New views on ethics

As with all research, there were ethical dilemmas to address which went beyond the usual issues of informed consent, voluntary participation, right to withdraw, confidentiality and anonymity. For example, students and teachers were keen to use their own names and wanted to be recognized as the authors of their own work. To anonymize them would be to deny their agency and reinforce the old hierarchy of research structures.

On the other hand, some neophyte researchers (particularly learners) may not have been fully aware of the consequences of being named. And even though they were given ample information, they may not have fully understood that in giving consent, their words might be cited in different contexts (e.g. large international conferences). Therefore, they were invited to select their preferred pseudonyms, and before publication, I revisited individuals to check that they were still willing to be published. One student in particular, who told a deeply personal story, had originally suggested the use of her real name, but readily agreed to a pseudonym. Three years later (as she was embarking on a PhD of her own) she told me she had a better understanding of the wider ethical/practical implications and was pleased with the choice of the moniker.

I posit that there is a rarely-considered ethical principle of ensuring that the contributions of learners, teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum developers, are fully recognized. The informed insights from these practitioners are as useful, if not more so, than those of a third-party researcher who can only scratch the surface of the complex world of classroom learning and teaching. A more egalitarian approach is needed: one which promotes the co-production of knowledge as a joint enterprise, and which fully acknowledges the contributions of those taking part. Following discussions with the participants I therefore provide here practitioner-researcher names as they themselves wished them to be published.

Education for globalization: Studies from around the world

In considering the notion of language education for globalization, I discuss a number of studies situated in schools and universities in Brazil, Japan, Turkey, and the UK. Exploratory Practice invites learners, alongside teachers, curriculum developers, teacher educators and policy-makers, to puzzle about their experiences and this surfaces important questions about motivation, learning and wellbeing.

Primary education

Caroline de Andrade is a teacher working in a primary school in a community in Rio de Janeiro which struggled with issues of crime, drugs, gang warfare and poverty. Caroline started by describing her situation as a young teacher endeavouring to teach English to her pupils: "They used to say that they hated me and they hated English too. It was the strongest resistance that I had ever seen" (Andrade, 2017, p. 150). She was puzzled about the behavior of her pupils, asking: *Why are some students not interested in learning English?* Some of the problems surrounding this issue appeared intractable, yet familiar to many teachers. Nevertheless she wanted to understand what was happening.

She therefore proposed a 'Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activity' or PEPA (see Moraes, Bezerra & Miller, 2015) to her class. This followed the Exploratory Practice principles of involving everyone to work for mutual development to understand *before* attempting to problem-solve. Caroline integrated her investigation into the pedagogy, by adapting a revision activity for language items that students had previously studied as part of the syllabus: 'expressing likes and dislikes'. Here, she adapted the activity by sharing her puzzle, and asking them to write their likes and dislikes related to the classroom. Their answers were surprising. She had assumed that they were inured to the ongoing noise, mess, and even fighting, in the class, but their responses indicated a desire for calm; she had assumed that their destructive behavior towards the course book (tearing out pages or

throwing the book on the floor) indicated a dislike for the book. Yet they said they found the characters interesting and fun. Tellingly, the students expressed surprise that their teacher genuinely wanted to listen to their opinions, and, perhaps as a result of being given space to share their views, their motivation gradually appeared to increase. As Caroline puts it, "The group finally had a voice in the English class and they started to show some motivation. […] They kept on misbehaving at the school, but observing the small changes, I started to feel more motivated too" (Andrade, 2017a, p. 152).

Despite their difficult circumstances, the children and the teachers came to school: education still continued, and although nothing could solve these major *problems*, they could gain *understanding* of one another's perspectives. In doing so they developed a mutual respect and a basis for making these small, but incremental changes towards a more hopeful way of engaging with learning and teaching, actively using their collective and separate agencies to make life in the classroom more liveable.

A defining characteristic of Exploratory Practice is to promote puzzling over problem-solving (see Hanks, 1999, 2009, 2017a for further discussion of the differences between puzzlement and problems). One outcome, sharply relevant for learning, is that puzzles can go beyond negative settings to incorporate positive thinking, as above, as the following narrative from Walewska Braga shows.

Also working as a teacher in Rio de Janeiro, Walewska describes her work with 11-year old children in her class. Their puzzle was: *Why do we have English classes only once a week?* (Braga in Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 186). Walewska was a seasoned Exploratory Practice teacher and therefore invited the children to investigate. The children prepared questions as a group, and went to interview the school principal and the person in charge of curriculum and scheduling. Interestingly, although these two were willing to be interviewed, the children felt that "students' opinions on their schedules were not welcomed" (Braga,

2009, p. 187). Nevertheless, the class continued working to understand the issue of timetabling, and even used their English lessons (they were learning English lexis for days of the week and school subjects) to create their own idealized timetables. Research and language learning were integrated in order to probe the question, develop the children's understandings of language and real-world issues. Motivated learners, relevant language learning and developing self-efficacy, were the truly high quality learning outcomes.

Secondary education

There is a rich seam of work reporting Exploratory Practice in secondary education in various contexts, most notably Brazil, Japan, Jordan, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates (see Gunn, 2003; Gunn, 2009; Hanks, 2019; Miller et al., 2015; Tajino et al., 2016). I will focus here on one story only: one told, in part, in the students' own words.

Carlos Magno and Daniela Lemos da Silva were high school students studying English at a state secondary school in Rio de Janeiro. They became interested in Exploratory Practice, and wanted to present their work at a local event for learners and teachers held at a nearby university. Their puzzle, which intrigued many others, was: *Why do we cheat?* They began by interviewing their classmates, and found a wealth of information, not only about methods of cheating in exams but also about the consequences of being caught. Not satisfied with this, they also interviewed teachers, who also admitted cheating to help some students for a variety of reasons. As Carlos (translated by Walewska Braga) put it:

> For some students the subject is difficult to study and learn and they cheat, for others cheating is a habit [...]. Good grades are important: no one wants to fail. We all agreed that cheating is wrong, students have to study. It is important for our future.
>
> (Magno & Braga, 2009, p. 210)

It is worth noting, again, that the aim in Exploratory Practice is to *understand* the phenomenon under scrutiny, not necessarily to solve the problem. In this case, understanding the reasons for cheating was far more important, for both learners and teachers.

Carlos and Daniela did not stop there, however. Their group continued their work to understand the phenomenon of cheating, and the narrative was extended to consider society at large:

> We also noticed that a lot of people misbehave outside the school. There are a lot of wrong things happening and we may compare them to cheating in tests […] people parking their cars on the sidewalks, people throwing papers and cans through the windows, on the streets, the elderly being disrespected, so many wrong things
>
> (Magno & Braga, 2009, p. 210)

When the time came to present their poster, Daniela reported that she and another pupil (Patricia) did the talking because Carlos was uncomfortable or shy with the public performance aspect of a presentation.

The learning outcomes from this activity may not have been ones that were directly specified in the curriculum in terms of language, but formation of questions, and the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing were clearly being practised. In addition, the learning outcomes encompassed higher level skills of critical thinking, citizenship and engaging with wider issues in society.

Tertiary education

The bulk of recent developments in Exploratory Practice have taken place in studies situated in higher education institutions. Space precludes extensive discussion here but see

Dikilitaş and Hanks (2018); Hanks (2015a; 2015b; 2019); Slimani-Rolls and Kiely (2018) for details of more studies. Here, I will focus on the stories of just a few from empirical work co-produced with learners and teachers of EAP.

Working as a teacher, director, researcher, on a 10-week summer pre-sessional programme, I encountered Val (a pseudonym). She was an Iranian student in a class of international students preparing for post-graduate studies at a British university. The students and their teacher had embraced the notion of Exploratory Practice and were keen to try it out. In the first week, they began puzzling about their experiences of learning languages; they shared their puzzles and began to refine their questions in small groups. Val, however, was one of two students who wanted to work alone. She stated that she wished to investigate her puzzle: *Why do I feel anxiety about studying at a British university?* She appeared painfully shy, and had difficulty in expressing her feelings – in fact when listening to the audio recording of her interview, there were many hesitations, and some parts were so quiet or muffled that it was impossible to hear:

> **Val:** As a general … [*indecipherable*]… anxiety. … Now, er, I, er, because I'm studying in Britain… anxiety. Whether I can do my… can I understand my lecturers in class… when my course start… because that time, er, professors just er, expect us to do a lot of works in essays, research. [*Speaking clearly and firmly:*] This is another language. It is not my own language. That's why… I'm worried … the other reason for my anxiety is that: can I do my assessment in my essays, my research correctly if I… [*trails off into silence*].
>
> (Hanks, 2017a, p. 286)

Val and her teachers wondered if anxiety was contributing to her difficulties in speaking. But rather than trying to 'solve' the problem of speaking fluently (see Hanks, 2017a, on the

need to move away from 'quick-fix solutions' and towards understanding), we worked to comprehend the issue of debilitating anxiety.

Supported by her teachers (myself included) Val read more about issues of anxiety – why was it so prevalent? She arranged appointments to interview her future lecturers to find out what would be expected of her once she began her Master's degree, and she talked to her pre-sessional teachers and classmates. The fact that they took her question seriously, and supported her in her quest to understand more, seemed to give her more confidence. After four weeks, she had already developed more fluency and was accessing her considerable store of language more easily. She even gave a poster presentation to the rest of the class, in which she spoke eloquently about her findings thus far:

> **Val:** This poster is … depend on my, my background about IELTS exam which I re-sat it twice and be-became the same [result]… and so … that time I … missed my self-confidence about English language. But at the moment I, er, I feel much better.
>
> (Hanks, 2017a, p. 287)

She noted that the anxiety other students had reported to her during her research activity stemmed from differences in environment, teaching methods, accents, and cultures. This she contrasted with her readings of the literature, which indicated that students typically experience *cycles* of anxiety. In a small epiphany, she pinpointed her own disappointing results in an English language examination (IELTS) as having undermined her confidence. When she found that others had also suffered anxiety, and was supported by her classmates and teachers in taking the issue seriously, she was able to move from a debilitating sense of self-criticism, towards becoming active in this new environment. She developed her own

agency by grappling with anxiety as a very real emotion and beginning to understand where it came from.

The micro learning outcome was a deeper understanding of the anxiety she (and many other students) struggled with; she established ownership of those enmeshed emotions, and she began a journey towards empowerment of, and by, herself, in conjunction with others. The macro learning outcome was an enhanced quality of life for Val in particular, as her anxiety decreased, and confidence increased, and for all those who were able to learn from her experience through her presentations and discussions.

In Japan, there are examples of work at the forefront of developing praxis in EAP. Stewart et al. (2014), for example, examined the notion of Exploratory Practice as process-oriented explorations conducted by learners and their teachers. Stewart worked over several years with her learners in tertiary education (undergraduate English-major students at a university) who used their 'Zemi' class to investigate their puzzles, develop their research skills, and, ultimately, write their graduation thesis. The students had read a combination of research texts, both traditional and those promoting more radical ideas, and began to engage in the kind of critical questioning that is all too rare in the academic world. The Exploratory Practice (EP) framework of principles for practitioner research particularly intrigued them, "the students were also surprised by EP terminology. "What do they mean by 'Quality of Life?' asked Junsei. ' And why do they use 'working for understanding' when they mean research? ' added Kazu" (Stewart et al., 2014, p. 137). The students began to probe these questions, with a robust and rigorous intellectual approach. Their findings were not only relevant to their own development; the students also explicitly stated that they wanted to collaborate with the incoming cohort (a year junior to them) to help them grapple with issues relevant to novice researchers.

In this thoroughly dialogic study, Stewart went beyond reporting her work, to engage in dialogue with her students and with two commentators: Croker and Hanks. She wove into the

argument their responses to questions posed by the students and herself. For example, Croker was asked to consider the question of whether Exploratory Practice should be defined as research or practice. He concluded that it is different from traditional definitions of both and proposed a broader definition which could be more inclusive of non-mainstream approaches to research. Meanwhile Hanks was asked about the meaning of Quality of Life (QoL), which had deeply puzzled the students. She responded by highlighting the inclusivity and sustainability of the work, which had aided these neophyte researchers in their journey of discovery:

> What you say about the feelings of ownership and belonging that you and your students 'cherished' is (to me) the essence of QoL. […] EP's approach empowered them to make their own decisions about learning with a view to developing not only as language learners, but also as budding researchers.
>
> (Stewart et al., 2014, p. 143)

Stewart concludes the chapter with a critical reflection on a process that took more than two years with several cohorts of students in her 'Zemi' class. They stumbled, as all researchers do; but, like all good researchers, they learned from these missteps for the future. The learning outcomes encompassed a high level of critical thinking; questioning and analyzing as a sustainable and ongoing process integrated into language learning.

Moreover, Stewart discovered that the students had been continuing their work unbeknownst to her, and without any instructions, over their summer holidays. They had continued in their 'research circles' working independently, to gather and analyze data, and to provide peer feedback to one another on their drafts of their theses. Stewart concludes, "'Quality' whether of life or learning, is elusive and ephemeral […] What [EP] does offer,

given time for frank and open discussion, is a principled approach to democratic and inclusive learner development" (Stewart et al., 2014, p. 146).

Curriculum design

Work has begun to investigate the potential of including learners and teachers in the processes of curriculum design. Writers have discussed ways in which teachers and learners puzzled about, and contributed to, the construction of the syllabus and, more broadly, the curriculum, in their various institutions.

In Turkey, Biçer (2018) began by wondering why learners' voices were not included in the design of a Foundation Year course at his university. He encouraged his colleagues to attend presentations given by his students, and highlighted a major advantage, "it was really satisfying to practice alongside my students as one big investigation unit and probe into such a problematic but often avoided subject. I began to see it through their eyes"(Biçer, 2018, p. 154)

Meanwhile, in the UK, Bond (2017) began by investigating her own puzzle about curriculum design. Explicating her own position as an influential person in the (re-)design of the curriculum in her institution, she argues that the curriculum can, through Exploratory Practice, become "a dynamic space for empowerment and for dialogic and dialectic learning" (p. 11). Like Biçer above, she involved pre-sessional students as *key developing practitioners* (see Allwright & Hanks, 2009) who helped colleagues (learners, teachers, and curriculum designers) in developing clear learning outcomes, discussing core aims, values and principles as a new curriculum was jointly developed. Bond claims that the learning outcomes included a built-in reflexivity to the new syllabus, and a responsiveness to student needs. These, she argues, led to greater student ownership, and more teacher engagement, which, in turn, led to improved relationships and better understandings of different points of view.

Their work is built on a much earlier study in Japan. Here, Smith (2009) worked with undergraduate students to collaborate in building a new syllabus in their university. These learners contributed to the design of a new EAP curriculum over four iterations, as they met key personnel who were designing and implementing a new syllabus. The students reported positive reactions to their suggestions, and experienced a renewed sense of self-efficacy since their voices had clearly been heard, and changes could be traced to their influence. Smith highlights the potential for positive co-production of knowledge that this inclusive approach to curriculum design promises.

In each of the above cases, it is noteworthy that the quality of learning outcomes were significantly affected by mutually respectful collaboration, and this affected their quality of life. For example, Bond cites better understanding and improved relationships, while Biçer notes more empathy and mutual comprehension. Smith breaks new ground and concludes that there is "joy in the companionship of a few kindred spirits working together on projects that they believe in" (Smith, 2009, p. 110).

Conclusions

In considering ways of assuring quality learning outcomes in this increasingly globalized world, we need to question our own pre-conceived ideas about who does what in language education. Teachers, learners, curriculum designers and all those involved in language education, can develop their own agency as key players in the game. The insights that practitioners can provide are essential for a deep understanding of the educative process. The studies cited above exemplify ways in which teachers *and* learners can set the research agenda, investigate collaboratively, and disseminate findings of immediate relevance to their own settings. What emerges, though, is a need to re-conceptualize the very essence of 'quality learning outcomes'. No longer focusing on surface-level linguistic items or interactions, these

outcomes can now be conceptualized as higher level skills such as advanced critical thinking, nuanced interpersonal negotiations, and thorough, well-reasoned argument.

Too often we read of learners' debilitating anxiety, or teachers' lack of wellbeing, yet the global search for solutions is found wanting. Traditional third-party research means that both learners and teachers are positioned as powerless in making decisions about what happens in the classroom. As a result, they "do not dare reflect on macro discourses which they believe are beyond their control" (Hiratsuka, 2016, p. 110). But they can, and do, manage to make independent decisions and implement changes within their sphere of influence. As Hiratsuka also argues, these micro-level shifts through Exploratory Practice can "enrich their lessons" (Hiratsuka, 2016, p. 110) and lead to a more critically aware approach.

Motivation is cited as central to successful language learning, and Ushioda (2016) argues that engaging learners as active agents in exploring their learning experiences is one way of encouraging highly motivated students. This chimes with Tajino and Smith, who explain, "When teachers and students share the construction of their learning environment in a harmonious team-learning partnership, the full collaborative potential of team teaching may be realized" (Tajino & Smith, 2016, p. 23). I would go even further, arguing that we might position learners as experienced 'knowers' who can pass on their knowledge of what it is to be a learner so that others may benefit. In order for this to successfully be implemented, an atmosphere of trust is required. This is because Exploratory Practice "re-conceptualizes the epistemology of research itself as more than a search for solutions; EP reminds us of the endeavor to *understand* (Heidegger, 1962; Dreyfus, 1991) language, culture and education" (Hanks, 2019, p. 35). Although this may be a difficult step for more entrenched researchers to accept, it points the way to the kind of creative, dynamic, dialogic research that the 21st century requires.

I conclude that the communicative, symbolic, and intercultural issues encountered whilst working for deeper understandings across cultural borders are central to quality of life, and

hence learning opportunities, for all those involved in language education. Involving everyone in collegial, curious inquiry not only develops a sense of self-efficacy and wellbeing, but also enhances Quality of Life. These are, in fact, the quality learning outcomes needed for education in a globalized world.

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Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan: Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency[1]

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Abstract

English education has been criticized in the sense that most Japanese learners of English as a foreign language (hereafter referred to as EFL) have failed to become as proficient in English as they are supposed to. The question is, however, whether or not this criticism is reasonable given the fact that there is little consensus on the notion of foreign language proficiency of Japanese EFL learners. It is, therefore, of central importance to make clear the notion of foreign language proficiency with regard to Japanese EFL learners. This paper attempts to propose a theoretical model of foreign language proficiency in which several issues could be discussed both theoretically and practically in connection with the national curriculum of English education in primary school through tertiary college/university.

Keywords: curriculum of English education, domain-specificity of foreign language skills, foreign language proficiency

Introduction

There is little consensus on the question of how foreign language proficiency should be defined in the context of English education in Japan. This question is of central importance, provided that English education is about to start from grade three in primary school in Japan and most Japanese students are supposed to study English as a foreign language from grade three through the first or second year of university (a total of 10 -12 years). Therefore, this

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

paper aims to (a) provide a theoretical framework in which foreign language proficiency, skills, and expertise can be described and explained; (b) address a natural approach for Japanese EFL learners to become proficient and skillful in English, specifically in terms of the four basic skills; (c) address the learning difficulties Japanese EFL learners experience in attaining proficiency in English, specifically how to cope with the learning issues associated with the "domain specificity" of the four basic language skills and the difference between spoken and written language; and (d) propose a hypothetical curriculum of English education from grade three through to post-secondary college/university (i.e., about 11-12 years), while taking into consideration the points argued in (a), (b), and (c).

Foreign Language Proficiency: Knowledge and Control Questions

It has been argued that the notion of language proficiency, competence, or expertise could be conceived of as "multi-dimensional" (e.g., Bialystok, 1991, Cummings, 1984; Snow, 1991). The question is: How many and what dimensions should be assumed to comprise language proficiency? This paper takes a cognitive position, specifically using an "information processing model" in the sense of Ellis (2015, p. 175): That is, language proficiency and language skills could be described and explained in terms of language knowledge and control of language knowledge (e.g., Anderson, 2015; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Carroll, 2008; Ellis, 2008; McLaughlin & Heredia, 1996).

Following this line of reasoning, Bialystok (1990, 1991, 2001, 2002, 2011) and Bialystok and Barac (2012) have attempted to describe and explain language proficiency and skills, whether in first, second, or foreign language contexts and whether speakers are monolingual, bilingual, or trilingual, in terms of two language processing dimensions of knowledge and control. The knowledge dimension concerns the qualitative and structural aspects of linguistic knowledge representation; and the control dimension concerns the access and application of the linguistic knowledge necessary to perform certain language skills (e.g.,

"oral greetings," "reading and writing," and "delivering lectures") under the condition of limited cognitive resources of attention. Bialystok (1991) referred to these two processing components as "analysis of linguistic knowledge" and "control of linguistic processing," respectively (p. 116).

Bialystok (2001) goes on to define the notion of language proficiency as "the ability to function in a situation that is defined by specific cognitive and linguistic demands, to a level of performance indicated by either objective criteria or normative standards" (p. 18). To be more specific, the "cognitive and linguistic demands" means how much "analyzed knowledge" of the target language and how much "control" of the knowledge language learners are supposed to attain to perform particular language skills or tasks (e.g., greetings, everyday conversation, reading and writing poetry, delivering lectures, and so on). In other words, the notion of language proficiency, competence, or expertise should be conceptualized as the intersection of the two language processing dimensions, "analysis of knowledge" and "control of knowledge." Furthermore, Bialystok (2001) attempts to explain gains in language proficiency as follows: "The two processing components are considered to be the mechanisms by which language proficiency improves through age, experience, and instruction. They are also the mechanisms which are responsible for a language learner's ability to carry out various language functions" (p. 116).

In short, the author argues that language proficiency has two fundamental questions: the "knowledge question" of what kinds of knowledge underlie language usage and the "control question" of how language knowledge is used and controlled. This view is clearly manifested in Bialystok's two-dimensional conceptualization of language proficiency and skills (also see Roehr-Brackin, 2018). The next question is how the two-dimensional model of language competence can be applied to the description and explanation of English proficiency of Japanese EFL learners.

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

Two-Dimensional Model of Language Proficiency of Japanese EFL Learners

This paper aims to provide a theoretical framework for the description of language use and proficiency of Japanese EFL learners, following Bialystok's (1991, 2001) two-dimensional model of language proficiency, command, and expertise and Ellis' (2008) four-type representations of second language knowledge[2]. The framework is composed of two vertical and horizontal axes and the vertical and horizontal axes represent the knowledge component and the control (or process) aspect of language use and proficiency of Japanese EFL learners. More specifically, the X (horizontal) and Y (vertical) axes indicate the qualitative shift or change of knowledge representation and the automaticity of the access and use of the knowledge, respectively (see Figure 1)[3]. This paper is exclusively concerned with the knowledge question (i.e., the X axis), providing a theoretical framework in which language use and proficiency of Japanese EFL learners could be explained[4].

The question is then how to conceptualize knowledge representation in connection with Japanese EFL learners. In the literature of cognitive psychology and second language acquisition, the following notions of language knowledge have been proposed:

(a) "declarative knowledge" and "procedural knowledge" (Anderson, 2000, 2015; DeKeyser, 2017);

(b) "unanalyzed knowledge" and "analyzed knowledge" (Bialystok, 1991, 2001);

(c) "implicit knowledge" and "explicit knowledge" (Ellis, 2008, 2015; Itagaki, 2003);

(d) "acquired knowledge" and "learned knowledge" (Krashen, 1982, 1985);

(e) "development of metalinguistic awareness" (Itagaki, 2003; Itagaki, Sugiyama & Kubota, 2003; Roehr-Brackin, 2018; Suzuki & Itagaki, 2007); and

(f) "formula-based knowledge" and "rule-based knowledge" (Itagaki, 2017; Skehan, 1998; Wray, 2002, 2008).

These notions are based on different theoretical assumptions of knowledge and memory (Squire, 1987, 1992). The question is this: Which could be most applicable for the

descriptions and explanations of the language proficiency and skills of Japanese EFL learners? In this paper, I argue that the notion of formula-based and rule-based knowledge should be more relevant to the conceptualization of knowledge of Japanese EFL learners than the others[5].

Foreign Language Proficiency: From Formula-Based to Rule-Based Knowledge

It is possible to assume that the knowledge representation of Japanese EFL learners would advance from less structured, conscious, formal, and abstract to more structured, conscious, formal, and abstract (Anderson, 2015; Bialystok, 2001; Ellis, 2008, 2015). This developmental shift could be characterized as an umbrella notion of "from less elaborated to more elaborated." Turning to the above notions of language knowledge, the notion of "formula-based" and "rule-based" knowledge can be judged to be more applicable, compared with others, for the description of the knowledge development of Japanese EFL learners. That is, the formula-based and the rule-based knowledge can be assumed to be less and more, respectively, elaborated in that the former is less structurally, consciously, formally, and abstractly represented knowledge than the latter. Some examples will be described later.

Following this line of reasoning, the X (horizontal) axis represents the knowledge elaboration continuum, that is, from formula-based to rule-based knowledge of Japanese EFL learners (see Figure 1). More importantly, language knowledge of EFL learners should be assumed to be a knowledge complex of formula-based and rule-based knowledge, with proportions depending on language development. In other words, the knowledge representation of Japanese EFL learners is a mixture of partially formula-based and partially rule-based knowledge. Primary school EFL learners, compared with secondary school EFL learners, can be characterized as relying on far more formula-based language knowledge and secondary school EFL learners will have gradually acquired rule-based knowledge in addition to formula-based knowledge (Bialystok, 1991, 2001; Ellis, 2008, 2015; Reber, 1967).

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

The question is why these two basic types of knowledge representation, formula-based and rule-based, needs to be assumed in Japanese EFL learners[6]. First, some foreign/second language learners can comprehend and say "I like dogs," even though they are not aware of the grammatical structures of "subject," "verb," "object," and "subject + verb + object." In other words, their language knowledge should be considered to be implicit rather than explicit, suggesting that their language knowledge should be claimed to be formula-based (e.g., "I like + dogs / animals / cats and dogs / pizza / apples …") rather than rule-based (e.g., subject + verb + object, subject → "I / he / she ...," verb → "like / love / feed / …, object → dogs / cats / apples …" …) (Bialystok, 2011; Ellis, 2008, 2015). Second, formula-based expressions are characteristic of very beginning language learners, whether foreign or second (Ellis, 2015; Hakuta, 1976). Third, formula-based teaching and learning are necessary in that grammar structures are sometimes beyond explicit teaching and learning. In other words, some grammar rules such as the use of articles are simply too complicated to teach and learn in an explicit manner (Ellis, 2008, 2015). Fourth, a first step in socio-cultural communication is simply to expand a speaker's repertoire of expressions by learning formulaic chunks (Wray, 2008). Fifth, one has formula-based as well as rule-based learning mechanisms and these learning processes are basically consistent with the notion of "holistic processing" and "analytic processing" in the sense of Wray (2008, p. 14) and "exemplar-based learning" and "structure-based learning" in the sense of Skehan (1998, p. 53)[7]. Given these lines of reasoning, it is plausible to assume formula-based and rule-based knowledge to underlie language proficiency of Japanese EFL learners as shown in the X axis of Figure 1.

Another question is how formula-based knowledge could be turned into rule-based knowledge. Formulaic expressions need to be analyzed into grammatical rules, if necessary, which is a major part of language proficiency development. This paper suggests that in addition to explicit grammar teaching, cognitive processes such as "analogy," "generalization," and "abstraction" may play major roles in analyzing formulaic units to

create grammatical rules; that is, an elaboration process of "from formula-based to rule-based knowledge representation" (Anderson, 2000, 2015; Tomasello, 2000; Wray, 2002, 2008).

Natural development of Foreign Language Skills

There is no doubt that some language skills take longer to learn than others. Some foreign (and second) language learners never learn to read (and write) in the target language, even though they do not have problems with basic oral conversation; the opposite can also occur. This is particularly true for foreign language learning, less true for second language and least true for L1 acquisition (e.g., Bialystok, 1991, 200; Ellis, 2008, 2015; Roehr-Brackin, 2018). It is important to make clear that the four basic foreign language skills, oral and written skills, and metalinguistic skills should not be considered to be equally easy or difficult to learn. This paper addresses the following questions: (a) As in L1 acquisition, is it possible for Japanese EFL learners to acquire English skills in the order of "from everyday conversational through literate (reading and writing) to metalinguistic skills"? and (b) Does learning basic conversational skills necessarily guarantee that a learner will be able to learn to read or write the target foreign language and vice versa?

It has been argued that first language syntactic competence is generally acquired prior to primary school education (i.e., at the age of around six or seven) (Lenneberg, 1967; Harley, 2014). Through school education, specifically L1 subject classes, children learn to read and write, hopefully acquiring metalinguistic skills. Thanks to school education, one is in general capable of acquiring L1 skills of conversational through literate to metalinguistic skills (e.g., Bialystok, 1991, 2001; Roehr-Brackin, 2018). This is not usually the case, however, for second and especially for foreign language learning (e.g., Ellis, 2008, 2015).

Based on these considerations, I propose the notion of "natural development of language skills," presented in Figure 1[8]. Everyday conversational skills can usually be performed on the basis of a lower level of elaborated knowledge (i.e., mainly formula-based) and control

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

processes; reading and writing skills basically need a higher level of elaborated knowledge (i.e., a complex of formula-based and rule-based knowledge) and control processes; and metalinguistic skills (e.g., to revising and accounting for grammatical errors) should be based on much higher levels of elaborated knowledge (i.e., mainly rule-based) and automatized control processes which can retrieve and use appropriate grammatical knowledge. This "natural development of foreign language skills" is indicated by the diagonal line in the Figure 1.
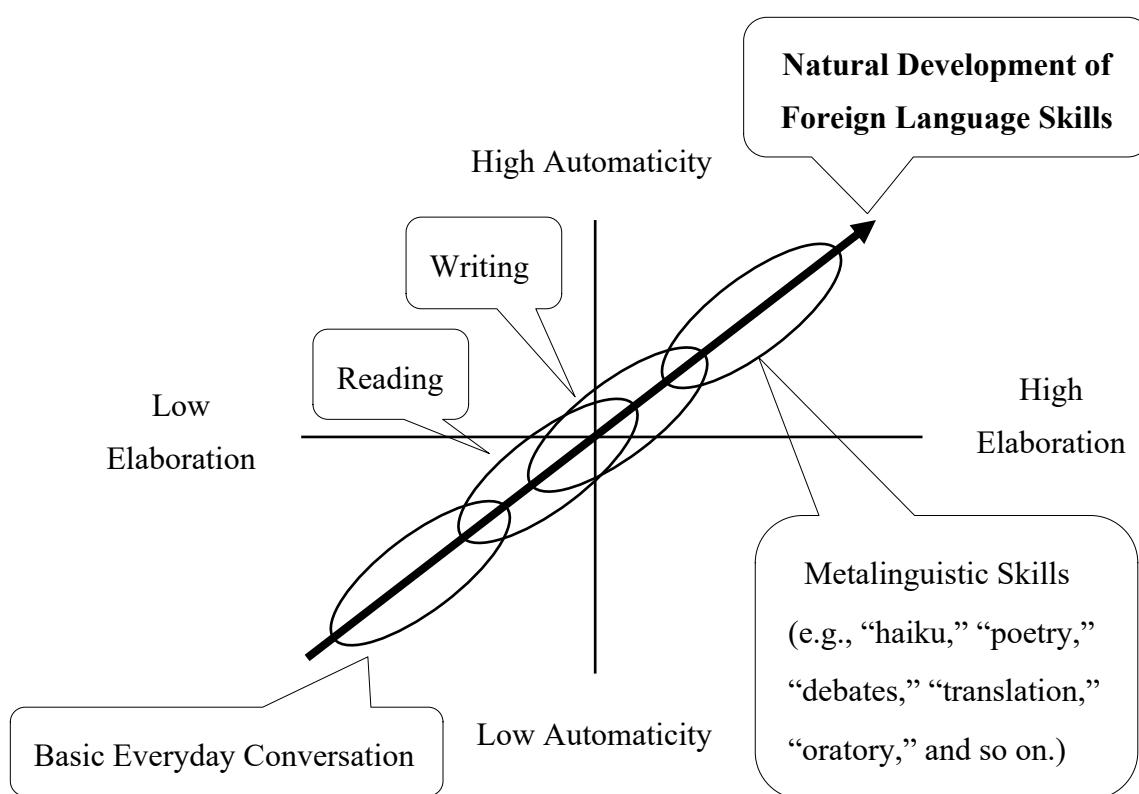
Figure 1. Natural development of foreign language skills

Independence and Learning "Walls" Among Foreign Language Skills

As stated earlier, the natural development of four language skills is in general the case for first language acquisition, but not necessarily the case for second language acquisition and particularly for foreign language learning. These phenomena should be discussed in association with the "domain specificity," "transfer," or "transfer appropriateness processing"

of cognitive skills (e.g., Anderson, 2000, 2015; Ellis & Shintani, 2015; Morris, Bransford, & Franks, 1977).

It is highly conceivable for Japanese EFL learners to learn everyday conversational skills but not reading and writing skills of formal documents or vice versa. Similarly, we must have come across the following cases of learning English as a foreign language:

(a) At some fast food shops, some individuals can orally order what they want to eat although they are unable to read the menu;

(b) Other individuals can read the menus in restaurants, but cannot read articles or editorials of English newspapers and school textbooks;

(c) Some people can read school and college textbooks, but they cannot write research papers or term papers;

(d) Some people are able to understand lectures at school and college, but they would have tremendous difficulty chatting (i.e., small talk) with friends over a cup of coffee;

and

(e) Some people can enjoy chatting with friends, but would not be able to follow lectures at school and college.

These examples lead to the following two premises on which the discussions below are based:

(a) **"Independence" among foreign language skills (domain-specificity of cognitive skills):** Each foreign language skill is of different ease or difficulty to learn in the sense that each skill is based on each different level of elaborated knowledge (i.e., the X axis) and automatized control (i.e., the Y axis) of the language;

(b) **"learning walls" among foreign language skills:** There is no guarantee that learning conversational skills makes it possible to learn to read and write the language and vice versa[9]. These phenomena of independence and learning walls

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

among foreign language skills are shown in Figure 2. The independence and

learning walls should be considered major learning difficulties facing Japanese EFL

learners.
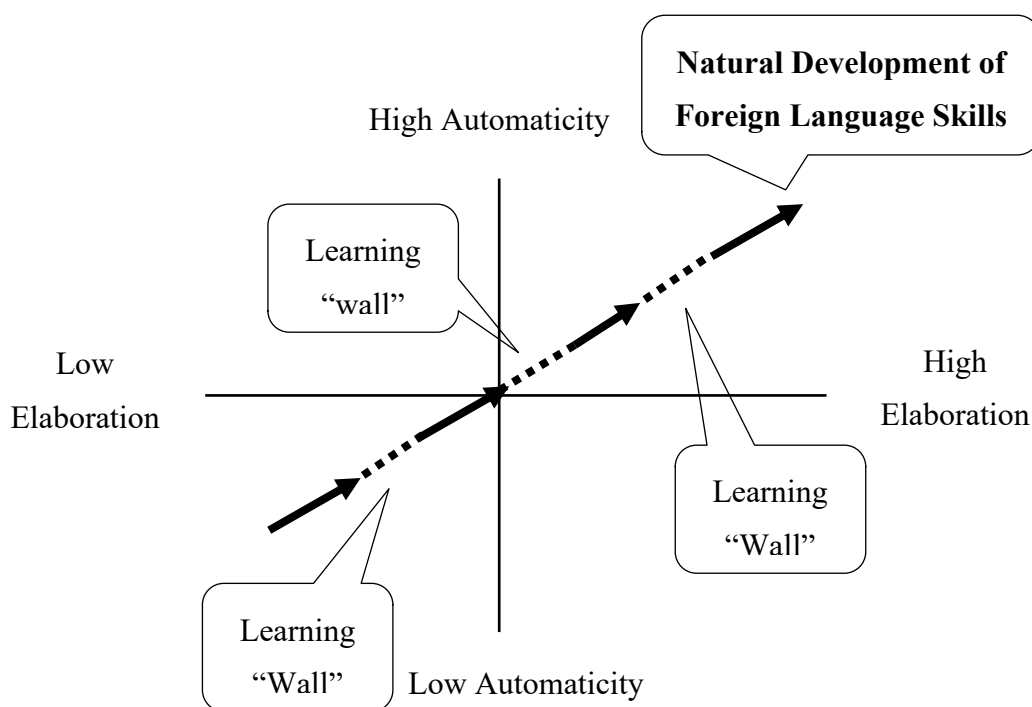
Figure 2. The independence and "learning walls" among foreign language skills

A Hypothetical Curriculum of English Education in Japan

I propose the following five broad groups of foreign language skills on the basis of the

two-dimensional model of foreign language proficiency, the natural development of language

skills, and the independence and the "learning walls" among language skills:

Oral 1: rudimentary everyday conversational skills, which are part of spoken English.

The Oral 1skills can generally be performed on the basis of a low level of elaborated

knowledge (i.e., exclusively formula-based knowledge) and in either an automatic way (e.g.,

"one-word" formulaic chunks such as "How are you?" "I'm fine." and "Nice to meet you.")

or somewhat non-automatic (or controlled) way (e.g., rather complicated formulas such as "I

want to be a musician / nurse / doctor …" and "I study math / English / science … on Monday / Tuesday / Wednesday / …") [10]. This Oral 1 should be a primary goal of English activities and education at primary and junior high school (i.e., grades 3 through to 6 and on to 8 or 9) in Japan.

Reading 1 and Writing 1 (R 1+W 1): reading and writing skills that are linguistically based on Oral 1 (e.g., reading and writing skills based on Oral 1). Accordingly, the R 1 and W 1 skills should be considered to be linguistically related to basic spoken English, and can be performed on the basis of formula-based knowledge and a somewhat lower level of automaticity of control. It follows that the R 1 and W 1 skills should be a basic goal of English teaching at primary school (grades 5 and 6) and junior high school (grades 7, 8, and 9) in Japan.

Reading 2 (R 2): reading skills as a major part of written English (e.g., reading newspaper articles, scientific reports, and so on) which are linguistically beyond the R 1 described above[11]. These R 2 skills are performed on the basis of an intermediate level of elaborated knowledge (i.e., both formula-based and rule-based knowledge) and automaticity of control. Developing the R 2 skills is usually a goal of English teaching at high school and postsecondary school (possibly from around grade 9 through to college).

Writing 2 (W 2): writing skills as a major part of written English (e.g., writing critical/argumentative reports, research reports, and so on) which are linguistically beyond the W 1 mentioned above. The W 2 skills are performed on the basis of an intermediate level of elaborated knowledge (i.e., both formula-based and rule-based) and automaticity of control. Strengthening the W 2 skills should be a goal of English teaching at high school and postsecondary school (possibly from around grade 9 through to college).

Oral 2: most advanced oral skills which orators and eloquent speakers or lecturers must have mastered (including persuasive debates and discussions). This paper also assumes that Oral 2 is linguistically based on R 2 and W 2 in the sense that, compared with other skills,

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

Oral 2 is performed on the basis of a much higher level of elaborated knowledge (i.e., not only formula-based but also rule-based knowledge including pragmatic and metalinguistic rules) and automaticity of control. In other words, Oral 2 might be the most difficult language skill to learn. Accordingly, Oral 2 skills should be an ultimate goal of English education at senior high school and college (presumably from grade 10 through to postsecondary students).

It is also important to note the following dependency and independency among the five types of foreign language skills:

dependence relationships: Oral 1 – (R 1 and W1), R 2 – W 2, and (R 2 and W 2) – Oral 2 in which the former should be considered to a kind of prerequisite for the latter.

independence relationships: Oral 1 – (R 2 and W 2), R 2 – W 2, Oral 1 – Oral 2 in which learning the former does not necessarily lead to learning the latter.

Another aspect of these five types of foreign language skills concerns the question of whether skills are "natural" or "problematic" (in the sense of Bereiter and Scadamalia, 1987, p. 4) ones. The former skills are generally acquired through ordinary living or experiences, including classrooms, while the latter takes a long time and sustainable efforts (it could take over 10 years) to learn. The Oral 1, R1 and W 1 skills could fall into the "natural ability" with the R 2, W 2, and Oral 2 skills as "problematic ability." (also see Cummins, 1984, 1986)

Figure 3 presents the natural development of the five types of foreign language skills as a hypothetical curriculum of English education for Japanese EFL learners.
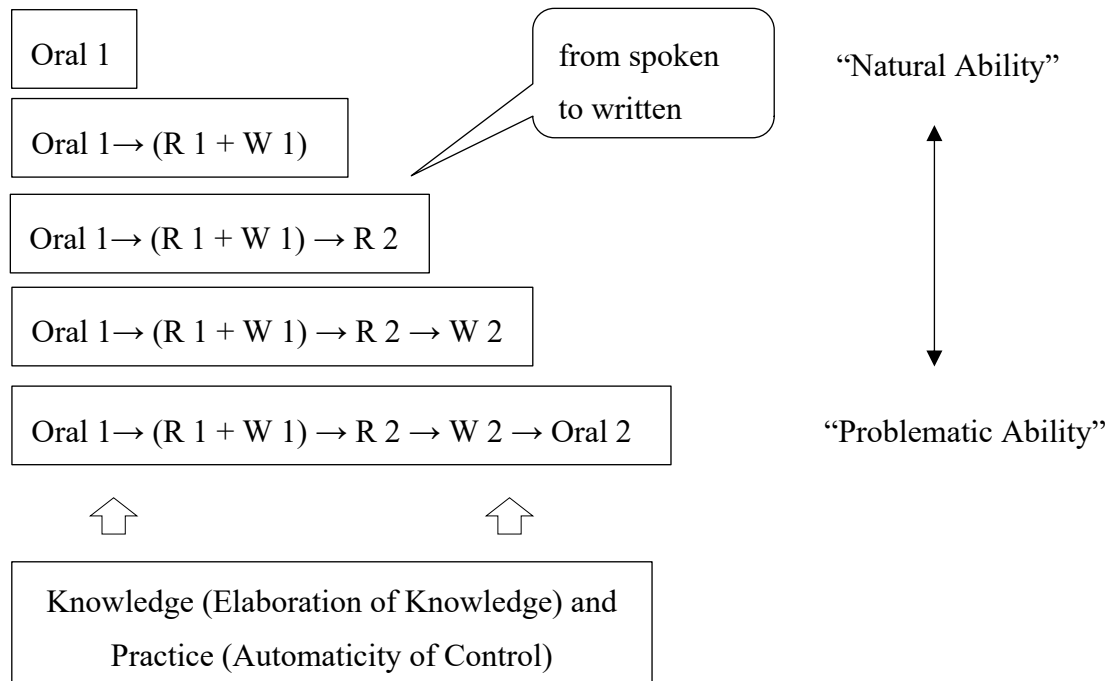
Figure 3. A Hypothetical Curriculum of English Education in Japan ("→" indicates that the former should be a prerequisite for the latter.)

Let us to summarize the hypothetical curriculum of English education in Japan from the following four perspectives: (a) teaching goal (i.e., which type of language skills to teach and learn), (b) language knowledge (formula-based and/or rule-based), (c) teaching and learning style (implicit and/or explicit)[12], and (d) language creativity (formula-based and/or rule-based)[13].

Grades 3 and 4

 (one 45-minute lesson a week and a total of 35 lessons a year)

(a) goal: Oral 1;

(b) language knowledge: formula-based knowledge dominant;

(c) teaching and learning style: implicit teaching based on and learning from participating in and experiencing English activities as formula-based knowledge;

(d) creativity: formula-based creativity by manipulating formulas in a creative way.

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

Grades 5 and 6

(two 45-minute lessons a week and a total of 70 lessons a year)

(a) goal: Oral 1 $\rightarrow$ (R 1 + W 1);

(b) language knowledge: formula-based knowledge dominant;

(c) teaching and learning style: implicit, as formula-based knowledge, teaching based on and

learning from participating in and experiencing English activities including very basic

reading and writing as well as Oral 1;

(d) creativity: formula-based creativity by manipulating formulas in a creative way.

Grade 7 (first year of junior high school)

(four 50-minute lessons a week and a total of 140 lessons a year)

(a) goal: Oral 1 $\rightarrow$ (R 1 + W 1);

(b) language knowledge: largely formula-based but also a very early stage of rule-based

knowledge focused on basic grammar rules of this stage;

(c) teaching and learning style: mainly implicit teaching and learning as formula-based

knowledge but also, if necessary, explicit teaching and learning of a very basic grammar

rules as rule-based knowledge;

(d) creativity: mainly formula-based and slightly rule-based creativity.

Grades 8 and 9 (second and third years of junior high school)

(four 50-minute lessons a week and a total of 140 lessons a year)

(a) goal: Oral 1 $\rightarrow$ (R 1 + W 1) $\rightarrow$ R 2;

(b) language knowledge: still largely formula-based but also somewhat rule-based knowledge

focused on basic grammar rules of this stage;

(c) teaching and learning style: still mainly implicit teaching and learning as formula-based

knowledge but also, step by step, explicit teaching and learning of basic grammar rules as

rule-based knowledge;

(d) creativity: both formula-based and rule-based creativity.

Grades 10, 11, and 12 (senior high school)

(six-eight 50-minute lessons a week and a total of 210-280 lessons a year)

(a) goal: Oral 1 → (R 1 + W 1) → R 2 → W 2 → Oral 2;

(b) language knowledge: a mixture of formula-based and rule-based knowledge;

(c) teaching and learning style: both implicit teaching and learning as formula-based

knowledge and explicit teaching and learning of somewhat advanced grammar rules as

rule-based knowledge;

(d) creativity: both formula-based and rule-based creativity.

The First and Second Years of College

(in general two 90-minute lessons a week and a total of 60 lessons a year)

(a) goal: Oral 1 → (R 1 + W 1) → R 2 → W 2 → Oral 2;

(b) language knowledge: a mixture of formula-based and rule-based knowledge and hopefully

rule-based knowledge should be much larger than those of grades 7 through to 12

students;

(c) teaching and learning style: both implicit teaching and learning as formula-based

knowledge and explicit teaching and learning of advanced grammar rules as rule-based

knowledge;

(d) creativity: both formula-based and rule-based creativity and hopefully rule-based

creativity should be much greater than those of primary and secondary school students;

Concluding Remarks

As stated earlier, English education has been strongly criticized in Japan. It is also true

that some Japanese EFL students have failed to develop a sufficient command of English. To

be honest, most of the criticisms do not seem to be constructive and helpful. It is not possible,

however, to identify the answers to the problems with English education in Japan and how it

should be improved unless we have a more reasonable conceptualization of foreign, *not*

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

second, language proficiency from the perspective of English education in Japan. In this respect, I do hope that this paper will provide some insights into the notion of proficiency of Japanese EFL students.

Notes

1. This paper is a written summary of a plenary presentation delivered at the 2018 JACET Convention. The content of the paper is also a revised and expanded version of Itagaki (2002, 2005, 2011, 2017).

2. Ellis (2008) does not make a clear distinction between knowledge and process. He argues that second language knowledge should be conceptualized with reference to the following two aspects of language knowledge: "implicit" versus "explicit" and "controlled" versus "automatic" which, he claims, are inherent characteristics of language knowledge. It is clear, however, that the former refers to qualitative aspects of language knowledge while the latter indicates how automatically language knowledge can be accessed and used. It is possible, therefore, to assume that Ellis's four-type of knowledge representations could be interpreted as a kind of two-dimensional model of language learning and proficiency.

3. Cummins (1984, 1986) and Snow (1991) also proposed their own dimensional models of language proficiency and command. Cummins (1986) attempted to explain the notion of language proficiency from the perspective of the relationship between language and thought, specifically two dimensions of "context-embedded or reduced" and "cognitively demanding or undemanding." However, the relationship between language and thought would be too broad to describe each specific language use and skill. Snow attempted to define the notion of proficiency in terms of three task-related dimensions of "background knowledge (e.g., shared or not shared)," "information load (e.g., simple or complex)," and "audience (e.g., present or distant)." Although task complexity and performance would be explained in terms of the three dimensions, the question of how the model explains the language proficiency development

from everyday oral conversational through literal to advanced oral tasks remains to be answered.

4. There is a broad consensus on the issue of how the automaticity of the access and use of the knowledge could be achieved. This issue has two basic questions: How much time would language skills take to acquire and how one is supposed to practice language skills? In regard to the latter, Ericsson (2003) proposed the notion of "deliberate practice" which plays a crucial role in acquiring cognitive skills. The deliberate practice is basically composed of three types of cognitive processes, "learning," "performance," and "metacognitive." For more details, see Ericsson (2003) and Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Romer (1993).

5. The notion of "formula-based" and "rule-based" knowledge representations can be conceived to be more inclusive than others in that formula-based knowledge are more "non-declarative," "unanalyzed," "implicit," and "non-metalinguistic" than rule-based one. It can be argued that foreign (and second) language knowledge could be assumed to be a complex of these two basic types of knowledge (Ellis, 1994, 2008, 2015; Shaken, 1998; Reber, Allen & Reber, 1999).

6. Several terms and definitions have been proposed. I decided to use the term "formula" or "formulaic expressions" and as its definition, to follow Wray (2008, p. 12): "a word or word string, whether incomplete or including gaps for inserted variable items, that is processed like a morpheme, that is, without recourse to any form-meaning of any sub-parts it may have. … the mental lexicon contains not only morphemes and words but also many multiword strings [formulas], including some that are partly lexicalized frames with slots for variable material, treated as if they were single morphemes." In addition, I defines the notion of formula-based knowledge as "implicit" in the sense that EFL learners are neither aware of nor explicitly taught their grammatical structures.

Itagaki, N.
Assuring Quality Learning Outcomes in Primary to Tertiary English Education in Japan:
Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

7. In this respect, Skehan (1998, p. 53) and Ellis (2008, 2015) proposed two independent learning processes of "a dual-mode system," whereby one can process and learn both exemplars and a rule system as language knowledge (also see Anderson, 2000; Harley, 2014).

8. In this paper, basic conversation can be claimed to be learned before reading and writing skills in the sense that the former requires lower levels of knowledge elaboration and control processes than the latter. Likewise, spoken language is in general mastered before written language and metalinguistic skills such as "composing poetry." In addition, the term of "natural development of language skills" was not specifically used in Bialystok (1991, 2011). I opted to use this term, but the term of "natural" is not based on the "nativist view" of language acquisition.

9. The term "learning wall" may be similar to the notion of "fossilization" in the sense that at a certain point, language learners will not make any further discernable progress. The notion of "learning walls" is proposed, however, from a cognitive perspective of the two-dimensional model of proficiency of foreign language: That is, each different language skill can be performed on the basis of each different level of elaborated knowledge and automaticity of control. For example, "oral chatting," "reading and writing," and "simultaneous interpretation" would be based on lower, middle, and higher levels of elaborated knowledge and automatized control of knowledge, respectively. Even though a learner may be very good in chatting, he or she may fail to learn to read and write formal documents; or vice versa. This discontinuity is what the "learning walls" are intended to mean.

10. There are no decisive criteria, however, for judging whether utterances and sentences are formula-based or rule-based (Ellis, 2008, 2015). As far as Japanese EFL learners at grades 3 through to 6 (possibly 9) are concerned, two types of formulaic expressions are of relevance: (a) "routines which are totally unanalysed units and learned as wholes" (Ellis, 2015, p. 81) and (b) "patterns, which consists of a chunk with one or more open slots" (Ellis, 2015, p. 81).

I chose to focus on these two types of formulaic expressions (i.e., "routines" and "patterns"), whereby Oral 1 skills could be described and explained (also see Hornby, 1975; Pawley & Syder, 1993; Yamaoka, 2006).

11. The distinction between spoken and written English is not based on any theoretical background. I simply assumes that written language is linguistically more formal and complicated in terms of both vocabulary and sentence structures. It follows that spoken language is more formula-based and less rule-based than written language, which is consistent with the two-dimensional model of foreign language proficiency described earlier.

12. Formulaic expressions, whether "routines" or "patterns," can be assumed to be part of implicit knowledge in the sense that, although learners are not aware of their grammatical structures, they can easily access and use them (Ellis, 2008, 2015). On the other hand, rule-based knowledge is usually a result of explicit teaching and learning of each grammar rule.

13. I claim that language creativity can be either formula-based or rule-based in the sense that utterances or sentences are made by manipulating formulas or grammar rules in a creative way. The "creative way" here includes the case where the same expressions are used in different contexts or situations, as well as the case where novel expressions are produced by manipulating formulas such as routines or patterns and grammar rules. It must be admitted, however, that in reality, it is quite difficult to distinguish between formula-based and rule-based creativity, depending on how much each utterance or sentence depends on either formula-based or rule-based knowledge (Wray, 2002, 2008).

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Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

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Focusing on the Notion of Foreign Language Proficiency

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Preparing our Students for a Rapidly Evolving World

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Abstract

The ability to communicate via a lingua franca has never been as important as it is today. The number of English users is estimated to be about 1.5 billion, while those using it as a native language amount to less than 400 million. Thus, interactions using English are likely to occur among ELF (English as a lingua franca) users. As language educators, how can we prepare our students for such real-life situations? Another factor that cannot be ignored in the language classroom today is our rapidly evolving global society, which is undergoing what has been called the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This brings to the fore two other issues: what will our students need for jobs in the 21st century and how do we work with Generation Z students who are digital natives. This paper will try to suggest answers to the three questions of how to prepare students to master the English that they will need for life in the 21st century, how to motivate the generation of students in universities today, and how to decide on what kind of English to teach.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, English for specific purposes, discourse community, genre, corpus linguistics

Introduction

The world is changing and we have entered the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2016). In the First, humans harnessed water and steam power, and in the Second, began using electric power. The Third ushered in a digital age from around 1990 (Baldwin, 2018). The Fourth is predicted to converge physical, digital and biological worlds. The term was used in 2016 at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland. Professor Klaus

Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (2016) states (emphasis mine):

> This Fourth Industrial Revolution is, however, **fundamentally different**. It is characterized by a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even **challenging ideas about what it means to be human**.

In Japan, the Cabinet Office (2014) announced its vision for Society 5.0 in which the Internet of Things will connect people and things and there will be advances in technology to help overcome social issues and free humans from toilsome work. The current information society has begun to use cloud computing technologies but it still relies on people to individually access cyberspace by themselves. Society 5.0 is predicted to herald a convergence of cyberspace and physical space with sensors automatically accessing artificial intelligence systems in cyberspace to automatically make optimal choices, for example, in automatic driving systems or automated factories.

The question thus arises of how can we prepare our students to deal with such a rapidly changing world. The World Economic Forum (2016:3) reports that

> By one popular estimate 65% of children entering primary schools today will ultimately work in new job types and functions that currently don't yet exist. Technological trends such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution will create many new cross-functional roles for which employees will need both technical and social and analytical skills.

On a more positive note, Manyika (2016) notes that

A 2011 study by McKinsey's Paris office found that the Internet had destroyed 500,000 jobs in France in the previous 15 years—but at the same time had created 1.2 million others, a net addition of 700,000, or 2.4 jobs created for every job destroyed. (p. 3)

Thus, technological advances do not necessarily mean that there will be fewer jobs but that there will be new jobs that we at present do not know about.

To prepare for education in the 21st century, The Partnership for 21st Century Learning was founded in the United States in 2001 by a coalition of people from business, education and policymaking ("The Partnership for 21st Century Learning"). The coalition includes the U.S. Department of Education and organizations such as AOL Time Warner Foundation, Apple Computer, Inc., and Microsoft Corporation Learning and Innovation Skills. They proposed The P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning which identifies three areas of important skills: life and career skills, learning and innovation skills (4Cs of critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity), and information, media and technology skills. These skills are supported by knowledge of key subjects as well as 21st century themes, such as global awareness and literacy in financial, civic, health and environmental topics. What most concerns those of us in English language teaching is the fostering of communication skills in our students.

English education in Japan

In a globally connected world, having a common language is essential for communication with people from other countries. As English is the current lingua franca, let us now consider the situation of English education in Japan, which is offered from elementary school to upper secondary school as part of the compulsory education system (MEXT, 2014). The former president of the JACET (Japan Association of College English Teachers), Jimbo (2012) noted that there are two pillars of English education at the tertiary level: English as a liberal arts

subject to foster responsible global citizenship and English for specific purposes as a foundation for communication in specific disciplinary fields. Much effort has been expended in promoting English education but those teaching English in Japan are confronted with three major problems: (1) the students are not meeting target goals, (2) the students in schools today are of a different generation, with different mindsets, from the instructors, and (3) English as a lingua franca is difficult to define clearly for teaching purposes.

In April 2018, *The Japan Times*, an English-language newspaper, ran an article entitled "English proficiency at Japan's middle and high schools falls far short of government targets." These targets were set using tests from the Eiken Foundation of Japan, which are the most widely used in country. Junior high graduates were expected to reach an Eiken Grade 3 (A1 on the Common European Framework of Reference, or CEFR) or higher and high school graduates to achieve Eiken Grade Pre-2 (CEFR A2) or higher. However, only 40.7 percent of third-year junior high school students attained the target level with the level falling to 39.3 percent for third-year senior high school students.

The second problem arises from the fact that the students in tertiary education today are children raised during the Third Industrial Revolution. They have been dubbed by many names but the one used here will be Generation Z (Chun et al., 2017; Haynes, 2010). They are digital natives and spend a lot of screen time obtaining information from web sources. They have a short attention span, which some have called an "acquired attention deficit disorder" (Fudin, 2012). Generation Z displays a stronger reliance on visual forms and expects instant results and constant feedback (Chun et al., 2017). These students have been told that they are "special," should be "themselves" and should be "happy." This contrasts greatly with their instructors who are often called Baby Boomers (Haynes, 2010). They were trained to obey authority, work hard and do their best. The gap between generations is not something new but the one occurring today is probably wider than those experienced in the past because of the rapidity of societal change.

The third issue is that of the diversity in what is accepted as "English" today. It is not the American/British native speaker versions but any intelligible form of the language. This evident from the new descriptors announced for CEFR in 2018. All notations of "native" speaker in the 2001 framework have been replaced in various ways to show that if the interaction is mutually intelligible, it would be acceptable. Here are some examples of these changes (CEFR, 2018) (underlining mine):

- Overall Listening Comprehension, C2

  Has no difficulty with any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast <u>native</u> speed. → Can understand with ease virtually any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast <u>natural</u> speed.

- Understanding conversation between native speakers → Understanding conversation between other speakers, B2+

  Can keep up with an animated conversation between <u>native speakers</u>. → Can keep up with animated conversation between <u>speakers of the target language</u>.

- Sociolinguistic appropriateness, C2

  Appreciates the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by <u>native speakers</u> and can react accordingly. → Appreciates virtually all the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by <u>proficient speakers of the target language</u> and can react accordingly.

While CEFR encompasses all languages, if we focus on English, which is used in many dialects and varieties, this means that many forms would be acceptable if intelligible among the interlocutors. This is understandable because of the 1.5 billion speakers of English today, only about 375 million are native speakers (Myers, 2015). The majority of English users rely on this language to communicate with other non-native English speakers.

Thus, the questions facing English language educators today are: (1) how can we raise the English ability of our students; (2) how can we work with Generation Z students to prepare them for a world that we do not yet know; (3) how do we decide what kind of English to teach in an ELF world.

The Model 21st Century Language Learner

What is important for language learning in the 21st century? CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018) states the following (underlining mine):

The methodological message of the CEFR is that language learning should be directed towards <u>enabling learners to act in real-life situations,</u> <u>expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures</u>. Thus, the criterion suggested for assessment is <u>communicative ability in real life</u>, in relation to a continuum of ability. (p. 27)

Clearly, the aim is to have learners be able to actually use the language to accomplish what they wish to do. How can this be done? Hunston (2012) characterized the model 21st century language learner as being motivated, self-directed and informed. Motivation arises when people realize that they are no longer "learners" but active "users" of the language. They should be self-directed in that they understand what they need to know about the language in order to attain their goals. The third feature of "being informed" means that they know what tools they can use to aid their efforts at learning the language. How can we as language teachers have our students become motivated, self-directed and informed users? Here I would like to suggest that the answers can be found in work that has been done in the field of English for specific purposes (ESP).

A brief introduction to English for specific purposes (ESP)

The concept of language being used in various ways for specific purposes has always been with us. That is why we use different registers or levels of formality when addressing our friends, colleagues or superiors. However, as an academic concept, the development of ESP can be traced back to the 1960's when a need for a lingua franca arose in response to international business activities (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Belcher (2004) in "Trends in teaching English for specific purposes" discusses the three major influences shaping ESP as being sociodiscoursal, sociocultural and sociopolitical. The important point to note here is that all terms begin with "socio," indicating that for ESP, "no community, no language."

The first ESP feature of being sociodiscoursal has a wealth of research starting with concepts of genre analysis proposed by John Swales in 1990 and 2004. Another form of ESP, New Rhetoric (Bazerman & Paradis, 1991; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995), arose from composition studies in North America, with a stronger focus on the writers themselves. The third major approach was from the Systemic-Functional Linguistics work based on the Sydney School (Halliday 1992; Leckie-Tarry, 1995) which tends to place more emphasis on the texts themselves. For more information on these movements, the Belcher review (2004) is strongly recommended. In this paper, I will focus on the genre analysis concepts of Swales (1990, 2004) and show how they can be developed for effective language teaching in various university situations.

The central ESP concept of "genre" can be defined as a communication event that is repeatedly used by members of a discourse community composed of people interested in achieving common goals. Communication is essential for these people to discuss, debate about and coordinate their thoughts and actions to achieve their goals, for example, in business activities or academic research. To raise the efficiency of communication, the genres develop distinct patterns of rhetoric and lexicogrammar. To delineate the rhetorical frameworks in texts, Swales (1990) introduced move analysis, while Hyland (2001, 2003), Cortes (2004) and others have published many papers on lexical bundles, multiword

expressions and hint expressions that use corpus linguistic methods (McEnery & Hardie, 2012) to identify frequently used lexicogrammatical patterns.

The second ESP feature of sociocultural refers to connections with the discourse communities in which the language is being used. For example, the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) considers situated learning in which novices are offered scaffolding in their attempts to enter expert communities. Trying to find ways to aid learners has led to much work in English for academic and occupational purposes. The third socio-political feature of ESP considers critically examining its effects on discourse (Master, 1998). This includes research on the implications of the dominant use of English and how this affects speakers of other languages in gaining a voice in their discourse communities. Work has been done on English as a lingua franca as well as English has an additional language.

How ESP can help the 21st century language user?

As stated above, the aim is to foster the development of motivated, self-directed and informed language users. ESP can foster motivation by preparing students to become active language users in their target discourse communities, whether it be in business, academia or other situated settings. ESP can help students acquire a sense of self-direction by acquiring genre awareness which can support language learning throughout their lifetime. ESP can show how to stay informed by using language analysis tools and taking advantage of useful websites and other resources.

Here, let us examine some specific examples. In the first case study, first- and second-year pharmacy majors (about 60 per class) were given quizzes at the beginning of every class to learn the technical vocabulary they would need to understand texts in the medical sciences. In order to raise motivation for what could be a trying task, the ideas, as discussed by Grabe (2009), were very effective: (1) involve students in the choice of texts and tasks, (2) build student self-confidence to raise their chances for success by providing support to aid students

as necessary, (3) create a pleasant and cooperative atmosphere, and (4) generate "flow." (p. 192) In the first year, the students were given quizzes in which they had to choose technical terms from a list to complete a sentence such as "She went to the (orthodontist) for braces to correct the alignment of her crooked teeth." In the second year, the students were invited to offer their own sentences for inclusion in the quizzes. They worked in groups of three to five to find words with Greek or Latin affixes in technical terms in the medical sciences and then create sentences using these words. The sentences from the groups were edited in class with explanations. The students were then told to re-examine them in preparation for a quiz using some of the student-created sentences.

A second example of raising student motivation involved second-year students in liberal arts. The class of about 20 students wrote opinion letters to a reader's forum in an English-language newspaper published in Japan. The task entailed a four-week cycle: (1) they worked in groups to read and analyze the features of the published letters, (2) reported on reference materials relevant to the topic assigned for the following month, (3) presented their letter drafts to the group/class for discussion, and (4) turned in a final draft which could also be sent voluntarily to the newspaper. This task offered a number of benefits. First, it allowed the students to deal with whole texts (about 300-word opinion letters) for a real audience. Second, students were made aware of the features of the published letters: methods of persuasion (reference to authority, examples), organization, length. The third benefit was learning about how to gather ideas and references, not only from published materials and websites but also from personal interviews and other innovative options. The students gained self-confidence in sharing their information, ideas and texts with others in the class and in getting feedback to help them shape their ideas and revise their writing. Those whose letters were actually published experienced the thrill of seeing their ideas in print.

ESP can support learners in gaining self-direction. Here is an example of fourth-year students in various science fields who worked with a textbook introducing various genres

useful for science and technology, ranging from safety rules to lab manuals, science feature articles and research paper abstracts. Students were told about the OCHA-PAIL approach (Noguchi, 1997, 2003) to understanding genre texts. OCHA is an acronym for observe, classify, hypothesize and apply, and PAIL for grasping the purpose, audience, information and language features of genre texts. By observing the genre features and classifying them, students can hypothesize about how they can effectively use them and then apply them for their own purposes. For example, as students majoring in sciences should be able to explain their research to laypeople, learning about the science feature article to introduce cutting edge research is very useful. Examination of this genre shows that it usually has a catchy title and a hook to capture the interest of the reader in the first sentence or two. More details are then given and the article ends with a concluding statement about the impact of the research in our daily lives. After understanding the features characterizing a science feature article, the students wrote their own articles on topics that interested them in their respective fields.

The third characteristic of a successful 21st century learner is to be informed about how they can become successful users of the language they wish to acquire. This is where genre analysis plus corpus linguistic tools are most effective. Noguchi (2003) describes a master's degree course in engineering where students learn how to analyze a research article for genre moves and also practice using concordance software to discover how words and phrases are used to respond to their specific needs. Small-scale personal corpora built for specific purposes can be useful for focused searches to aid writing in a second language. In a class to teach the writing of the research article, students are instructed to collect articles from reputable journals in their research field. These are articles that they would most likely be reading to support their own research. How to conduct a genre analysis is explained with the students working with articles that they themselves have included in their corpora. Students are also asked to make a "corpus discovery" by using concordance software with their corpora to find frequently used expressions or to compare words with similar meanings, for example,

"conduct/perform/run experiments"; "investigate" and "examine"; "demonstrate" and "show."

As can be seen from the above examples, ESP offers many ways to motivate learners, encourage their self-direction and show how they can acquire information to support their learning journey.

How can we work with Generation Z students?

The students in universities today are Generation Z people who differ in their perspectives and expectations from those who teach them. In order to effectively reach them, Haynes (2010) suggests that we assimilate technology, give feedback and coach them, include students in decision-making processes and expect students to collaborate with each other. The examples described above show how these suggestions can be realized. When possible, conducting classes in classrooms with access to computers allows immediate feedback and promotes instruction on the use of corpora, concordance software and other useful web tools. When doing genre analyses or choosing texts to work with, students are encouraged to select materials that interest them. Students work in groups to share information and collaborate with each other. All of this promotes a high level of motivation and self-direction.

What kind of English should we teach?

With English as a lingua franca being accepted over a "native speaker" model, the question arises of what kind of English should be taught. In considering this, let us turn to research in experimental social psychology:

Processing fluency, or the subjective experience of ease with which people process information, reliably influences people's judgments across a broad range of social dimensions. (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009, p. 219)

While some may argue that the genre analysis approach and encouraging the use of frequently used expressions to present moves in genre texts can stifle creativity, in ESP, the creativity is not in the wording but in the ideas that are being presented. Dressen-Hammouda (2008) in describing how novices attain expertise in their disciplines states:

> …it is argued that genre-based courses should also include instruction about both the target discipline's specialist knowledge frames as well as the implicit cues that help readers and writers reconstruct them. (p. 233)

For those wondering about "nativeness," Tribble (2017) opines:

> I would…hold that a focus on expertise in academic communication liberates the EAPWI (English for academic purposes writing instruction) teacher from a false dependence on (or insecurity in relation to) nativeness, and makes possible the development of teaching programmes which will provide practical, timely and effective means for supporting our students' development as academic writers. (p. 40)

Conclusion

This paper, based on a plenary address given at the 57th JACET International Convention, has pointed out the rapid changes occurring in society today and the importance of a lingua franca for communication with people around the world. The problems facing English education in Japan include the ineffectiveness of the system that has hitherto been in operation, the generation gap between students and instructors, and the variety of ELF forms considered acceptable today. To resolve these issues, using an ESP approach was suggested with the presentation of examples of how it has been successfully used in various university

classes to motivate students, encourage their self-direction and show them how to become informed about their language learning process to lay the basis for life-long learning.

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Selected Papers

Research Articles

Exploring EAP Teacher Cognition in Written Corrective Feedback

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Abstract

Written corrective feedback (WCF) has been thoroughly studied in terms of its effectiveness and students' perceptions in the contexts of English for General Purposes (EGP), although teachers' cognition of their feedback practice in the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) remains relatively unexplored. This study examined teachers' cognition of their feedback practice in an EAP context in order to examine what teachers regard as effective feedback, why they regard certain feedback as effective, and what kind of gaps exist between such effective practice and actual practice. Qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews with five instructors who taught academic-English courses in the UK. The interview data suggested that a teacher who has extensive EAP teaching experience may think feedback should focus on corrections beyond the sentence-level although focusing on such corrections can be difficult when teachers are used to the type of feedback delivery in EGP contexts or when students' proficiency is at lower level. The interview data also revealed that the gaps are caused by time constraints, teaching context, and the level of students' proficiency. In order to overcome the gaps, the present study suggested several potential strategies teachers might employ, including the use of collaborative feedback activities.

Introduction

Although there is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of feedback in English Language Teaching (ELT), researchers have primarily focused on students' preferences or the impact of feedback on students' writing accuracy, and thus some uncertainty remains about the perspectives of teachers. teachers' perspectives. As previous research has been student-focused, this trend can also be seen in the specific context of written corrective feedback (WCF) studies where more attention has been paid to students' assessment of each other's writings, otherwise known as peer feedback. Teachers' feedback remains important, however, as it has been reported that the students may prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback (Lee, 2015; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006; Zhang, 1995) or prefer a combined mode of peer and teacher feedback (Zhao, 2014). WCF is a common strategy employed in ELT writing instruction, which has traditionally tended to focus on grammatical error correction (e.g., Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Truscott, 1996, 1999), especially in the context of English for General Purposes (EGP). Although there has been an increasing interest in WCF, it has most often been studied in terms of its effectiveness to learners' grammatical development or surface errors (e.g., Ferris, 1999, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2007) and as yet little is known about feedback in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) where feedback regarding argument, style and academic-conventions are of importance in addition to surface error corrections.

Teacher cognition can be defined as "the complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs that language teachers draw on in their work" (Borg, 2006, p. 272) and is important as their intent and focus affect the practices (Borg, 2001; Burns, 1992; Mori, 2011). Teacher perceptions are considered to be a subcategory of the broader term teacher cognition. Although it is difficult to distinguish each concept from the others, for example, to distinguish belief from knowledge, teacher cognition is an overarching term that is able "to embrace the complexity of teachers' mental

lives" (Borg, 2006, p. 50). Teacher's cognition regarding WCF is of interest because one of the few studies investigating teacher cognition suggested that examining teacher cognition in corrective feedback research may make the research findings more relevant to teachers and thus help them to make a difference in classrooms (Mori, 2011). Another study regarding teachers' perspectives revealed that there is a gap between what teachers think is effective and the kind of feedback they actually give (Lee, 2009). Since it is not clear what causes this gap between their practice and cognition, further research is needed to investigate the nature of such mismatches, which is what the current study aims to explore. In order to explore the teachers' cognition, this study set out to examine the following research questions:

1. What do teachers regard as effective WCF, and why do they regard certain WCF as effective in EAP contexts?

2. What kind of gaps exist between such effective practice and actual practice, and why do such gaps arise?

Literature Review

While feedback has often been studied in terms of its purpose, form and effectiveness, little attention has been paid to teachers' cognition regarding their own feedback practices, especially in EAP contexts. As teaching context is a crucial factor that can affect both teachers' cognition and practice, it is important to examine this issue at various educational levels, and to consider contextual constraints (Lee, 2009; Lee, Leong, & Song, 2017), such as class size, teaching load, and institutional policy. Apart from the contextual constraints, another factor that may influence teachers' cognition is the perceived needs and capabilities of their students. Some teachers have reported that feedback is useful only when the feedback matches the students' proficiency and when it addresses the needs of the students (Lee et al., 2017). Although little research has been conducted in tertiary contexts (Lee et al., 2017), much WCF research has been conducted in EGP contexts including secondary schools

(Northcott, Gillies, & Caulton, 2016). These two contexts, however, differ greatly in terms of the aims and skills expected to be acquired. As EAP instruction has a particular aim, which is, "equipping students with the communicative skills to participate in particular academic and cultural contexts" (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p. 2), the feedback delivery and the content of feedback should be specifically designed for the context.

According to Seviour (2015), year-round pre-sessional EAP courses in the UK are designed to help students learn the academic language required for their chosen undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Although process-oriented writing is valued in such pre-sessional courses, it can be time-consuming to give formative feedback several times over the process. As the courses are often short-term, such as five weeks, it may not be possible to give students sufficient time to reflect on feedback and revise their essays accordingly (Seviour, 2015). Another issue is that feedback that takes into account the students' disciplines can be difficult in practice (Seviour 2015; Northcott et al, 2016). Teachers may feel uneasy when they have to give WCF on discipline-specific writing which they are not familiar with (Northcott et al, 2016) and thus they may not give feedback according to students' disciplines or they may give only general feedback (Seviour, 2015).

In contrast with EAP writing, WCF in ELT writing has been thoroughly researched, especially with a focus on how it should be provided in order to be effective (Bruton, 2009; Hartshorn et al., 2010; Kang & Han, 2015). As much of the previous research has been conducted in EGP settings, WCF in the literature tends to focus on the accuracy and correction of grammar and spelling (Northcott et al., 2016). Despite such studies, however, it is unclear whether WCF can improve the grammatical accuracy. Truscott (1996, 1999, 2007) claimed that error correction on grammar does not help improve a new piece of writing, although it may improve the accuracy of the revision of subsequent drafts. Ferris (1999, 2003), however, stated that WCF can improve the accuracy of new drafts and thus may lead

to improved abilities of students. Although they tried to evaluate the effectiveness of WCF on the grammatical accuracy of the learners' writings, Hyland and Hyland (2006) indicated that there is a lack of evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of such WCF due to the inconsistency in the research contexts, populations, and research designs.

Despite an uncertainty about the effectiveness of WCF in general, much debate has focused on the specific effects of direct and indirect feedback styles. Direct feedback typically provides correction of linguistic form or structure and may include the indication of unnecessary words and phrases, missing words, the correct form, the grammar rules, and examples of correct usage, while indirect feedback is typically provided with underlines or circles on errors and thus writers must correct the marked errors by themselves (Bitchener et al., 2010). Indirect feedback is suggested to be more effective for the development of writing-skills, especially in long-term learning because learners have to go through a reflection and problem-solving process (Lalande, 1982). Direct feedback tends to be preferred by students (Chandler, 2003) because they can see their errors corrected soon after writing and thus it is easier for them to revise. Indirect feedback may not be effective for learners at lower levels as they may need a certain level of linguistic competence to correct their own errors (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Similarly, indirect feedback is reported to be effective for treatable errors (Ferris, 2006) that "occur in a patterned, rule-governed way" (Ferris, 1999, p. 6), which include problems with verb tense, subject-verb agreement, run-ons, fragments, articles. Direct correction, on the other hand, should be given for untreatable errors (Ferris, 2006) for which there are no "set of rules students can consult to avoid or fix those types of errors" (Ferris, 1999, p. 6) which include problems with word choice, idioms and the sentence structure (Hyland & Hyland, 2006) and for advanced errors (Bitchener et al., 2010). Although there is extensive research regarding the grammatical error corrections, teachers' cognition regarding feedback has not yet been thoroughly investigated, especially in EAP contexts. The current

study therefore examines teachers' cognition regarding WCF in EAP contexts and considers contextual constraints that may have caused the gap between their cognition and practice.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to examine teacher cognition regarding WCF. As well as their cognition, the study examined factors that affected such cognition including academic background, training experience, and EAP teaching experience.

Participants, Research Context and Sampling Method

The current study was conducted in a language teaching center in a university in the UK, which offers both general and academic English courses for international students and staff. The students at the language teaching center can choose courses from EAP, EGP and skills-based courses including International English Language Testing System (IELTS) preparation courses. The EAP program is aimed at those who wish to improve their academic English skills before starting a degree course in the UK, or students who wish to improve their English in a university setting. Students are placed in classes according to their performances in a placement test. Class time is 20 hours per week and class size is approximately eight to 15 students. There are three semesters in a year and the data collection was conducted in the Semester Three, which lasts for two months.

Five teachers of academic English from the center were asked to participate in this study by email and then interviewed for 30 to 40 minutes. Their responses were audio-recorded and transcribed for the qualitative analysis. Whereas Teachers A, B, C and D were native speakers of English, Teacher E was a non-native speaker (see Table 1). Every teacher had more than 12 years of ELT experience and at least four years of EAP teaching experience. Teachers A, B, and C were teaching both year-round pre-sessional courses and

dissertation-writing courses in the semester when the interview was conducted. Teachers A, B, D, and E responded to the questions based on their teaching experience in year-round pre-sessional courses and Teacher C talked about the dissertation writing courses for master students as he was not teaching writing in the year-round courses. Teacher E talked about IELTS preparation courses, while Teachers A, B, and D talked about general academic-English courses. In the interview, the teachers were asked to explain the kind of feedback they gave on the students' writings and what they thought effective feedback should focus on, how they thought it should be given in the EAP courses they were teaching. They were also asked to explain what experience may have affected the cognition. A consent form was sent by email to potential participants and also presented before the interview. The researcher provided participants with clear information about the research and how the data would be used. It was also clarified that participants had the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time.

Table 1

Biography of Teachers

	Courses	NS or NNS	Teaching experience of English	Teaching experience of EAP	Post-graduate studies
Teacher A	Year-round pre-sessional	NS	20 years	5 years	MSc TESOL (completed a year before)
Teacher B	Year-round pre-sessional	NS	20 years	10 years	Language testing and assessment MSc (Distant, in progress), CELTA
Teacher C	Dissertation Writing course	NS	25 years	6 years	MSc TESOL, DELTA
Teacher D	Year-round pre-sessional	NS	13 years	8 years	MSc TESOL (in progress)
Teacher E	Year-round pre-sessional (IELTS preparation)	NNS	18-20 years	4 years	MSc TEFL (13 years ago)

In addition to the interview data, WCF was collected from Teachers A, B, and C and analyzed by triangulation to see whether emergent themes from the WCF correspond to themes in the interview data. Teachers A and B provided WCF from pre-sessional courses and Teacher C provided WCF from the dissertation writing course. Although WCF was not collected from Teacher D and E, all the important themes emerged from the interview data was supported by WCF collected from Teacher A, B, and C because the response from Teacher D and E were similar to Teacher A, B, and C. For WCF collection, an informed consent form was handed to the students by the teacher and those who agreed to provide their writings with WCF submitted the signed form to the teacher, which was then collected by the researcher.

Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to analyze the transcribed interview data and WCF on students' writings. This analysis includes the process of categorizing data based on the commonalities, differences and relationships within data to search for aggregated themes (Gibson & Brown, 2009). The feedback used for the analysis included underlines, codes, symbols, and written comments that, "constitutes a meaningful unit" within or beyond the sentence-level (Lee, 2008, p. 14). In order to meet the needs of the EAP context, the definition of WCF in this study was expanded to include corrections of sentence structure and the use of academic conventions and argumentation in addition to corrections of grammatical and lexical issues following the definition of WCF suggested by Northcott et al. (2016). All of the data from interview and the WCF were anonymized and any description that could identify individuals was avoided when including teachers' responses from interviews or comments from WCF relevant to the points of discussion.

The WCF given by Teacher A, B, C was analyzed by the researcher to see how the teachers' cognition may have affected their feedback practice and how their cognition was reflected in their practice. Examples of WCF given by Teacher A and Teacher B are provided in Appendix G (WCF 1, Teacher A) and Appendix H (WCF 2, Teacher B). Because Teacher D and Teacher E only gave WCF handwritten on assignments and returned them to students immediately after they submitted the assignments, it was not possible to collect textual instances from all the teachers. Teachers (A, B, D, and E) gave WCF on relatively short texts, such as one-paragraph essays or essays which consisted of multiple paragraphs. Teacher C gave WCF on sections of a dissertation. All teachers tended to give detailed and comprehensive WCF on all aspects of writing assignments, despite having limited time to provide WCF.

Results and Discussion

The themes that emerged from the interview data included direct and indirect feedback, corrections of errors beyond the sentence-level, and positive comments (see Table 2, Teachers' belief regarding the components of effective WCF). The data also revealed that the gaps between the ideal practice and actual practice may be caused by time constraints, teaching context, and the level of students' proficiency. The parts of the interview scripts which are relevant to the discussion in this section are introduced in the Appendices. Several themes emerged from the analysis of WCF, including a preference for positive comments combined with suggested improvements and direct feedback with clear indications of correct forms or suggestions of alternative expressions, which corresponded to the interview data. The analysis of data also indicated that teachers could use indirect feedback for simple grammatical errors to encourage students to think for themselves.

Table 2

Teachers' belief regarding the components of effective WCF

	Direct or indirect	Corrections of errors beyond the sentence-level	Positive comments
Teacher A	Direct feedback with suggestions of alternative expressions	Feedback should focus on construction of the argument and coherence, cohesion, a flow of information and argument	Highlight the praise-worthy aspect
Teacher B		Corrections of cohesion and information flow is more important than highlighting errors	Give positive comments and avoid excessive corrections
Teacher C	Direct when they do not have time and indirect when they have time to discuss feedback		
Teacher D	Indirect with error codes for low-level errors		Combine positive comments and advice for improvement
Teacher E		Feedback should focus on coherence	Give positive comments

Direct and Indirect Feedback

While direct feedback provides the student with the correct form, indirect feedback only indicates that the student has made an error, often by underlines, symbols, and codes. This indirect feedback often requires follow-up sessions in which students ask questions to teachers and teachers clarify what the feedback meant. Although the terms of "direct" or "indirect" were not explicitly stated, Teacher D remarked, for example, his feedback includes error codes, which are categorized as indirect feedback, and both Teacher A and C tended to give corrections with alternative expressions and detailed explanations, which are direct feedback (Bitchener et al., 2010). Teacher C, however, considered indirect feedback to be

more effective than direct feedback when he had time for follow-up sessions as students are required to correct errors by themselves. This view may have come from his research knowledge as he often explained with terms and concepts from corrective feedback research, which he said was useful in their current teaching practice. Teacher C stated that in the dissertation-writing course he usually gave direct feedback because he did not have time to discuss feedback in the classroom, whereas in other courses, he usually gave indirect feedback as he had time in class to discuss it with the students (see Appendix D: Transcript 4, Teacher C-1). Because of the lack of time and therefore opportunities for asking questions, he believed that WCF should be direct. In other classes where students have time to ask the teacher questions, he tended to simply underline and mark to indicate something was incorrect, so that students had to take time to process it by themselves. For example, for simple errors (including treatable errors) such as tense systems, he is more likely to give indirect feedback to encourage their reflection. This may be because indirect feedback is reported to be effective for treatable errors (Ferris, 2006) and also for the development of writing-skills and self-monitoring ability, as learners have to go through a reflection and problem-solving process (Lalande, 1982). Teacher C also stated that indirect feedback was not helpful unless there was a follow-up session. Although the teacher's remark was focused on indirect feedback, such a belief corresponds to the research finding that WCF may, "fall short of meeting students' needs if there are no opportunities for follow-up discussion and clarification" (Ferris et al., 2013, p. 323). Teacher A, on the other hand, seemed to consider direct feedback effective, as she believed that feedback should provide alternative expressions and indications of how learners might correct the errors, although she was aware that some teachers only highlight errors (for further details, see Appendix A, Transcript 1, Teacher A). She also explained that students would not look at the feedback again once they find out that it does not include clear indications of how they should correct the errors or how they can improve. She stated that this view may come from her past experience with students. It may

take time, however, to give such specific and detailed WCF. Teacher A expressed her concern that her choice of feedback may have been affected by time constraints, which may imply that her ideal practice was not always possible (see Appendix A). Teacher A also indicated that she gave direct feedback, but because it takes time, it was easier to explain orally after simply marking mistakes, rather than trying to explain them in written comments. As teacher's feedback shows, Teacher A tended to give long and detailed handwritten comments on students' texts, which may be one of the reasons Teacher A preferred oral feedback (see Appendix G).Teacher E thought that the feedback should be specific and detailed since the feedback she used to receive as an international student in the UK was not informative, so this experience as a learner influenced her cognition. Teacher D expressed his belief that he should give indirect feedback with error codes and not giving correct forms, as he knew, in theory, that he should not give the correct answer.

> …so depending on my expectations of the student and the level, my feedback does change, for example, with lower levels, I do generally use error codes and I write on them… and I know in theory we shouldn't be correcting their work… so I usually indicate that on the piece of paper. [...] if it's an error which I know the student should already know, I don't even indicate whether it's grammar or not, I might underline it with an exclamation mark which basically means, 'watch out, you made a mistake again'… (Teacher D's comments, see Appendix F: Transcript 6)

Corrections Beyond the Sentence-level

In EAP writing, teachers' WCF seemed to focus on beyond-sentence-level corrections, including cohesion, coherence, overall structure, and flow of the argument. The following example is from Teacher B's feedback in which he advised that the student should clearly state in the introduction that they were going to discuss the topic later in the paragraph as the

student had begun discussing a new topic in the second to last paragraph without mentioning it in the introduction:

> You make some good points that are nicely supported by examples. The end of the introduction could, however, have been better. The paragraph on Korea appears very suddenly. You could have said in your introduction that you would discuss the effects of globalization on Korea. Overall, though, well done! (Teacher B's feedback)

As Teacher B reported, the teacher tried not to correct every single error and tried to "read through the whole text" first, even though the approach was not always successful.

> Sometimes I try to read the whole… beginning with the whole text first but if, for example, the introduction is really bad… you are just going to pause and start correcting that introduction, because you know, the introduction sets up the rest of your text… It is quite a difficult thing for a language teacher to have a habit to get into… to read through the whole text without instantly jumping up and trying to correct something, to begin with. (Teacher B's comments, see Appendix C, Transcript 3)

Teacher B thought corrections of cohesion and information flow to be more important than highlighting errors and expressed that cohesion, "is a very important aspect of writing because it's writing beyond the sentence-level." As he had the longest EAP teaching experience among the participants, he explained how his feedback has changed from the time when he was teaching in EGP contexts, which shows how teaching experience in EAP context has affected his feedback. The teacher also pointed out there is a type of teacher who looks within the sentence-level, whereas an alternative approach is to read the whole text first and see if they can follow the ideas because problems in writing do not necessarily come from the language, but they may arise from issues with the information flow or cohesion. Teacher A stated that she tried to focus on "the overall construction of the argument and coherence, cohesion within paragraphs, whether or not they have managed to create a clear flow of

information and of argument" through the text. Teacher E mentioned that she tried to give WCF on coherence as it is one of the criteria of IELTS exam.

Positive Comments

Regardless of their backgrounds, including both research interests and teaching experience, all teachers reported that effective feedback should focus on the positive aspects of writing. Teacher A stated that an instructor should highlight the praise-worthy aspects of writing. Teacher B valued positive aspects as he believed simply pointing out mistakes could be demotivating for students. Teacher D said teachers should give comments to acknowledge what the learners did well because he would expect such comments if he was the student. The teacher further explained that he tried to indicate areas that needed improvement after he gave positive comments.

> …generally I do the whole thing of writing some positive things to, two or three
> positive things, are then there is, "but…", "watch out with… singular and plural or verb
> noun agreement", that kind of thing, or we will look at referencing in more detail in the
> future lessons, whatever… or, "look at this online" or, "look back the notes on this" but
> generally I do that…(Teacher D's comments, see Appendix F)

This cognition echoes their practice as positive comments followed by advice for improvements, often indicating a specific action the student would have to take, has been found in WCF of Teachers A, B and C (see Appendix G, WCF 1, Teacher A and Appendix H, WCF 2, Teacher B). Positive comments were frequently given in overall comments by the teachers, an example of which is as follows:

> You have done well at providing a strong topic sentence, good supporting sentences
> with clear explanation and examples and your concluding sentence connects well back

to the topic sentence. You need to continue to work however on more careful

proofreading to enhance basic grammatical and spelling errors. (see Appendix G)

This echoes the findings which state that instructors' positive comments enhance motivation

and lead to improvement in students' writing (Northcott et al., 2016).

Factors Affecting WCF Practice

As for Research Question 2, the data revealed that gaps exist between the teachers' ideal

practice and actual practice and that such gaps are caused by time constraints, teaching

context and the level of students' proficiency (see Table 3). In line with previous studies

(Junqueira & Payant, 2015; Lee, 2009), the interview data here showed that the teachers

tended to consider time constraints as one of the most important factors affecting their

practice. Teacher A, C and D mentioned time constraints several times in their responses

when they were explaining the gap between their ideal practice and the actual feedback they

gave in the classroom. Teacher C stated that he gave direct feedback, as there was not enough

time within his current class for students to take time to process indirect feedback. When

asked about effective feedback, the teacher said it depends on students and how much time he

has. Teacher A stated she preferred going through writing together with students face-to-face,

but that it was not always possible because of time constraints.

As WCF shows, Teacher A tended to give long and detailed handwritten comments on

students' texts, which may be one of the reasons teacher A preferred oral feedback (see

Appendix G). Teacher D reported that he was very impressed with the detailed feedback they

received as a student and wished he could give such detailed feedback to their students, but it

was not possible because he does not have sufficient time. As discussed in the literature

review, in short-term EAP courses, it is difficult to give students sufficient time to reflect on

feedback (Seviour, 2015), which may have affected the teachers' WCF practice.

Table 3

Factors Affecting Teachers' Feedback Practice

	Time Constraints	Teaching Context	The Level of Students' Proficiency
Teacher A	Face-to-face feedback is not possible because of time constraints		For lower-level students, the feedback may concentrate heavily on the sentence-level grammar correction
Teacher B		Experience in EGP contexts makes it difficult for the teacher to give WCF beyond the sentence-level.	With lower-level students, they cannot look at a larger picture of the text especially when it contains many errors
Teacher C	Time constraints make it difficult to give indirect WCF, which the teacher considers effective	Giving feedback on content is more challenging in EAP contexts because the content may be disciple-specific	
Teacher D	It is not possible to give the detailed WCF because of time constraints		
Teacher E	Face-to-face feedback is not possible because of time constraints		

As well as time constraints, teaching context, and past teaching experience in different contexts had an influence on teachers' feedback and thus led to the gap between their practice and cognition. One of the examples of such gaps is that it can be difficult for teachers to focus on corrections beyond the sentence-level because they are used to focusing on sentence-level corrections. Teacher B said it is difficult to read through the whole text first without correcting errors because he used to focus on sentence-level corrections and grammatical

accuracy in the EGP context and thus such experience might have influenced the way he gives feedback. Another gap which seemed to arise in the EAP context was that although teachers try to give feedback on the content, it can be challenging to do so in disciplines which teachers are not familiar with, because, as Teacher B said, the content is more advanced, complex and specialized than in EGP contexts. Teacher B stated that whereas in EGP courses, they focus on correction at the sentence-level with a detailed coding system, in EAP courses they focus more on clear communication (see Appendix B: Transcript 2, Teacher B). As the teachers need to comment on such aspects of learner writing, Teacher C stated that they have to, "wrestle with the content" for, "things with the specific purposes." The teacher further explained why it is difficult to comment on the content, providing an example of giving feedback on writing from disciplines he was not familiar with.

> For science… I don't know anything about those. I feel it's difficult for me to comment on that. And also I think as well, the tasks that students have to do, for example writing dissertations, they are really complex that, teachers giving more feedback on content is more challenging, because you have to have a good idea of what the task is. With general EFL context, the tasks are generally much simpler. So they are easier to analyze, to anticipate areas where students have problems. (see Appendix E: Transcript 5)

Teacher C, who was teaching dissertation-writing courses, mentioned the complexity of writing making it more difficult to give feedback. When asked if he thought he had to give feedback on anything that was related to students' disciplines, he said he could only give feedback within the areas he was familiar with, but Teacher C stated:

> In some occasions, when something appears, for example, too simplistic, I can write a comment, 'Are you sure about this? This seems too simple to me. Are you sure it is as easy as it is? Or is there more to this?' When it comes to writing about insufficient depth, details I can guess something is insufficient. (see Appendix E)

This partly echoes the findings that teachers may not give feedback on the content that are specific to students' disciplines because of the lack of exposure to the genres (Seviour, 2015), but the interview revealed that the teachers may try to give comments on contents about the sufficiency of the information in general.

The final factor that causes the gaps between teachers' practice and cognition is the level of students' proficiency. Although the reported cognition showed that teachers think feedback should focus on corrections beyond the sentence-level, they may not be able to focus on such aspects with lower-level learners. Teacher A said, for students with lower level of proficiency, the feedback may concentrate heavily on the sentence-level grammar correction even though the teacher tries to give feedback on coherence, cohesion, flow of information, and the overall construction of the argument. Teacher B stated that he tries to look beyond the sentence-levels, but with lower-level students, he cannot look at the larger picture of the text especially when it contains too many errors because these errors distract the teacher from following the flow of the arguments (see Appendix C: Transcript 3, Teacher B-2).

Conclusion

One of the research questions the current study examined was the kind of WCF that teachers regard as effective, and the reasons they regard certain WCF as effective. The interview data indicated that all teachers consider positive feedback effective no matter what their backgrounds are. However, teachers' backgrounds, including their teaching experience and research interests, may have affected their cognition of feedback practice. Another question the present research explored was the gaps that exist between what teachers consider as effective practice and their actual practice, and the reasons such gaps arise. One of the gaps revealed is that even when indirect feedback is more effective, direct feedback is preferred

because teachers do not have time for the necessary follow-up sessions that indirect feedback requires. The gaps may also arise because of the backgrounds of teachers and students: giving feedback on the content can be challenging when they do not have any experience or knowledge in the discipline; focusing on the corrections beyond the sentence-level can be difficult when teachers are used to the feedback delivery in EGP context or when students are lower level.

There are several potential strategies teachers might employ to overcome the gaps between the ideal practice and actual practice, which this study has illuminated. Teachers may be able to focus on the advanced issues such as corrections on the cohesion, coherence and structure by using automated writing evaluation such as *Criterion®* Online Writing Evaluation Service developed by Educational Testing Services (ETS), which will improve the accuracy of the students' writing and minimize the tasks of teachers. Alternate strategy is that teachers could give feedback in pair, for example, one teacher giving feedback on grammatical corrections and the other focusing on the coherence, overall structure, flow of the argument. Since the teaching context is one of the most important factors affecting their feedback, the teachers are required to make the right choice for the right context as reported in the interview. As the current study examined the cognition and practice of five teachers in a specific context in the UK, the findings may be limited due to the small sample size and limited number of textual instances. In order to increase the generalizability of the findings, it is recommended that further research be undertaken with greater sample sizes or in different educational contexts.

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Appendix A: Transcript 1, Teacher A

(A=Teacher A; I=interviewer)

I: What kind of feedback do you give on students' writing?

A: I think there are lots of different aspects I will focus on when I'm giving feedback, and it

may depend a little bit on the level of the students' proficiency, which aspects I might

choose to make the main focal point of feedback, so for lower level students, the

feedback may concentrate quite heavily on the sentence-level grammar correction and

correction of linguistic vocabulary errors etc... also, sentence structure, word order... even though with higher level students, I will try to give some kind of feedback that focuses more on the overall construction of the argument and coherence, cohesion within paragraphs whether or not they've managed to create a clear flow of information and of argument like through the text.

I: *I would like to know what you think about the effective feedback, how the feedback should be given to be effective and why… in the case of this course.*

A: I think in terms of effective feedback, I think it's important as a tutor to highlight the aspects of the writing… the way you can see as being praiseworthy so, you know, to point out to the student what things they've done well in the text and why you consider they managed to achieve that successfully, let's say, and… also to highlight the areas that you feel they need to work on to identify errors.

…I personally, generally choose to provide the student with an alternative. Some teachers just like to highlight a particular... what they consider an error or an issue of the writing and highlight that as an error or an issue but without offering the students their own suggestion as to how to correct it. I tend to provide some kind of indication as to how I would best… go about correcting that issue or error because my personal view... and maybe this comes from past experience with students is that, with some students, if you don't give them with some kind of indication as to how they might correct that issue or error they probably won't go away and think about it themselves… you know, They will look at the writing they've handed back to them, give it a glance a few minutes, put it away and won't look at it again.

… I will give a little brief explanation as to why, that tense, for example, it's more appropriate then the tense the students have used, but it also depends a little bit on the amount of time I have as a teacher within my working day allocated to give feedback to

individual students. Sometimes, your choice of feedback of how much time of feedback you give may be based on a time constraint.

…I think, in terms of what I think is genuinely most effective, often my preference, but this isn't always possible, again, because of time table constraints is that…my preference of giving feedback to a student on their writing, would be to be able to sit down face-to-face, individually with the student and go through the piece of writing together and explain verbally to the student, elicit, if possible, from the student, the statement, why something is an error or what they think is wrong with the structure or the paragraph or what they could have done to improve the clarity, let's say, of the argument.

Appendix B: Transcript 2, Teacher B

(B=Teacher B; I=interviewer)

I: *I would like to know what kind of the experience motivated you to think in that way, what kind of experience motivated you to give feedback in the way you are currently doing including teaching experience, postgraduate studies.*

B: I think it's changed quite significantly, because when I started off as an English teacher, I was largely teaching general English and there's no… the end of this theme isn't very much focused on... like a sentence-level correction, grammatical accuracy and using these detailed code systems for students 'WW= wrong' word 'SP= spelling' and all that kind of thing and then as I became more involved in English for academic purposes I spent most of my time teaching EAP and quite often with in-sessional students as well, dissertation writing education courses.

I'm also thinking more about the ability to communicate clearly but also meeting their expectations sometimes of academic discourse, so it's something that understanding about maybe how writing is assessed within master's program, in-sessional programmes.

So, thinking about that, and… really what can help students most in terms of improving their writing. Does it really help students if you spend ages focusing on articles when you can get proof-readers to check that sort of things, perhaps. And I think that's been … approach is probably been informed by research into feedback because There's quite a lot of research that actually I was reading, for example using code system, does not necessarily work, have little impact on the quality of students' work, highlighting where errors are, can be useful, but you don't need to do it often when you can offer a lot more, so that's maybe one thing.

Appendix C: Transcript 3, Teacher B-2

I: *When you focus on this specific EAP courses, do you think you first focus on the overall side (beyond the sentence-levels) or do you go from (focusing on) specific points (within the sentence-level) to overall side?*

B: Sometimes I try to read the whole… beginning with the whole text first but if, for example, the introduction is really bad… you are just going to pause and start correcting that introduction, because you know, the introduction sets up the rest of your text… It is quite a difficult thing for a language teacher to have a habit to get into… to read through the whole text without instantly jumping up and trying to correct something, to begin with.

Appendix D: Transcript 4, Teacher C-1

(C=Teacher C; I=interviewer)

I: *What kind of students' texts do you give feedback on? Is it like a short paragraph or...?*

C: They… their instructions for this group are to write… They've been told that I have 30 minutes of time to give feedback. If they send me that's long, I can only give global feedback. If they give me something short, I can give detailed feedback, but at the

moment I'm giving quite detailed feedback… detailed and unfocused feedback. Usually, (in this course) very explicit because I haven't got the time. Usually, I give implicit feedback with my own classes when I know that I have time in class to discuss it with them in a conferencing situation. But with these students, I don't have time to discuss it with them, so I'm more explicit.

I: Because your students do not have time to ask questions…?

C: So, 'Please ask me questions if you don't understand something, please ask me, but there isn't enough time because we have so much to do, in such little time, there isn't the time, with previous classes though, where I had more time, I've given implicit feedback, perhaps underlining things and circling things and then I ask the students to analyse, to tell me what they think. I've just indicated something is not right, but they have to do the hard work to identify where it is, and if they can't and they can ask me, but that takes class time, and with course, currently, I don't have time.

Appendix E: Transcript 5, Teacher C-2

I: When comparing this dissertation writing courses and other general EFL classes, do you think your feedback should be different? (given in different ways)

C: There are some features of academic writing which may not apply in more general context. So I find myself…things like citation, paraphrasing, summarizing, these are perhaps more central to academic discourse than they are outside, but really, outside, whatever, wherever the gaps are, between what students can do and ideally what students want to do, I think everything is relative, I think with something with EAP. Is that they often, the content is at more advanced level, it's a different discipline, sciences, social sciences and other discipline, it maybe something that I don't understand, so that can be difficult.

General English of course you… things from everyday life, things form newspapers or social encounters or things like that, things teachers are familiar with, but again, things with the specific purposes you have to wrestle with the content. For science… I don't know anything about those. I feel it's difficult for me to comment on that. And also I think as well, the tasks that students have to do, for example writing dissertations, they are really complex that, teachers giving more feedback on content is more challenging, because you have to have a good idea of what the task is.

With general EFL context, the tasks are generally much simpler. So they are easier to analyse, to anticipate areas where students have problems. With something much more complex, there are so many different areas you have to anticipate and maybe… types of discourse you are not familiar with, for example, science report, I've never written assignments on science, I've never read them. So that's very difficult to teach.

I: *Do you think you have to give feedback on anything that is related to their disciplines?*

C: …There's no way I can do that. They know the subject more than I do…In some occasions, when something appears, for example, too simplistic, I can write a comment, 'Are you sure about this? This seems too simple to me. Are you sure it is as easy as it is? Or is there more to this?' When it comes to writing about insufficient depth, details I can guess something is insufficient. And I imagine you could write more about this.

Appendix F: Transcript 6, Teacher D

(D=Teacher D; I=interviewer)

I: *I would like to know what you think about the effective feedback and which aspect of the students' writing the feedback should focus on and to be effective in this in the case of this specific yea-round EAP course.*

D: It's a difficult one, I mean, it depends on the class, it depends on the level, it depends on

the individual student as well, it really does, I give different feedback for each student

because I know, once you work with the students for a while, I know maybe the things

they're trying to improve and they've been successful so I can give credit for that or

maybe there's something in particular that I've told them to 'focus on this'… a lot of

students, the concept of citation and referencing even just how to write a reference list,

for example, they're not getting it for whatever reasons, so depending on my expectations

of the student and the level, my feedback does change, for example, with lower levels, I

do generally use error codes and I write on them…

…I know in theory we shouldn't be correcting their work so generally I indicate… so I

usually indicate that on the piece of paper. If it's, for example, if it's a lower level student

and I think probably they're not going to make… get this word sometimes I do, I'll

actually write the correction as well, not across all of it, but I will sometimes write the

corrections, and sometimes, again, expectations of the students, if it's an error which I

know the student should already know, I don't even indicate whether it's grammar or not,

I might underline it with an exclamation mark which basically means 'watch out, you

made a mistake again', I might underline it and then they can see there's something

wrong with it, I won't tell them whether it's grammar, singular, plural, things like that, so

they have to work it out, and again, it depends on the level of the students, that sort of the

micro feedback of individual things.

…generally I do the whole thing of writing some positive things to, two or three

positive things, are then there is 'but…', 'watch out with… singular and plural or verb

noun agreement that kind of thing, or we will look at referencing in more detail in the

future lessons, whatever… or 'look at this online' or 'look back the notes on this' but

generally I do that… I do comments on the page, there's a little comment about the

content and I will actually respond to the content of the text but also the overall structure,

In China, due to high security, good entertainment places and lower demands of life, most of people are enjoying their life. China is one of the countries, which prohibit the circulation of firearms. Although there will still be some minor violations, but in general can guarantee the safety of the people. As well as, in many reports shows that China's rescue is also very fast. Such as WenChuan Earthquake, Tangshan explosion. In addition, in China, there are many various kinds of entertainment places. With the improvement of people's living standard, people are more aware of that they need to enjoy their leisure time in those entertainment places to relax themselves. For example to do spa with their friends or go shopping with their family. In another words, employees seems like to enjoyment their leisure time with their friends or family in café or theatres to change their minds. Thirdly, most of Chinese citizens do not need high standard of living, so they need not big house and expensive cars. They just want to have basic necessities which are easy to achieve. They seems like do not have high life stress. Consequently, most of Chinese people feel happiness, because they will not be worried about their safety and they also could spend their free time in different entertainment places, as well as they do not have lots of require of their daily life

Handwritten margin notes:

'but' is unnecessary here as you have used 'although' already to show contrast.

not having a lot of requirements in

Do you really mean 'change' their minds? 'change' in what way?

You have done well at producing a strong topic sentence, good supporting sentences with clear explanation and examples and your concluding sentence connects well back to the topic sentence. You need to continue to work however on more careful proofreading to eliminate basic grammatical and spelling errors.

This cannot be a sentence on it's own as there is no verb. Instead you could connect this information to the previous sentence with a relative clause eg. Additionally, many reports show that China's rescue service is also very fast, which was evidenced in their response to the Wenchuan Earthquake and the Tangshan explosion.

organization and then one or two things to think about for the next essay. **Appendix G:**

WCF 1, Teacher A

Appendix H: WCF 2, Teacher B

Another important argument ~~is about~~ relates to culture. As the world is more globalised, we can know more about other countries' cultures. For example foods, lifestyles, language, climate and so on. I think this is ~~the most~~ biggest benefit of ~~the~~ globalisation because we can understand more things. However, there are some negatives in terms of language. ~~About language,~~ English now has enormous power now in the world and some major languages also are powerful, so some minor languages have disappeared. They are also quite important language, so it is a serious problem. A second problem is that some people are against other cultures and attack them, so sometimes they have conflict.

In conclusion, globalisation has ~~resulted in~~ affected our lives ~~from~~ in many ~~ways~~points. ~~We~~ Although ~~have~~ there are both positives and negatives, ~~but~~ I am for ~~the~~ globalisation because we can get more benefits than disadvantages. Nowadays, it has become bigger and wider, so we need to understand it and adapt to it.

Well done! A clearly organised essay in which you make some very good points. You do, however, need to work on essay introductions.

'In terms of' is a useful phrase to know and use. For example, in terms of shopping, Glasgow is a better city than Edinburgh.

These days, the world is becoming more and more globalised.

Good contrast.

Good point.

Assuring the Quality of Classroom Life Through Exploratory Practice: Learners' Experiences

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Abstract

This article reports on an aspect of a study which focused on the effects of practitioner-centered research in the form of Exploratory Practice (EP) on language learners' practices. EP is a viable way for language learners to cultivate their own understanding of classroom life. In total, 76 high school students participated in the present study. They experienced an EP endeavor over the course of four months, involving three cycles with two components: (a) classroom observation and (b) reflective class. Among the participants, four focal participants took part in individual interviews and pair discussions as part of the endeavor as well. Data were collected with two qualitative methods: individual interviews and pair discussions. An analysis of the data indicated that the experiences during the EP (being observed in their classes, participating in reflective classes, sitting for interviews, and joining pair discussions) helped the focal student participants to apply the three fundamental EP issues (i.e., the 'what', 'who', and 'how') in their learning. That is, they began to place emphasis on understanding their lessons, collaborate with each other for mutual development, and regard EP as a continuous enterprise. Suggestions for future EP research are also given.

Keywords: Exploratory Practice (EP), language learners, quality of classroom life

Introduction

Practitioner research is a practitioner-initiated systematic inquiry into teaching and learning practices at the grassroots level. One kind of practitioner research called Exploratory Practice (EP) is the research *of*, *for*, and *by* teachers and learners within their idiosyncratic contexts. EP is championed as a sustainable framework that provides a viable way for language teachers and learners to cultivate their awareness about the quality of their classroom lives through grappling puzzles that arise from their shared endeavors (Allwright, 2005; Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Hanks, 2017a). In this approach, language teachers and learners can enhance the quality of classroom life by placing value on a contextualized understanding of their lives – both inside and outside their classrooms – over lesson efficiency or student test scores (Gieve & Miller, 2006). 'Puzzles' are born out of curiosity and require collaborative work to be understood and addressed, as opposed to 'problems' that simply render generalizable solutions (Hanks, 2009). It can thus be said that "EP draws on ideas of empowerment, as practitioners (learners and teachers) identify what puzzles them about their language learning/teaching experiences, and use their pedagogic practices as tools for investigation" (Hanks, 2017b, p. 38). At the heart of EP is an egalitarian value that promotes learners, teachers, teacher educators, and all of those involved with language teaching and learning to be treated equally and therefore encouraged to explore their teaching, learning, and research activities collaboratively.

Literature now exists that documented successful cases of EP in a variety of contexts around the world (e.g., Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Hanks, 2017a, Yoshida, Imai, Nakata, Tajino, Takeuchi, & Tamai, 2009). However, what is noteworthy, given the equal weight EP attaches to both teachers and learners, is that there are relatively few EP studies which focus specifically on learners. The focus of this study is therefore the effects of an EP endeavor particularly on language learners' experiences, beliefs, and practices. It is hoped that this study contributes to knowledge about how the language learners' EP experiences enable them

to develop into practitioners of learning, and not just targets of teaching (Allwright & Hanks, 2009). In addition, this study aims to provide strategies for future EP endeavors.

Exploratory Practice (EP)

EP is conceptualized as a practitioner-oriented research that seeks to enrich the quality of life in the classroom whilst following the three fundamental EP issues: the 'what', 'who', and 'how' (Allwright & Hanks, 2009). The 'what' issues represent an attempt to emphasize the understanding about the intricacies of language classroom tasks and lives. Slimani-Rolls and Kiely (2014), for instance, carried out an EP study, valuing the 'what' issues, with eight university teachers in UK. In the study, the teachers observed video clips of their own lessons and discussed puzzles that arose from that viewing. As a result, the teachers gained insights into their classroom interaction and acquired a set of classroom analysis tools for reflective practice. The 'who' issues seek to give voice to all the participants concerned in order to increase inclusivity, collegiality, and mutual development. An example of this is an EP study conducted by five university ESL instructors in USA (Best, Jones-Katz, Smolarek, Stolzenburg, & Williamson, 2015). They conducted the research in collaboration with their students on the outcomes of the feedback the students received on their writing. They found that the students felt a great amount of anxiety about their grades and that they desired more face-to-face interactions with their teachers. Based on the findings, the researchers called for the need to create time and space for teachers and students to share their opinions and consolidate their relationships. The 'how' issues concern the importance of minimizing the extra workload required to carry out EP research and making the endeavor a continuous professional development opportunity. In an academic preparation course in Australia, for example, Rowland (2011) incorporated his research into his curriculum. He asked his students to compare their language learning experiences with the findings of some research literature on the matter. He concluded that the EP endeavor allowed him to perceive his students as

critical language experts in their own right and that he could gain this understanding through normal curricular activities. Hiratsuka (2016a) gave particular consideration to the three fundamental EP issues (i.e., the 'what', 'who', and 'how') and explored the EP experiences of two pairs of team teachers in two public high schools. His study revealed the unique ways that each individual teacher adopted and/or resisted the three EP issues during their EP journeys.

Although they are as yet not substantial, attempts have also been made to delve into the EP experiences of language learners. In her EP study, Chu (2007) gave her students the opportunity to decide on what they want to learn in class, a rare practice around the world but having the potential to give students power and responsibility for their own learning. She investigated the reactions of her students by eliciting feedback on the course as well as gathering student journals and worksheets. Based on the data, she argued that it is crucial to try to thoroughly understand teaching and learning practices, as opposed to finding solutions to problems, and to focus on students' strengths, as opposed to their weaknesses. Hanks (2015) reported the perspectives on EP of learners who were studying in an EAP program in UK. The findings suggested that EP was feasible in an EAP context and that the participating learners appreciated the new responsibilities given to them as explorers of their own classrooms. Most germane to the present study, Hiratsuka (2016b) documented how an EP process transformed the learning practices of Japanese high school students. His study concluded that the students became empowered learners and researchers because (a) they began to provide alternative learning methods, (b) they gave opinions about future learning, (c) they became highly involved with the research activities, and (d) they made suggestions for further research.

Although there are many similarities, this study differs from Hiratsuka (2016b) in some important ways. First of all, the focus of this study is the learners' experiences specifically relating to the three EP issues (i.e., the 'what', 'who', and 'how'). Another key difference is the unique contribution this study makes through its discussion in which I introduce three

strategies for successful EP endeavors. The following is the research question formulated for the present study: In what way did the participating students of an EP endeavor follow and achieve the three EP issues (the 'what', 'who', and 'how')?

Methodology

The participants in a larger study of which this study is part were: (a) two pairs of team teachers—each pair consisting of a Japanese teacher of English (JTE) and a foreign assistant language teacher (ALT)—from two public high schools, Sakura High School and Tsubaki High School (all the names of schools, classes, and participants in this article are pseudonyms); and (b) 76 second-year high school students from the two classes that each pair was teaching at the time of data collection. The teachers took part in an EP endeavor which consisted of three cycles over the course of four months with five components: (a) classroom observation, (b) pair discussion, (c) focus group discussion, (d) EP story writing, and (e) individual interview (see Hiratsuka, 2016a for details). The students participated in an EP endeavor which also consisted of three cycles over the course of four months but with two components: (a) classroom observation and (b) reflective class. In other words, the students were observed in their English classes by me (the visiting researcher) three times in each school. The observation opportunity facilitated my familiarization with the teachers' and students' practices in their classroom environments. In the reflective classes, which were held three times in each school, the students had the opportunity to listen to my talks about English language teaching and learning, watch a five-minute clip taken from the previous observed class, and write feedback sheets whereby they expressed their thoughts, ideas, and wishes about their teachers' practices and their own learning (see Hiratsuka, 2014).

Sakura High School was a vocational high school, and Tsubaki High School was a liberal high school. Each JTE in those schools chose a class on which to focus for the larger study (i.e., 2A in Sakura and 2B in Tsubaki). While 2A was a general course where the students

took three English classes a week, 2B was an international course where the students had six English classes a week. After the participating classes were selected, I asked the JTEs to choose two focal students from each class according to the following process. The first step in choosing the focal students was to randomly list the students from the class who were not busily engaged with club activities after school hours. They would possibly have more time to participate in the required activities for the EP endeavor (i.e., individual interviews and a pair discussion). The second step was for the JTEs to divide the list into a male list and a female list. For the final step, I asked the JTEs to choose the third student from the top of each list (i.e., one male and one female from each class). As a result, Kanon (female) and Tatsuya (male) were chosen at Sakura, whereas Sayaka (female) and Yousuke (male) were selected at Tsubaki. Kanon was a Student Council member, Tatsuya was a Soccer club member, Sayaka was a Japanese Culture club member, and Yousuke was a Student Council member. In the same manner as Hiratsuka (2016b), this paper reports only on the four focal students. The four focal participants took part in individual interviews and pair discussions as part of the endeavor as well. In other words, the focal student EP endeavor was consisted of: (a) classroom observation, (b) reflective class, (c) individual interview, and (d) pair discussion, and the data of this study were collected via individual interviews and pair discussions. At the beginning and the end of the EP endeavor, I interviewed each focal student in Japanese for approximately 60 minutes. Also, at the midpoint of the EP endeavor, the two focal students at each school and I had a discussion in Japanese for about 30 minutes, respectively. As the initial data analysis, I transcribed all the interviews and discussions, and translated them into English while making every effort to maintain the meaning of the utterances of the participants. A content analysis approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) was then employed to group the data into fewer and broader codes, categories, and finally themes.

Findings

EP hinges on the three issues (i.e., the 'what', 'who', and 'how') (Allwright & Hanks, 2009), and the goal of any EP endeavor is for the participants to adhere to them within their particular research contexts. The 'what' issues focus on the quality of classroom life by broadening everyone's understanding of what is occurring in the language classrooms. The 'who' issues involve bringing everybody together to enhance inclusivity, collegiality, and mutual development. The 'how' issues relate to minimizing the participants' workload in EP research and raising the possibility of continued exploration. I present below how the participants in this study followed and achieved the principles of the three issues within their respective and shared EP endeavors.

The 'what' issues

Of the four focal students, Sayaka and Yousuke at Tsubaki in particular recognized the importance of the 'what' issues and showed evidence of it over the course of the EP endeavor. For example, Sayaka remarked in her final interview that the experience encouraged her to think about her classes:

> I never thought of what sort of class I wanted to be in before. A class is a class. I just had to take it. That's how I felt. But I began to become interested in certain things more and more. Based on the experience I have had this semester, I now know that as long as I am interested in something, I will spend time and learn a lot about it.

Through the EP endeavor, Sayaka took on a more reflective stance with regard to her learning. As a result, she became aware that she could invest time and energy for meaningful learning when what she learns matches what she is interested in. The other focal student at Tsubaki, Yousuke, placed emphasis on the lives of teachers and students in the classroom and attempted to understand them better. During his final interview, he described what he learned

from my talks during the reflective classes, one of which was related to the noticing

hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990):

> I didn't necessarily think I was learning English per se in the endeavor, but you were
>
> talking about things that were directly related to English learning…. I made many
>
> discoveries, which I normally cannot in usual classes…. I was like, "Oh, this is
>
> noticing!" I was noticing 'noticing'. And your talk was about making learning directly
>
> relate to our life experiences.

He appreciated a different type of 'learning' during the EP, which encompassed a broader

issue connected to the quality of classroom life in language classrooms. In the EP, he was

learning about how to learn English ("things that were directly related to English learning")

rather than learning the specifics of the English language itself, as is ordinarily done when

English is taught as a school subject ("learning English per se"). He also saw how learning

was directly related to personal life experiences outside the classroom (see also Hiratsuka,

2016b).

The 'who' issues

In this study, all the participants seemed to have embraced the 'who' issues. Kanon at

Sakura, for instance, gave considerable thought in her final interview to what others (i.e.,

other students and their teachers) might feel and experience:

> Kanon: Not all the students share the same ideas or opinions, right? So, teachers
>
> should listen to their students' opinions as much as possible. I think teachers need to
>
> have the ability to deal with different students' needs and ideas…. I don't think
>
> teachers grow as professionals if teachers always impose their opinions on their
>
> students….
>
> Researcher: What can we do to include students' opinions?

> Kanon: If I were a teacher, it might be troublesome, but I would write down questions on the blackboard and have my students answer them. And rather than correcting their answers right away, I would have everyone answer the questions and elicit the reasons for their answers.

By putting herself in her teachers' shoes, Kanon explored teacher and student development. She imagined herself being a teacher and offered one way to increase inclusivity in the classroom through her suggested activity. She also promoted a more equitable method of teaching whereby she suggests that the teacher will grow if he or she allows opinion sharing in the classroom. Like the participants in Chu's (2007) and Hank's (2015) studies, she became a key practitioner of learning through reflecting and imagining. The other focal student at Sakura, Tatsuya, reflected on the value of collaboration between students. He commented on Kanon's input in his final interview: "I am glad I could listen to somebody else's opinion in the pair discussion.... I could understand what the other student was thinking … and refer to it". The opportunity for listening and sharing within EP activities gave Tatsuya the chance to view the learning environment from another's perspective. Sayaka also mentioned how having a discussion partner made her EP experience worthwhile. We had the following exchanges in her final interview:

> Sayaka: When I had the pair discussion with Yousuke, I was simply amazed at how much he could talk. I was thinking, "I cannot talk like this" (laugh). Like it or not, my ideas were influenced by Yousuke's ideas.
>
> Researcher: Do you think the discussion with him influenced your English learning?
>
> Sayaka: Yes. I think I changed my thinking.

The shared reflection on learning within the EP endeavor helped Sayaka to learn from her peer and to more fully understand what English learning means. In his final interview, Yosuke, evoked the spirit of the 'who' issues by saying:

> I think only people can change people…. For example, when we prepare for university entrance examinations, if one person takes the preparation seriously, two people start to take it seriously…. In our classroom, the first thing we can do is to talk to a group of people around us and suggest some things. And gradually from there, the conversations will spread to others like, "Oh, what about this?"

Yosuke thought that the students could take learning more seriously and generate more ideas when they communicate with other peers and share their thoughts because "only people can change people". This quote reflected two findings from previous EP works: the first being "the pleasure of being in a position to help others" (Hanks, 2015, p. 126) and the second being the benefits that arise from providing opinions and exchanging ideas as a responsible decision-making practitioner (Chu, 2007).

The 'how' issues

In this study, several features of the EP endeavor seemed to have led two students in particular, Sayaka and Yousuke, to consider the 'how' issues. For instance, Sayaka mentioned in her final interview the advantages of having three cycles:

> I was extremely nervous to be observed by you at first…. I initially thought I had to show my best behavior…. Probably at the very beginning, all of us were feeling like that. But you came a couple of times, right? Then gradually everybody became like, "Oh, he is here again", just like that.

Even though she initially felt she had to be on her "best behavior" in the observed classes, after I visited her classroom a couple of times she no longer felt pressured and took part in the classes as usual. This corresponds to the ideals of the 'how' issues in the EP world: the endeavor was a continuous enterprise and did not create an extra burden for the participants. Yousuke and I specifically discussed the three EP issues in his final interview. This

discussion prompted insightful opinions about the issues, and he expressed the need for agency in the classroom in order to continue the journey:

> What you are hoping to achieve seems to be a very good environment…. It would be ideal to have a situation with students and teachers working together, but it is very difficult at the moment in this current situation…. What would we do? Where can we start? …. Even a small action can make people aware…. Of course, we need some key experiences like this endeavor. But first we need someone to be the key person. We can start from there, and then one person becomes two people, and two people become four people and so on…. Also, teachers and students need to have a collegial relationship…. The harmony in the classroom, or the chemistry in the air, they all have to pre-exist. Can we do it? … I cannot picture exactly yet … but we need to take further action soon.

He agreed with the egalitarian values that underpin EP in that an ideal environment is one where students and teachers can work together collaboratively to create quality within language classrooms ("It would be ideal to have a situation with students and teachers working together"). However, he believed that his current situation was not conducive to creating such an environment. Yet, it was evident from this quote and his overall positioning that Yousuke wanted to be "the key person" in the near future to continue the EP experience. Importantly, he wanted to make a harmonious classroom where small changes create opportunities for growth ("even a small action can make people aware"; "I cannot picture exactly yet … but we need to take further action soon").

Minimal effects

I have shown above that all the student participants, although varyingly, provided evidence of embracing the EP issues over the course of the endeavor. However, it is to be expected that the EP would, at times, have only a 'minimal effect' to zero effect on the participants'

practices. Johnson (2009) states that "when human agency plays a central role in development, there are always differences in how different people react to the same set of circumstances [EP experiences] at different times" (p. 116). This phenomenon was also reported in the study by Hiratsuka (2016a).

There were occasions in this study when the participants, most evidently Kanon and Tatsuya, did not always follow the EP issues. Kanon, for example, described her experience with the pair discussion as follows: "Although it might be the case that he [Tatsuya] had the same opinion, I thought he might have been thinking different things. So, I could not really say what I was thinking in the discussion". Kanon was concerned about her partner's opinions to the extent that she could not freely express hers and failed to work cooperatively for mutual development. Tatsuya made some worrisome comments during his interview. Even though he reported to have benefitted from the EP endeavor by realizing that he could learn a lot from team-taught classes conducted by JTEs and ALTs, and he began to like team-taught classes more than before, at the end of the endeavor he still had a negative attitude towards JTEs. He regarded their solo classes as useless for his future: "The usual classes by Japanese teachers will not be useful at all when we go to foreign countries. I read it in a book somewhere. So, I want to have a real foreigner in the classroom". This positioning of the JTE classes as useless is counter to the EP issues of working cooperatively for mutual development. The EP did not seem to encourage him to challenge the premise he held. In the worst case scenario, the EP experience might have in fact 'facilitated' the native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) and led him to think that team-taught classes with a foreigner are better than JTEs' solo classes.

Discussion

The literature on EP studies has reported that EP endeavors promoted the enrichment of many student participants' quality of classroom life. In particular, those participants in previous EP studies demonstrated their capabilities to advance their understanding of their

own learning. It has been argued that the EP approach is more beneficial for assuring the quality of classroom life than other approaches that focus on finding quick solutions to technical problems (Chu, 2007). Student participants also reported that they welcomed new and increased responsibilities as developing learners in their contexts (Hanks, 2015). Furthermore, they demonstrated that they had become empowered learners and researchers by providing alternative learning methods and making suggestions for further research (Hiratsuka, 2016b). In the present study, Sayaka and Yosuke in particular embraced the 'what' issues by taking a reflective stance towards their learning and, through this, learned more about how to learn, i.e., developing their meta-learning capabilities. All the focal students cherished the 'who' issues. For example, Kanon and Tatsuya used reflective and imaginative practices to suggest activities that would increase inclusivity while Sayaka and Yosuke championed the egalitarian values of EP by promoting collaboration among all the people concerned in the classroom. Finally, Sayaka and Yosuke in particular adhered to the 'how' issues by noting the benefits of greater familiarity between the participants and the researcher and, in the case of Yosuke, the possibility of continued agency, under the condition of there being a key person. Considering the findings from the previous EP studies as well as those of this current study, I now suggest three strategies for raising the likelihood of success in future EP journeys.

First, I recommend that, at the outset of and throughout the EP research, the participants understand explicitly what participation in it entails and precisely what the three EP issues aim to achieve. In this study, there were occasions in which Kanon and Tatsuya in particular were not sure about the goals or purposes of the EP activities and did not adhere to some of the core principles in the three EP issues (see also Hiratsuka, 2016a). At the beginning of an EP study, the three EP issues should be explained to all the people involved, and their understanding should be checked. Subsequently, there should be an opportunity to negotiate the terms and their involvement in the study. They should then be reminded as often as

possible during the study about the three EP issues and, as the study evolves, make concrete links from immediate experience to each EP issue. Second, EP participants need to be told to accept that some ambiguity and uncertainty will prevail within their unique contexts. That is, each EP practitioner should take ownership of their endeavor by planning, executing, and evaluating their endeavor in their own ways whilst taking into account all the affordances and limitations of their particular contexts. It is essential to recognize that there is no one style, process, or activity that can perfectly embody the ideals of the three EP issues; in other words, researchers and participants alike need to be flexible and be prepared to learn by trial and error (see Chu, 2007; Hiratsuka, 2016b).

Finally, as Hanks (2017a) addressed repeatedly, in EP it is of utmost importance to generate and maintain trust among the participants. As exemplified in the case of Kanon in this study, EP cannot fulfill its true potential when there is a lack of trust between the participants. Whether it is between the researcher and participants, between teachers and students, or amongst teachers and students, trust needs to be built through increasing familiarity with each other. This can be enhanced by sharing our honest intentions and disclosing our vulnerabilities to each other, for example, through the use of a discussion activity. This high level of trust promotes the sharing of ideas and thoughts between participants as well as advancing empathy for each other. These three suggestions of increasing clarity of the goals, accepting a degree of ambiguity, and building trust are likely to improve the chances of success in the EP endeavor.

Conclusion

An inquiry-based EP endeavor, like the one documented in this paper, has proven to have the potential to enable students to realize the three EP issues ('what', 'who', and 'how') and therefore enrich the quality of their classroom lives. Nonetheless, EP research is still in its infancy and requires a significant amount of growth and refining before it can more

consistently increase the quality of classroom life in a variety of contexts around the globe. Researchers should thus continue to "critically examine EP as a subject in its own right, as a lens through which to see the world, developing their, and our, understandings of this innovative new form of practitioner research" (Hanks, 2017, p. 10). My desire is that this article and other EP research can inspire more language teachers and students to engage in EP endeavors with a better understanding of the three EP issues, a strong sense of ownership of their own EP, and a great deal of trust in each other.

Acknowledgements

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Investigation of the Learning Process for English Wh-Question Intonation: Japanese Learners

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Abstract

This study investigated the difficulty, likelihood and order of Japanese learners learning English intonation for wh-questions. The data was collected from three native speakers of English, eight learners of English who had lived for more than a year in an English-speaking country, and nineteen learners of English who had not. They were analyzed according to phonological, phonetic and semantic dimensions, using acoustic analysis. These dimensions each involved the location of the nucleus, its pitch peak and valley, and its pitch range, and the use of the nuclear tone. The results showed that the phonological and phonetic dimensions were more difficult to learn than the semantic dimension, which was most likely to be learned and was learned faster than the other two dimensions. There was also a greater likelihood of learning the phonological dimension than the phonetic dimension. This study did not successfully present clear evidence to determine the order in which the phonological and phonetic dimensions were learned, probably because their learning is closely intertwined. A further study will reveal whether there is a preferred order for learning these dimensions.

Keywords: wh-questions, intonation, Japanese learners of English,

Introduction

The different realization of the tonal use for wh-questions and yes/no questions in

English has been frequently highlighted in English education in Japan. What is intriguing and significant about the learning of this element of pronunciation is that questions requiring an answer from the hearer are commonly given with a rise in Japanese, no matter what type of question they are. The cardinal principle for the English intonation where wh-questions are spoken with a fall, as taught in Japanese schools, is therefore difficult for students to learn intuitively. Halliday and Greaves (2008) attributed the difference between wh-questions and yes/no questions to the polarity, stating that the unmarked realization of wh-questions is a non-polar interrogative. That is to say, unlike yes/no questions, there is no uncertainty in wh-questions as to the polarity, and they are a type of statement that requires the hearer to fill in the missing piece of information. The lack of uncertainty leads wh-questions to be reasonably said with a fall in English; however, this argument will not apply to Japanese wh-questions. This study considers how the linguistic and conceptual difference in the realization of intonation for wh-questions between English and Japanese could have an effect on learning English.

Literature Review

Theoretical Backgrounds

Although there have been an increasing number of studies on the learning of the intonation of a target language in recent years, no theoretical model for the learning of intonation has been fully established. However, there have been two promising evolving models proposed, the Perceptual Assimilation Model for Suprasegmentals (PAM-S; So & Best, 2014) and the L2 Intonation Learning Theory (LILt; Mennen, 2015). This study adopted the latter because it was applicable to the productive aspect of learning. Another advantage of this theory is that some assumptions of the LILt stem from those suggested by influential learning models in the field of second language (L2) pronunciation learning, the Speech

Learning Model (SLM; Flege, 1995), the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM; Best, 1995) and the PAM-L2 (Best & Tyler, 2007). This expands the applicability of this working model.

The essence of the LILt (Mennen, 2015) is that it attempts to characterize similarities and differences in intonation between the first language (L1) and L2 in four dimensions: the phonological, phonetic, semantic and frequency. There are various linguistic items that these dimensions could cover; for instance, they each concern on which syllable the nucleus is placed, how tones are phonetically realized in terms of the alignment, slope or height, what each intonation pattern means, and how frequently each tone is used.

To best of the author's knowledge, there is no data available regarding the frequency in use of a fall for Japanese wh-questions. A rise is overwhelmingly dominant for questions in Japanese. Thus, the present study examined the learning of intonation in the phonological, phonetic and semantic dimensions. The literature is reviewed regarding the intonation of English and Japanese in each dimension.

Phonological Dimension

A fundamental difference between English and Japanese in the phonological dimension lies in the pitch accent, and it leads each language to allow different pitch patterns. This is shown in Figure 1 (Igarashi, 2015, partially revised), which typologically compares the intonation systems of the two languages based on MAE-ToBI (Beckman & Elam, 1997; Beckman, Hirschberg, & Shattuck-Hufnagel, 2005) and X-JToBI (Maekawa, Igarashi, Kikuchi, & Yoneyama, 2004) transcribed under the framework of autosegmental-metrical theory. Although this study is not based on the theory, these transcriptions are used here to illustrate a direct comparison between the two languages.

First, the pitch accent is lexical in Japanese, meaning that the location of the pitch accent is lexically fixed. In contrast, the pitch accent in English can be placed on any word, as

121

the nucleus goes on any syllable in the utterance, which suggests that it is post-lexical.

Secondly, English and Japanese have different types and numbers of the pitch accent in their

inventory. Figure 1 shows that Japanese has only one type of pitch accent, H*+L, and the
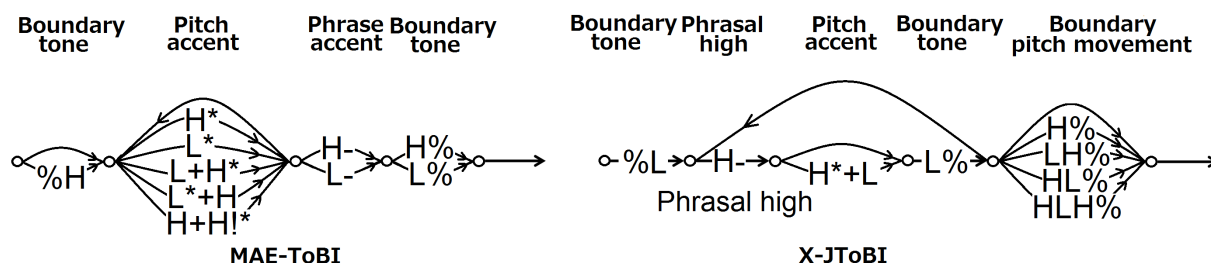
Figure 1. Intonation systems of English and Japanese. Adapted from "Intonation," by Y.

Igarashi, 2015, *Handbook of Japanese phonetics and phonology*, p. 560. 2015 by Walter de

Gruyter.

language even allows an unaccented accentual phrase. However, English has far more

varieties of pitch accent. Thirdly, the X-JToBI (Maekawa, Kikuchi, Igarashi, & Venditti, 2002;

Maekawa, Igarashi, Kikuchi, & Yoneyama, 2004) framework defined two levels of prosodic

phrasing in Japanese (Igarashi, 2015): the accentual phrase (AP) and the intonation phrase

(IP). While the IP is the domain within which pitch range is specified (Igarashi, 2015), the AP,

consisting of at most one pitch accent, serves to delimit a tonal pattern. The English

intonation system, however, is typically considered to have a one-level prosodic phrasing, the

IP. Finally, the presence of boundary pitch movements (BPMs) is unique to Japanese. BPMs,

realized as a pitch movement containing a rise at the beginning, appear at the end of the AP or

IP to "contribute to the pragmatic interpretation of the utterance" (Igarashi, 2015, p. 544) such

as a question, continuation or emphasis. Igarashi (2015) classified BPMs into four groups, as

in Figure 1, although their classification varies from study to study (Kim, 2015). Such pitch

movement, limited to the final position of the prosodic phrase, does not occur in English.

Prior studies have demonstrated that the first two of these differences in pitch accent

could affect the way that Japanese learners learn the phonological dimension of intonation. Saito and Ueda (2011) summarized four major types of errors in the nucleus location; pronouns such as *I* especially, interrogatives, attributive adjectives and negatives are four syntactic categories on which the nucleus is placed in utterances produced by Japanese learners of English. Although they did not provide empirical data, Maeda (2005) performed an experiment and analyzed the data acoustically, reporting that less proficient Japanese learners of English tended to locate the nucleus on the interrogatives and pronouns. This clearly shows the effect of the difference in the pitch accent between English and Japanese. That is to say, English speakers have to place the pitch accent depending on the context, which is difficult for Japanese learners. This was also discovered by Joto (1983).

Phonetic Dimension

The phonetic dimension of intonation represents the realization of the pitch contour, including the pitch alignment, pitch peak and valley, and pitch range. It is frequently argued that Japanese learners speak English monotonously with a flat pitch, and previous studies have generally agreed that they use a narrow pitch range (Joto, 1983; Maeda, 2005; Sato, 1999; Todaka, 1994) with some studies presenting the opposite finding (Aoyama & Guion, 2007). Study of the phonetic dimension will therefore focus mainly on pitch range here.

In terms of the phonetic realization of intonation, English and Japanese are somewhat similar in that both generally have an overall downward pitch movement to the end of the IP. However, they differ in that Japanese is more remarkable for its downstep whereas English involves declination. Both occur within the domain of the IP, but downstep is more systematic in that each AP is compressed when it is preceded by another accented AP, with the height of the low pitch almost steady (Igarashi & Koiso, 2012). Declination is the phenomena in which a fundamental frequency (F0) is gradually lowered toward the end of the utterance. Figure 2

displays a schematic illustration of this difference.

The negative interference of the compression of the pitch range due to downstep in Japanese could result in Japanese learners using a narrow pitch range when speaking English. For example, Nariai and Tanaka (2012) acoustically and statistically investigated the realization of English intonation produced by native English speakers and native Japanese
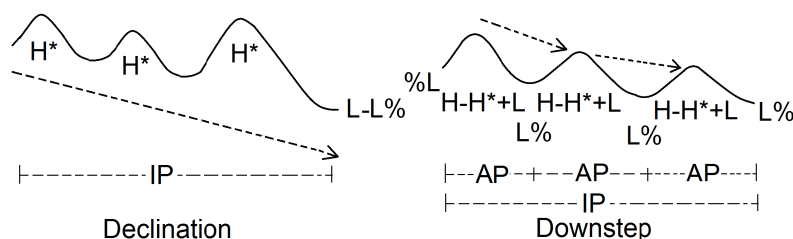
Figure 2. Schematic illustration of declination and downstep.

speakers, and found that the pitch range of the Japanese speakers was smaller than that of the native English speakers in 88% of the utterances. They also argued that the Japanese speakers generally spoke utterances with a higher pitch on the function word and a lower pitch on the content word, compared to the native speakers. In contrast, the Japanese speakers had a wider pitch range at the end of declaratives, which was not heard at the end of interrogatives.

Maeda (2005) found that less proficient Japanese learners of English place the prominence on the wh words and pronouns with a higher F0, a greater pitch change and a longer duration. This implies a failure to produce utterances with a native-like wide pitch range on the nucleus for wh-questions. According to Maekawa (1997), there is a higher peak on wh words in wh-questions in Japanese, with the last peak less clear and less prominent. This could lead to the findings in Maeda.

Semantic Dimension

The semantic dimension of intonation involves the way that the intonation is realized to

convey a certain linguistic meaning (Mennen, 2015): the type of the nuclear tone used for wh-questions is within the scope of the semantic dimension. The difference is notable between English and Japanese in this dimension. As mentioned above, wh-questions are implemented with a rise in Japanese. Despite the fact that a rising contour is not always evident at the end of the utterance (Maekawa, 1997), Igarashi (2015) maintained that a scooped rise of the four BPMs, LH%, typically expresses questions. In contrast, a fall is a default nuclear tone for wh-questions in English (Watanabe, 1994; Wells, 2006).

Unlike Japanese, however, there are multiple candidates for the nuclear tone of wh-questions in English, including a rise and a fall-rise. While a fall-rise is less common, the rise used for wh-questions is known to be an encouraging rise that makes a spoken utterance sound more gentle, kindly, encouraging, sympathetic or deferential (Wells, 2006). A rise for wh-questions also has the effect of expressing negative emotions such as ridicule, sarcasm, complaint or criticism (Watanabe, 1994). In addition, the use of a rise for wh-questions is common in Belfast English, where 94.4% of wh-questions were spoken with a rise and 5.6%, with a fall, according the report by Grabe (2002). A fall is therefore not a unique, fixed nuclear tone for wh-questions in English.

Despite all this, this study defines a fall as the default nuclear tone used for English wh-questions, as described in Watanabe (1994) and Wells (2006), which Japanese learners are recommended to learn for the following reasons. One is that a fall is, in fact, still the first choice for the nuclear tone in English wh-questions. According to Grabe (2002), apart from Belfast English, British English generally prioritizes a fall in all tones, with the frequency of a fall ranging from 55.6% in London to 83.3% in Bradford. Watanabe (1994) even claimed that a rise is only used for 10% of the wh-questions at most, with this use of a rise slightly more frequent in British English than in American English. The other reason is that this study placed more emphasis on the examination of how Japanese learners learn intonational aspects

of English that are different from those of Japanese. Joto (1983) claimed that Japanese learners of English had difficulty using a fall for wh-questions. This implies that the different realization of the semantic dimension between the two languages concerning the tonal use in wh-questions could interfere with Japanese learning of English intonation.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The present study examined Japanese learning of intonation in the production of English wh-questions in the three dimensions, defining the location of the nucleus as a learning item of the phonological dimension, the pitch peak and valley of the nucleus, and its pitch range as learning items of the phonetic dimension, and the use of a fall for a nuclear tone as a learning item of the semantic dimension. The following three research questions were addressed according to the definition of a native-like realization appropriate for learning intonation:

1. How difficult is it for Japanese learners of English to achieve a native-like intonation pattern for wh-questions in English, in each of the three dimensions?

2. How likely are Japanese learners of English to achieve a native-like intonation pattern for each dimension?

3. In what order do Japanese learners of English tend to learn a native-like intonation pattern when these three dimensions are compared to one another?

The first and second research questions concern the difficulty and likelihood of Japanese learners learning to produce a native-like intonation pattern for wh-questions in English. The third research question dealt with the order of learning to achieve a native-like intonation pattern from the perspective of the three dimensions. Based on the similarities and differences between the two languages and the prior studies described in the literature review section, this study constructed hypotheses regarding the first and second research questions as follows:

126

1. It would be difficult for Japanese learners of English to learn to realize a native-like intonation pattern for wh-questions in all three dimensions.

2. It would be most unlikely for Japanese learners to achieve a native-like realization of intonation for wh-questions in the phonological dimension, but it would be more likely in the phonetic dimension and most likely in the semantic dimension.

All three dimensions were predicted to be equally difficult, but the hypothesis on the likelihood of learning varied. It was hypothesized that the phonetic dimension would be more likely to be learned than the phonological dimension, because previous research such as Maeda (2005) and Nariai and Tanaka (2012) suggested the inappropriate placement of a high pitch by Japanese learners. This implies that a corrected placement of the pitch peak could enhance the learning of English intonation in the phonetic dimension by Japanese learners, and contribute to the learning of both pitch peak and pitch range. The semantic dimension was, furthermore, hypothesized to be the most likely learned of the three dimensions, because a fall involves the Japanese tonal inventory, and the use of a fall for wh-questions in English is one of the most frequently taught elements in English education in Japan.

For the third research question, Japanese learners were predicted to have different degrees of difficulty in learning English intonation for wh-questions depending on the dimensions, and to have a preferred order for learning them, as found for Korean learners by Jun and Oh (2000). However, this study did not propose a hypothesis on the exact order due to a lack of earlier studies directly addressing this issue.

Method

Participants

Three groups of males participated in the experiment: a group of native speakers of English, of Japanese learners of English who had lived in an English-speaking country and

127

been exposed to English either in a local school or international school for more than one year, and a group of the other Japanese learners of English whose English proficiency falls in the A1 or A2 level of CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The average age for the two Japanese groups was 18.13 and 18.05 years old, respectively. The first group, or the native-speaker group (Group N), served to demonstrate the productive realization of wh-questions in English as a reference. The second group, the Japanese returnees (Group JR), represented the Japanese learners of English who were expected to provide the productive realization at a level that Japanese learners of English could achieve at a later stage in the learning process. The final group, or the rest of the Japanese learners of English (Group JL), was expected to typify the Japanese learners of English who would show a common level in their productive realization.

Group N consisted of three native speakers of English who were teaching English to Japanese learners of English, two of whom spoke General American and one of whom spoke General Australian. The two American English native speakers were from the states of California and Colorado. The Australian native speaker was from Melbourne. They all reported themselves as speakers of standard English with no strong local or social accents. This study allowed the native speakers with different accents to provide a reference because the participants of Groups JR and JL had been exposed to various English accents.

Groups JR and JL comprised eight and nineteen native speakers of Japanese, respectively. The eight participants of Group JR varied as to the country in which they had stayed, the length of residence, and their age of arrival. Three lived in the U.S., two in Singapore, one in the U.K., one in Canada and one in the Philippines. The average length of residence was 6.97 years, ranging from 1 to 15, and the average age of arrival was 4.13, ranging from 0 to 16.

Materials

The present study employed three passages from Wells (2006) as experimental materials. Wells provided these passages in the section titled *Passages for Analysis: Getting breakfast*, *Books* and *Cornwall*. These were supplied with a model answer so that readers could learn how each part of the utterance is pronounced regarding the three linguistic intonation systems, tonality, tonicity and tone. This enabled the experimenter to analyze the intonation patterns used by Groups JR and JL, while examining whether Group N performed in a model way.

The seven wh-questions that appeared in these passages were excerpted and analyzed as target sentences, although the participants were required to read the whole passage aloud since the context determines acceptable intonation patterns. The target sentences are described in Table 1. The bold and underlined syllables in the table correspond to those on which Wells (2006) proposed the nucleus should be placed, and where a fall is commonly used.

Table 1

Target Sentences

	Target sentence	Passage	Phonol.	Phon.	Sem.
A	Excuse me, | where do I get **breakfast**?	Getting breakfast	✓	✓	✓
B	Where's **that**?	Getting breakfast	✓	✓	✓
C	**Which** books?	Books	✓		✓
D	**Why**?	Books		✓	✓
E	And how **was** it?	Cornwall	✓	✓	✓
F	So what did you **do** during all this rain?	Cornwall	✓		
G	What's **that**?	Cornwall	✓	✓	✓

Note. Sentence A is divided into two IPs, as shown by a vertical line, and the second IP was a target of analysis. Phonol. = phonological dimension; Phon. = phonetic dimension; Sem. = semantic dimension.

The ticks in Table 1 show which sentences were tested for which dimensions. Since Sentence D is a one-word sentence, there was only one candidate for the nucleus, and therefore, this sentence was not analyzed for the phonological dimension. Similarly, Sentences C and F were excluded from the analysis of the phonetic dimension because they

129

differ from the other sentences in that the nucleus is followed by another content word. Sentence F was not analyzed for its semantic dimension either, because two of the participants of Group N located two nuclei in the utterance by dividing it into two IPs unlike the model suggested by Wells (2006), as will be reported in the results section.

Recording and Procedure

The materials written in English were distributed beforehand, with the Japanese translations. The participants of Groups JR and JL read aloud both English and Japanese versions, while those of Group N read an English version only. Groups JR and JL were allowed to choose which version to read first. These materials were printed on A4 paper, and placed around 15 cm to 20 cm away from the microphone on the table. The participants and the experimenter were alone in the recording session, so as to avoid background noises. Their data was recorded at a sampling rate of 44.1 kHz, 16 bit, using a digital recorder, Roland-09, and a condenser microphone, SONY ECM-MS957.

Acoustic Measurements and Analyses

The acoustic analyses were conducted using Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2015), a software for acoustic analyses. The target sentences were first manually annotated based on the waveform and spectrogram. Then, the location of the nucleus for the phonological dimension, the peak and valley of the nucleus and its pitch range for the phonetic dimension, and the type of the nuclear tone for the semantic dimension were analyzed. The analysis of the phonetic dimension depended on the realization of the phonological and semantic dimensions, as described below. Hence, when the nucleus was not placed on the word as in the model answer supplied by Wells (2006) and/or a non-fall was used, the target sentences concerned were not analyzed for their phonetic dimension.

Analysis of the nucleus location was based on a visual inspection of where the most dynamic pitch movement occurred on the pitch contour with the help of the auditory impression. After identifying the nucleus, the tone used was categorized into a fall, rise, fall-rise or level by listening to the utterance and examining F0. Although O'Connor and Arnold (1973) categorized the English tones into seven groups, the present study adopted four categories by classifying a high fall, a low fall and a rise-fall as a fall. This was because they are subtypes of the fall that differ in the pitch height or movement at the start of the fall, according to Wells (2006). Even if the nucleus was on a different syllable from that proposed by Wells, analysis of the semantic dimension was carried out as long as the nucleus was placed somewhere within the same IP. However, when only the utterance was spoken with a fall on the exact nucleus, as suggested by Wells, the pitch peak and valley were measured in Hertz (Hz) to examine the phonetic dimension. The pitch range was calculated from these values and expressed in semitones (ST), a musical scale. This scale was used to make it possible to consider the characteristic auditory sense.

Statistical Analyses

Statistical analyses were conducted after the above analyses to investigate whether there was a statistically significant difference in the use of the intonation pattern in wh-questions among Groups N, JR and JL, and to address Research Question 1, about the difficulty of learning, and Research Question 2, about the likelihood of learning. The former was discussed based on the comparison of the realization between Group N and Group JL; and the latter, on that between Group JR and Group JL. Table 2 presents a summary of the variables with their levels of measurement, units and scales.

Table 2

Variables for the Statistical Analyses

Dimension	Variables	Level of measurement	Unit	Scale
Phonological	Score of the nucleus	Interval		0-6
Phonetic	Pitch peak	Interval	Hz	
	Pitch valley	Interval	Hz	
	Pitch range	Interval	ST	
Semantic	Score of the nuclear tone	Interval		0-6

Scores for the nucleus, adopted as the variable for the phonological dimension, were obtained by counting the number of target sentences in which the nucleus was placed on the syllable, as suggested by Wells (2006). If all nuclei were appropriately located, the participants scored six, the highest possible score. The same applied to the semantic dimension, which involves whether a fall was used for a nuclear tone in the target sentences.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was carried out using these variables, with the scores as the response variables and the groups as the explanatory variables, in order to examine whether there was any significant difference among the three groups. This test was followed by a Mann-Whitney U test, a post-hoc test, when a significant difference was yielded (Field, 2009). Because this post-hoc test was conducted three times, the α level was set at .00167 in this analysis by applying a Bonferroni correction (Field, 2009). A one-tailed Man-Whitney U test was performed because the hypotheses were directional in the present study, where Group N was predicted to outperform Group JR, and Group JR, to outperform Group JL, taking their linguistic experience of English into account. Groups N, JR and JL differed in sample sizes and their data violated the assumption of normality; therefore, these non-parametric tests were performed.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to investigate whether the groups significantly differed according to the phonetic dimension. Three variables, the pitch peak, the pitch valley and the pitch range, were used in a MANOVA, as the response

variables and the three groups as the explanatory variables. As mentioned above, sample sizes widely differed between the three groups, and so a non-parametric MANOVA (PERMANOVA) was also conducted using PAST (Hammer, Harper, & Ryan, 2001a, 2001b) to see if the results obtained by a MANOVA were reproduced. As this is not a standard method, however, the results produced by the MANOVA will be reported when both results were comparable. One thing to be noted is that the data used for the test depended on the results of the phonological and semantic dimensions. Therefore, the test was carried out excluding the data where the nucleus was not placed on the appropriate syllable and/or a non-fall was used. When a MANOVA identified a statistical difference between the groups, a post-hoc test was performed using discriminant analysis to locate the difference. The contributions of the variables to the discrimination of the groups were judged from the structural matrix of the correlation between the variables and each discriminant function. With no decisive standard in the interpretation of the correlations, this study followed the convention described by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), where those higher than .33 were interpreted as correlated with the function.

In order to address Research Question 3, about the order of learning, skill mastery profiles were created by focusing on the learning of each participant, rather than on the overall tendency of the learners. To this end, all participants were classified as a master or non-master as to each attribute. A master or non-master was defined by labeling the data which fell within 2 standard deviations (SD) of the mean of Group N as a master, and the other data as a non-master, by reference to the method adopted by Flege, Yeni-Komshian, and Liu (1999), which attempted to label the non-native speakers as native-like or not. The phonetic dimension was examined using the three variables, and the participants were labeled as a master as long as they were defined as a master for all variables.

Results

Phonological Dimension

The descriptive statistics of the results of the phonological dimension are presented in Table 3. As you can see from the comparison of the mean values, the three groups differed to some degree. The difference between Groups JR and JL was more remarkable than that between Groups N and JR, which was reflected by the results that that none of the participants of Group JL achieved a full score for this dimension. This indicates that no participants in Group JL successfully located the nucleus on the appropriate syllable.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the Phonological Dimension

Group	n	M	SD	Max.	Min.
N	3	5.33	0.47	6	5
JR	8	4.50	0.71	6	4
JL	19	2.74	0.91	4	1

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to examine whether the difference between the three groups was significant. The results showed that the scores of the nucleus significantly differed, $H(2) = 17.47$, $p = .000$. These results meant that a post-hoc test was conducted to identify where the difference was among the three groups. According to the results of a one-tailed Mann-Whitney test, there was no significant difference between Group N ($Mdn = 5.00$) and Group JR ($Mdn = 4.00$), $U = 4.50$, $z = -1.65$, $p = 1.00$, $r = -.50$. In contrast, Group JL ($Mdn = 3.00$) differed significantly from Group N, $U = 0.00$, $z = -2.83$ $p = .001$, $r = -.60$, and from Group JR, $U = 12.50$, $z = -3.52$, $p = .00$, $r = -.68$, with Group JL performing more poorly than Groups N and JR.

Phonetic Dimension

134

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for the phonetic dimension. One participant of Group JL failed to provide any data for the phonetic dimension; therefore, there were 18 data points available for this group. Comparisons of the values between the groups showed that there was a notable difference in the pitch peak and pitch range. The pitch peak of Group N was much higher than that of Groups JR and JL. A similar trend was noted for the pitch range; Group N used the widest pitch range of the three groups, with the mean value of Group JR closer to that of Group N than Group JL was. The pitch valley demonstrated a different tendency, in that Group JR produced the lowest value, followed by Group JL and Group N in this order. These results were shared with all target sentences.

A one-way MANOVA and a one-way PERMANOVA, a non-parametric version of a one-way MANOVA, were carried out to examine whether there was a significant difference in the pitch peak, pitch valley and/or the pitch range between the groups. The results of both tests revealed a significant difference between the groups. Using Pillai's trace, the three groups differed at a significant level, $F(6, 50) = 4.43$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .35$. Following this, a discriminant analysis was conducted to identify which groups differed in which variables. The analysis statistically found two functions; the first function and the second function each explained 74.6% of the variance, canonical $R^2 = .47$ and 25.4% of the variance, canonical R^2

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of the Phonetic Dimension

Group	n	Pitch peak		Pitch valley		Pitch range	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
N	3	195.33	27.33	106.17	22.94	10.89	4.11
JR	8	131.98	27.91	84.16	12.94	7.69	2.51
JL	18	130.47	16.37	96.95	11.47	5.16	2.00

Note. Not all participants provided the data to be analyzed because some failed to locate the nucleus appropriately and/or use a fall. The number of participants whose data was analyzed for each target sentence was therefore as follows; N = 2, JR = 6, JL = 5 for Sentence A; N = 3, JR = 7, JL = 11 for Sentence B; N = 3, JR = 7, JL = 13 for Sentence D, N = 3, JR = 7, JL = 6 for Sentence E; N = 3, JR = 8, JL = 17 for Sentence G. The values of the pitch peak and valley are expressed in Hz and those of the pitch range, in ST.

= .22. When combined, these two functions significantly discriminated the groups with a

Wilk's lambda value of .41, $\chi^2(6) = 22.17$, $p = .00$. After removing the first function, the

second function alone set the groups significantly apart, with a Wilk's lambda value of .77,

$\chi^2(2) = 6.49$, $p = .04$. It follows that each of the two functions contributed to the

discrimination of the groups. The canonical discriminant function plot in Figure 3 and the

group centroids in Table 5 revealed that the first function distinguished Group N from Groups

JR and JL. They also showed that the second function contributed to distinguishing Group JR

from Groups N and JL.
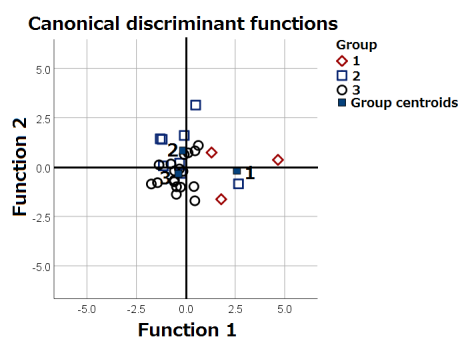
Figure 3. Canonical discriminant function plot for rhythm.

The structural matrix in Table 5 indicates the correlations between the variables and the

discriminant functions, where the pitch peak and pitch range highly loaded onto the first

Table 5

Structural Matrix for the Correlations Between the Variables and the Two Discriminant Functions

	Function	
Variable	1	2
Pitch peak	**.98**	-.14
Pitch range	**.71**	**.70**
Pitch valley	.26	**-.82**

Note. The variables with the absolute value of correlations with the corresponding functions of .33 and above were highlighted in bold.

function ($r = .98$ and $r = .71$). This result indicates that Group N differed from Groups JR and

136

JL in that Group N produced the target sentences using a wider pitch range, with the pitch peak reaching higher, when interpreted considering the values shown by Table 4. In contrast, the high loadings of the pitch valley (r = -.82) and the pitch range (r = .70) in the opposite direction were observed for the second function. The second function contributed to the separation of Group JR from Groups JL and N, as mentioned above, meaning that the function characterized how Group JR realized the intonation for wh-questions phonetically. Taking into account that Group JR used the lowest peak valley of the three groups, as in Table 4, it could be interpreted that the group widened a pitch range by lowering the pitch as much as possible.

Semantic Dimension

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of the semantic dimension, which concerns the score for the nuclear tone. Sentence F, *So what did you do during all this rain?*, was not included in this analysis because two participants of Group N placed two nuclei, dividing the utterance into two IPs, as mentioned in the method section. From what can be seen in the table, there seemed to be no profound difference between Groups N and JR although they differed from Group JL. The scores of the participants in Group JL ranged widely, from zero to six.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of the Semantic Dimension

Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*Max.*	*Min.*
N	3	5.67	0.47	6	5
JR	8	5.38	0.48	6	5
JL	19	4.11	1.65	6	0

One thing to be noted before reporting the results of the statistical tests is that there was only one case in which a participant from Group N spoke the target sentence with a non-fall.

This participant used a rise for Sentence A, *Excuse me, where do I get breakfast?* In contrast, the rest of the sentences produced by this participant had a fall, and the other two participants of Group N spoke all the target sentences with a fall.

The Kruskal-Wallis test was performed just as it was conducted for the phonological dimension. The results indicated that the groups significantly differed in the scores for the nuclear tone, $H(2) = 5.83$, $p = .046$. A one-tailed Mann-Whitney test was thus carried out as a post-hoc test. However, no group differed significantly from the others: between Group N (*Mdn* = 6) and Group JR (*Mdn* = 5), $U = 8.50$, $z = -0.83$, $p = .42$, $r = -.25$; between Group N and Group JL (*Mdn* = 4), $U = 11.50$, $z = -1.67$, $p = .08$, $r = -.36$; between Group JR and Group JL, $U = 40.00$, $z = -1.97$, $p = .023$, $r = -.38$.

Skill Mastery Profiles

The learning profiles of the three dimensions of intonation, which focused on individual participants, are summarized in Table 7. The numbers given in the second row stand for the profiles, where 1 and 0 represent a master and non-master, respectively. In total, there were nine possible profiles, into which each participant was classified.

The results of the skill mastery profiles can be summarized into the following six points. First, all three participants in Group N fell into Profile 111, meaning that they were defined as masters of all three dimensions. Secondly, the most common profile among the participants of

Table 7

Skill Mastery Profiles

Group	n	Skill Profile							
		111	110	101	011	100	010	001	000
N	3	3							
JR	8			3	2			3	
JL	19				2		2	6	9

Note. There were eight profiles, where 1 and 0 each stand for a master and a non-master. Attributes are ordered from the phonological skill to the phonetic skill to the semantic skill.

Group JL was Profile 000, as observed for nine participants. This means that nearly half the participants of the group failed to master any dimension of intonation. Thirdly, as for Group JL, more participants were defined as masters of the semantic dimension than the other dimensions. Six participants and two participants each had Profile 001 and Profile 011, the former having mastered the semantic dimension only and the latter, the phonetic and semantic dimensions. Fourthly, learning the semantic dimension also characterized Group JR; all participants had mastered the semantic dimension as seen in all three profiles found for Group JR, Profiles 101, 011 and 001. Fifthly, learning the phonological and phonetic dimensions produced mixed results. Group JL had no master of the phonological dimension whereas four participants were defined as masters of the phonetic dimension. In contrast, Group JR had three participants who had mastered the phonological dimension and two participants who had mastered the phonetic dimension, and all had mastered the semantic dimension. Finally, the participants of both Group JR and Group JL had some variations in the profile, which implied the presence of individual differences in the learning process.

Discussion

Phonological Dimension

The results of the phonological dimension demonstrated that Group N and Group JR did not differ significantly from each other, and that both groups did differ from Group JL. This means that it was difficult for the Japanese learners to learn this dimension of intonation, but that they were likely to learn it. At an earlier stage of learning, especially, it would be difficult and nearly impossible to achieve a native-like realization of the phonological dimension, or the nucleus location, in producing wh-questions; however, as learners learn more, probably both more intensively and extensively, Japanese learners would be able to learn to place the nucleus in a native-like manner. Therefore, the results of the phonological

dimension upheld the hypothesis on the difficulty of learning, but not that on the likelihood of learning.

A more careful examination of the scores of the nucleus implied which type of nucleus location was difficult for Japanese learners. The first rule regarding the location of the nucleus is that it is placed on the primary stressed syllable of the last content word although it is also determined by other factors such as the focus and the sentence components. The target sentences were categorized into two according to this basic principle: the sentences in which the nucleus goes on the primary stressed syllable of the last content, and the others. The former category included Sentences A, B, and G, and the latter, Sentences C, E and F. When the results were scrutinized in terms of this classification, it was far more difficult for the Japanese learners to place the nucleus on the appropriate syllable when it had to go on the syllable of the non-last content word. It follows that the nucleus location was a difficult learning item when the utterance did not follow its first and foremost principle that the stressed syllable of the last content word bear the nucleus. The mean values of the scores of the nucleus for Sentences C, E and F were 2.33 for Group N, 1.50 for Group JR and 0.89 for Group JL out of 3 maximum points. The values for the sentences in which the nucleus is placed on the stressed syllable of the last content word were 3.00 for Group N, 3.00 for Group JR and 2.35 for Group JL out of 3. The nucleus location is determined by the factors such as old information for Sentence C, the sentence pattern of a wh-word + be verb + pronoun for Sentence E, and adverbs and adverbial phrases of time and place for Sentence F (Wells, 2006). These determinants locate the nucleus on a non-final word of the utterance, which was found to be a difficult learning item for Japanese learners.

However, the Japanese learners in this study did not necessarily locate the nucleus on the wh words although Saito and Ueda (2011) and Maeda (2005) suggested that their participants did. Instead, more than half of the participants in both Group JR and Group JL

failed to place the nucleus on the wh word for Sentence C, *Which books?*, despite the model that the nucleus goes on *which* in this sentence (Wells, 2006). The syllable that bore the nucleus for most participants in Group JL for Sentence E was also *it* rather than *how*. No participant placed the nucleus on *what* in Sentence F. Because this target sentence, unlike the model (Wells, 2006), tended to bear two nuclei on *do* and *rain* by being divided into two IPs in the data of the majority of the participants, including two native speakers, the acceptability of placing the nucleus on *rain* needs to be more carefully examined in a further study. Nevertheless, a general tendency found in the results here demonstrates that the nucleus is not always on wh words in the Japanese learners' production of wh-questions. These results require more comparable studies to discuss why this research did not corroborate prior findings.

A more evident finding was, instead, that the less experienced Japanese learners tended to locate the nucleus on the last syllable of the utterance, which applied to all target sentences produced by Group JL. This was even true of Sentence A, where eight participants out of nineteen in Group JL placed the nucleus on *fast* in *breakfast,* a bi-syllabic word whose primary stress occurs on the first syllable. Taking this into consideration, Group JL had not learned the basic principle of the nucleus location, but located it on the last syllable of the utterance. If this claim is reasonable, it suggests that the use of BPMs in Japanese could be transferred to the realization of the phonological dimension of intonation in production by Japanese learners. As described in the literature review section, BPMs carry prosodic meanings, such as question, continuation and emphasis. This linguistic function of the last syllable of the prosodic phrase is stubborn even in the realization of the prosody in their target language. The results produced here indicated that the transfer of this would be difficult to avoid, but could be smoothed out with enough experience of the target language.

Phonetic Dimension

The results obtained revealed that Group N used a wider pitch range by setting the pitch peak at a higher pitch than Groups JR and JL. This suggests that the phonetic dimension of intonation was difficult for the Japanese learners to realize, meaning that the results bore out the hypotheses regarding the difficulty of learning. The finding confirmed what was argued in Maeda (2005) and Nariai and Tanaka (2012), and it could be claimed that a narrower pitch range was used in the realization of the phonetic dimension, as for the production by Japanese learners. The results here, moreover, indicated that a lower pitch peak could lead to a limited pitch range, which would be in part due to the downstep described in the literature review section. However, a failure to use a wide pitch range does not necessarily stem from the linguistic deviance of the target language from a learner's native language. Kainada and Lengeris (2014) reported that the Greek learners of English, whose data was acoustically analyzed, used a narrower pitch range in the realization of English intonation than the native speakers, despite the finding that Greek and English did not differ in the pitch range. There could thus be multiple reasons for Japanese learners to use a narrower pitch range than native speakers.

The hypothesis on the likelihood of learning was only partially supported. Group JR was found to use a different strategy than Group N to widen the pitch range in producing wh-questions with a fall; Group N used a high pitch peak whereas Group JR lowered the pitch. Neither of the tendencies was observed in Group JL, and it would be reasonable to suggest that this is a strategy used by Group JR to realize a native-like intonation in the phonetic dimension. The overall pitch remained within a narrow range, however, with the pitch peak lower. Taken together, this study interpreted the results to suggest that learning the phonetic dimension of intonation was not unlikely, but only likely to a limited degree.

Semantic Dimension

The Mann-Whitney test did not confirm the significant difference yielded by the Kruskal-Wallis test. This is partially because of the unbalanced sample size of the three groups, which needs to be amended and tested more rigorously in further research. Because the location of the difference was not exactly identified, this study decided to focus more on the results of the Mann-Whitney test. This offered a provisional suggestion that the learning of the semantic dimension of intonation was easy for Japanese learners of English in using a fall for a nuclear tone of wh-questions, and that they were likely to learn this dimension. Henceforth, the hypotheses that the semantic dimension of intonation would be difficult for Japanese learners, but that they would be likely to learn how to realize it in a native-like manner were supported. Learning the semantic dimension of the intonation tested in this study involves the link between the types of pitch accent and their meaning. One of the possible interpretations of these results would be that it is relatively easy to learn to realize the semantic dimension of intonation, at least when it comes to adjustments to relink the existing pitch accent, a fall, with another meaning.

On the other hand, it was true that some participants in Group JL failed to use a fall for all target sentences, including one participant given zero for the score of the nuclear tone as in Table 6. Accordingly, the study revealed that while Japanese learners generally learn to use a fall for wh-questions with relative ease, some prefer to use a non-fall. As reported in the results section, one of the participants in Group N used a rise for Sentence A, *Excuse me, where do I get breakfast?*, which was also observed for two participants in Group JR and nine participants in Group JL. Although these cases could not be seen as a total failure of the use of the nuclear tone, the dominant use of a fall for the target sentences analyzed suggests that a fall was reasonably the default tone for wh-questions as defined in the literature review section, considering that the participants of Group N spoke the rest of the seventeen utterances (three native speakers multiplied by six target sentences minus one utterance with a

143

rise) with a fall. This is why it is worth taking a closer look at the data for Group JL,
regarding the use of a non-fall as a lack of learning to use the default tone for wh-questions.

The scores of the nuclear tone ranged from 5 to 6 for Group JR, which means that they
mostly selected a fall for wh-questions. A rise was also used by two participants of Group JR
for Sentence A, and exceptions included a level for Sentence B and Sentence E, and a fall-rise
for Sentence D, where one case was found for each. In contrast, although a rise was defined as
the non-default tone for wh-questions as mentioned above, the tone was most frequently used
by Group JL. Nine, three, seven, four, six and one participant spoke Sentences A, B, C, D, E
and G with a rise, respectively. The second most common non-fall among Group JL was a
level; three participants used the tone for Sentence C and one participant, for Sentences A, B,
D and G, respectively.

A relatively frequent use of a rise for wh-questions was observed for Group JL, and
could be attributed to the dominant use of a rise for questions in Japanese; it is a negative
transfer of the tonal use. Although a rise is an acceptable nuclear tone for wh-questions
(O'Connor & Arnold, 1973; Watanabe, 1994; Wells, 2006), the use of a rise by Group JL
represents a lack of learning in the semantic dimension of intonation, taking into account that
Group JR spoke the majority of the target utterances with a fall. Six participants out of
nineteen in Group JL used only one type of non-fall for more than half the target sentences;
three participants used a rise for three target sentences, one participant, for four target
sentences and one participant, for six target sentences, while one participant used a level for
three target sentences. It would be less plausible to argue that these participants intentionally
distinguished the use of a fall from that of a non-fall depending on the context, considering
the tonal use observed in Groups N and JR. Hence, more reasonably, the Japanese learners'
use of a non-fall for wh-questions in English could be caused by a lack of learning the
semantic dimension of intonation. Joto (1983) suggested that Japanese learners had difficulty

in using a fall for wh-questions in English, which was corroborated by the present study.

Skill Mastery Profiles

The most evident result of the skill mastery profiles was that the semantic dimension was the best learned of the three dimensions. This applied to Groups JR and JL. It suggests that the results of the skill mastery profiles confirmed the findings presented in the results section, that the semantic dimension was easy and that Japanese learners were likely to learn when aiming to achieve a native-like realization of English intonation for wh-questions. Accordingly, the Japanese learners tended to learn the semantic dimension of intonation first, followed by the phonological and phonetic dimensions.

It was hard to determine, however, whether the phonological or phonetic dimension came first in the learning process. This was because not only did they indicate the presence of individual differences within the groups in the learning process, but also produced mixed results when Group JR and Group JL were compared. The learning profiles of Group JL showed that they tended to have mastered the phonetic dimension slightly faster than the phonological dimension, whereas those of Group JR presented indecisive findings regarding a preferred order of the learning. This seemingly contradicts the findings discussed in the results section, that the phonological dimension was more likely to be learned than the phonetic dimension. However, the results were literally interpreted and simply suggests the possibility that the phonetic dimension is somehow easier for the Japanese learners at an earlier stage of learning, but that once the phonological dimension is being learned, the learning of the phonetic dimension is restrained, as the learner has more experience with English. Because these two dimensions are closely related to each other, linguistically speaking, this relationship might have a connected effect on the process of learning intonation. The question of whether this interpretation is justified or which dimension tends to

come faster when learning English intonation for wh-questions needs further investigation.

Limitations

The present study comprehensively investigated Japanese learning of wh-questions from different dimensions, successfully providing some pedagogical implications for the field. However, a few methodological limitations must be noted. One concerns the participants; the sample size of the native speakers was especially small compared with that of the Japanese learners of English, and the participants were all male. Although the participants of Group N tended to show a consistent within-group pattern as to the production of wh-question intonation, future research with a balanced and large sample size in each group will confirm the findings of this study, and the same is true regarding gender-balanced participants. The other limitation involves the experimental materials. This study suggested that learning the phonological dimension is difficult for Japanese learners when producing utterances where the nucleus is on a non-final word. In order to support this finding, further studies in which the number and type of the target sentences are specifically designed are needed. They could also contribute to revealing the order in which the phonological and phonetic dimensions are learned, to which this study did not give a clear answer.

Conclusion

This study examined the learning of intonation for wh-questions by Japanese learners in the phonological, phonetic and semantic dimensions. The location of the nucleus was analyzed for the phonological dimension, the pitch peak and valley of the nucleus and its pitch range, for the phonetic dimension, and the use of the nuclear tone, for the semantic dimension in order to address three research questions about the difficulty of learning, the likelihood of learning and the order of learning. The findings of the study, based on an

acoustic analysis, were as follows. The dimensions all varied as regards the difficulty of learning; the phonological and phonetic dimensions were difficult whereas the semantic dimension was easy. Similarly, the likelihood of learning varied between the dimensions; the semantic dimension was obviously most likely to be learned, followed by the phonological dimension, and the phonetic dimension was least likely to be learned of all. Regarding the order of learning, the semantic dimension was learned faster than the other two dimensions. On the other hand, the learning of the phonological dimension and the phonetic dimension, and their relations were unclear. Although further research is needed to reveal the whole picture of the realization of English intonation and its learning, the findings in this study have implications for both the learning and teaching of intonation for wh-questions.

Acknowledgements

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Exploring College Student Views on the Use of the First Language in English Language Teaching: The Case of Scholarship Students

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Abstract

The present study investigated Japanese college student views on the function and value of first language (L1) use in the English classroom. The first-year scholarship students at a college completed a questionnaire consisting of 11 closed questions on their views, and two open-ended questions on the perceived advantages and disadvantages, of using L1 in English classes. The results indicate that the college students perceive a positive role for L1 use in core, framework, and social functions: a core function for imparting knowledge about the target language (TL), framework function for managing the classroom, and social function for reducing classroom anxiety. While students recognize this functionality of L1 use, they also perceive L1 use as a potentially demotivating factor. The students' conflicting views on L1 use call for further research, to investigate the optimal L1/TL balance for maximizing TL teaching and learning.

Keywords: first language (L1), target language (TL)

Introduction

The proper balance between use of the learners' first language (L1) and the target language (TL) in the foreign language classroom remains an object of debate among researchers, who have generated numerous studies concerning this issue, from a teacher, learner, theoretical, and/or pedagogical perspective. Though a near consensus appears to hold

that teachers should aim to make maximum use of the TL, researcher outlooks differ, ranging from insistence on total exclusion of the L1, toward varying degrees of recognition that the L1 can provide valuable support for effective learning of the TL (e.g., Atkinson, 1993; Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Polio & Duff, 1994). Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008) point out that this divergence of opinion is "based on the underlying differences in approach regarding the language classroom environment and the goal of language learning" (p. 250).

Given the debate on the L1/TL balance, the notion of TL exclusivity (or the monolingual principle) has been the subject of re-examination, though it has typically been prescribed by official policies, particularly in the field of English language teaching (McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Phillipson, 1992). In an effort to reassess the role of L1 use in language education, Hall and Cook (2012) explored a wide range of applied linguistics knowledge, such as the amount and functions of L1 use; theoretical frameworks from psycholinguistic, second language acquisition, constructivist, sociocultural, and sociolinguistic perspectives; and teacher and learner perceptions of L1 use.

Furthering such reassessment, a number of studies have attempted to quantify the amount of L1 used in teacher discourse (e.g., Duff & Polio, 1990; Edstrom, 2006; Kim & Elder, 2005; Macaro, 1997; Polio & Duff, 1994), and the results of these investigations demonstrate that the amount of L1 use varies considerably with the institutional and societal context.

The reported functions of L1 use, however, appear to be relatively constant. Duff and Polio (1990) suggest that teachers tend to use the learners' L1 when it differs significantly from the TL, such as in the grammar or writing system, a decision influenced by departmental polices, lesson objectives and tasks, training, and qualifications. Subsequently, Polio and Duff (1994) explored the pedagogical functions of L1 use by summarizing teachers' use of learners' L1 for grammar instruction, classroom management, demonstration of empathy to learners, and response to learners already speaking in their L1. Drawing on Kim and Elder

(2008), Littlewood and Yu (2011) classified the functions of L1 use into core goals for teaching the target language, framework goals for managing the classroom situation, and social goals for expressing personal concern and sympathy, in order to explain teachers' strategic employment of learners' L1 in class. Given these pedagogical functions of L1, some applied linguists insist that the L1 can and should be treated as a positive resource for language teaching, not an impediment to learning the TL (e.g., Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Cook, 2001; Widdowson, 2003).

In addition to the aforementioned amount and functions of L1 use, which were investigated from a teacher perspective, much attention has been paid to learner perceptions of L1 use, such as the strategic use of the L1 by students during classroom interaction, and student views on L1 use in the classroom. Regarding the strategic use of the L1, two main studies (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2000), each employing a sociocultural framework, identify two essential functions. First, the L1 is a psychological tool for learners to focus attention on form when solving grammatical problems; and second, the L1 fulfills the social role of establishing a cooperative atmosphere.

Studies on L1 use from a learner perspective, on the other hand, have employed either SLA (Levine, 2003; Macaro, 1997) or sociolinguistic frameworks (Chavez, 2003). Macaro (1997) investigated English high school learners' reactions to TL exclusivity, and found that only a minority of able learners accepted TL exclusivity, while the majority had a negative reaction, with both groups agreeing on the importance of framework goals of L1 use for classroom management. Levine (2003) investigated college students' anxiety level in relation to the amount of TL use, and found no correlation between student anxiety and the amount of the TL used, with TL exclusivity considered as a positive challenge in the U.S. university context.

Chavez (2003) explored the different functions of L1 and TL use perceived by learners in the language classroom, viewing the functions in terms of a diglossic environment. The

results showed that learners perceived two functions of L1 use: medium-oriented interactions for teaching the TL itself, and framework-oriented interactions for class management; while appreciating TL use for repetitive practical activities. These studies on student views on L1 use in the classroom generally agree that contextual factors such as learner proficiency in the TL, teaching methods, and department policies tend to play a crucial role in shaping students' views on the L1/TL balance.

Rolin-Ianziti and Varsheny (2008) point out that most studies have focused on the L1/TL issue in teacher discourse over the past two decades, with relatively few studies exploring the issue from a learner perspective. Investigating learner views is, however, indispensable in teaching language because it can anticipate areas of conflict between teachers and learners, and can be of great help in creating better communication in the language classroom. Thus, in order to obtain further information on the role that learners attribute to L1 use in language teaching and learning, the present study addressed the following questions: What are Japanese college student views on L1 use in English language teaching? Are the aforementioned pedagogical functions and/or dangers of L1 use evident in student perceptions?

The study

The purpose of the study was to examine Japanese college student views on the use of L1 (Japanese) in English language teaching (ELT), in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context. The investigation was conducted in contexts where the English teachers and their students share a common L1 (Japanese) in most of the lessons, but the students sometimes take practical English conversation classes from native English-speaking teachers (mainly from the United States or the U.K.) who may have little proficiency in Japanese. In such an EFL context, the classroom is the main or only source of student exposure to the TL (English).

Saito (2018) previously investigated Japanese college student perceptions of L1 use in ELT, relying on qualitative data (through analysis of student written comments on L1 use). The results suggested that college students appreciate inclusion of the L1 in a variety of situations, such as learning the TL itself, managing classroom activity, and establishing a safe space for learning. In order to increase the quality of the relevant data, drawing on Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008), the present study employed both qualitative and quantitative forms of data collection and analysis, with open-ended and closed questions, respectively; and examined to what extent the respective results of the two forms of analysis were mutually supporting.

Similar to Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney's study of learner views on the use of the L1 (English) and TL (French) at a college in Australia, the research conducted in Japan, regarding L1(Japanese) use in teaching the TL (English), aimed to critically assist in anticipating areas of conflict between teachers and learners, and in improving our understanding of communication between them in language education.

Procedure

The investigation was conducted at a private college in Japan, where the author works as a full-time language instructor. The research participants were first-year scholarship students of the college, who were enrolled in a course in global communication, a required subject for scholarship students, taught exclusively in English by native or near-native English-speaking teachers. They were also taking comprehensive English and TOEIC preparation classes from Japanese English teachers. As these students had passed a special entrance examination to obtain a scholarship, and were chosen from a large group of applicants, their scholastic abilities, attainments, and/or motivation for learning were typically higher than other students at the same college.

The study was based on a questionnaire consisting of two sections (see Appendix), following Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008). The first comprised 11 closed questions (i.e., opinion statements) which were answered on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The second contained two open-ended questions asking the students to list three or more advantages and disadvantages of using L1 (Japanese) in English classes. The closed questions assessed student views in four main areas of particular relevance to the study: core goals of L1 use in teaching the TL (1, 2, 3); framework goals of L1 use in managing the classroom situation (5, 6); social goals of L1 use in expressing personal concern and sympathy as teachers, and supporting identity as learners (8, 9, 11); and primarily TL or TL-only instruction (4, 7, 10).

The questionnaire was administered to 31 first-year scholarship students in June 2018. It was administered after eight weeks of instruction, to ensure that the students had been adequately exposed to the college learning environment. Quantitative analysis of the responses to the 11 closed questions was conducted, followed by qualitative analysis of the responses to the two open questions; and descriptive statistics were employed to analyze student responses to the former, to calculate the frequency of the respective answers to each question. The qualitative analysis was based on two lists of written responses, one detailing the advantages or positive views of L1 use (Japanese) in English classes, and the other the disadvantages or negative views of such L1 use. The qualitative data was analyzed based on the aforementioned four main areas of relevance to the study, which were the focus of the closed questions. Thus, the overall structure of the study was based on four categories: (1) student views on L1 use for core goals, (2) student views on L1 use for framework goals, (3) student views on L1 use for social goals, and (4) student views on perceived dangers of L1 use. Since the questionnaire was administered in the students' L1, the students' written comments were translated into English by the author.

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Findings and Discussion

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The following focuses on the four categories detailed above, with selected results of the quantitative analysis employed to support the interpretation of the qualitative data.

Student Views on L1 Use for Core Goals

This category focuses on student views on L1 use in learning the TL (English). The expression "easy to understand" is found in almost every student's open-ended response (27 out of 31 students) regarding the advantages of L1, showing the significant importance of L1 use for learning the TL:

> Since Japanese is a language I usually use, its use makes it easier to understand English lessons. (Student #3)
>
> I can understand the explanation in Japanese better, because the explanation in English makes it difficult to understand the content of English lessons. (Student #18)
>
> Use of Japanese makes it easy to understand the meaning of English. (Student #20)

These comments show that students attribute a significant positive role to L1 use, in their understanding of the content of English lessons as a whole. In support of these comments, Widdowson (2003) claims that L1 use is an inevitable and natural element of classroom life, and can and should be turned to pedagogical advantage as a positive resource for learning the TL. Some students detailed the effectiveness of L1 use for learning grammar, vocabulary (English words and phrases), and translation:

> Use of Japanese is effective for both teachers and learners when it comes to teaching difficult elements, such as subtle nuances of grammar and English words. (Student #2)
>
> Use of Japanese makes it easy to understand grammar and subtle nuances of English expressions. (Student #9)

> Use of Japanese makes it easy to understand the difficult parts of English grammar
>
> and vocabulary. Only Japanese use can explain some difficult aspects of English, such
>
> as translation into Japanese. (Student #29)

The response frequencies for Closed Question 1 indicate a similar preference for L1 use when teachers are explaining the grammatical structure of the TL: 22 students (71%) strongly agree or agree that L1 use makes understanding grammatical explanations easier, 8 (26 %) neither agree nor disagree, 1 (3%) disagrees, and none strongly disagrees.

The quantitative analysis of Closed Question 2, concerning vocabulary, shows a relatively high frequency of agreement: 19 students (61%) strongly agree or agree that explanation with L1 use makes it easier to understand the meaning of English vocabulary, 8 (26%) neither agree nor disagree, 4 (13%) disagree, and none strongly disagrees.

Quantitative analysis of the responses to Closed Question 3 indicates that students tend to understand long sentences better if the TL is translated into the L1. In this case, 18 students (58%) strongly agree or agree that translation into the L1 enables them to better understand long TL sentences, 8 (26%) neither agree nor disagree, 4 (13%) disagree, and 1(3%) strongly disagrees.

The results of qualitative and quantitative analysis suggest that students typically appreciate L1 use for learning the TL, supporting the reported functionality of L1 use for explaining difficult aspects of the TL, such as grammatical elements and the meaning of new vocabulary items, from both teacher and learner perspectives. In a similar way, Polio and Duff (1994) found that teachers used their learners' L1 for grammar instruction and classroom management, as well as to demonstrate empathy with learners, translate unknown words, and compensate for students' lack of understanding. Students' appreciation of translation appears to support Cook's argument (2010) that translation is a natural and effective means of language learning, develops important skills, answers learners' needs, and protects their linguistic and cultural identity. Furthermore, current SLA research, such as Laufer and Girsai

(2008), supports the conceptions of "noticing" and "focusing on forms," and advocates the effectiveness of contrastive analysis and translation as one of the strategies for form-focused instruction.

The students' qualitative responses appear to support some theoretical approaches to L1 use. For example, some student comments indicate that L1 use facilitates communication between teacher and student, or among students:

Use of Japanese can facilitate communication with teacher and classmates better than use of English. (Student #13)

Use of Japanese makes it easier for students to teach each other. (Student #20)

Use of Japanese makes it easier to communicate, because I am unfamiliar with English. (Student #24)

Japanese is useful when I explain to my classmates the reason I selected a certain item in a multiple-choice test. (Student #31)

Students' preference for communicating in the L1 may be partly explained from the sociocultural perspective that suggests that language learning is a collaborative process driven by social interaction (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2000). From this perspective, L1 use is a cognitive tool for learners, by which learning is scaffolded. L1 use in collaborative talk during tasks, such as pair work for solving problems between learners, facilitates production of the TL through interaction, and enables learners to work with teachers or experts at a level that may otherwise be beyond their reach. L1 use also facilitates communication when communication in the TL fails.

In addition, some student comments indicate that L1 use can increase the efficiency of TL learning by reducing both learning time and the burden of doing cognitively challenging tasks:

English only lessons are inefficient because it takes time to check difficult parts of lessons. (Student #7)

Translation of English words into Japanese makes the learning process faster.

(Student #16)

Use of Japanese can help organize large amounts of lesson information more rapidly.

(Student #22)

Offering theoretical support for such comments, Macaro (2006), for instance, suggests that L1 use can lighten the cognitive load on learners, facilitate the processing of other output, and provide efficient short cuts in the learning process employed by leaners. He also suggests that the introduction of a matching L1 word is an effective way of introducing new TL lexical items.

Thus, overall, the results concerning student views on L1 use for core goals suggest that TL lessons in the classroom should not preclude L1 use, because such use provides effective ways of enhancing the learning process, though maximization of the TL is needed.

Student Views on L1 Use for Framework Goals

Responses regarding English teachers' administration and classroom management constitute another focus category in which students attribute a positive role to L1 use. Responses to the open question on the advantages of L1 use, for example, suggest that students tend to appreciate the use of the L1 in classroom management, such as providing information about class outlines and activities:

In Japanese, I do not have to worry about missing important information. (Student #3)

Explanation of an assignment in English may have a negative effect on executing the assignment. (Student #7)

I can understand what to do next in lessons when Japanese is used. (Student #11)

Lessons go smoothly in Japanese. (Student #17)

The quantitative analysis of Closed Question 5, regarding classroom management, indicates a high frequency of agreement with such comments: 22 students (71%) strongly agree or agree

that teachers should give instructions (about classroom outlines, assignments, details of testing and assessment) in L1, 7 (23%) neither agree nor disagree, 1 (3%) disagrees, and 1 (3%) strongly disagrees. Therefore, L1 use for classroom management seems to provide better opportunities for students to obtain important information about lesson objectives, including assignments and assessment, in order to avoid confusion.

Overlapping somewhat with L1 use for core goals, included in this category is L1 use for instructions regarding English examinations: teaching important points or techniques in preparation for such examinations (e.g., the TOEIC and English proficiency exams), including the acquisition of pertinent knowledge and skills, such as patterns of past examination questions and predicting future examination questions. Though no explicit references to English exam preparation are observed in the students' qualitative responses, their frequent use of expressions such as "easy to understand" likely includes understanding more easily explanations regarding the structure and content of such English examinations.

In support of this, the results of quantitative analysis of the Closed Question 6 responses, concerning English examinations, shows the highest frequency of agreement among all the 11 closed questions: 28 students (90%) strongly agree or agree that L1 should be used for the explanation of important points for passing English proficiency examinations, 1 (3%) neither agrees nor disagrees, 1 (3%) disagrees, and 1 (3%) strongly disagrees. Especially in light of their typically high motivation as scholarship students, clear and detailed L1 technical explanation regarding the successful execution of assignments and exams would appear to satisfy the students' real-world needs.

In support of such framework functionality, Cook (2001) suggests that teachers' L1 use is effective for task organization, maintenance of discipline, contact with individual students, and testing. Chavez's study (2003) indicates that learners prefer L1 use for achieving the most important communicative goals, such as matters related to evaluation; while Medgyes (1994) argues that nonnative English teachers, who share with their students the same cultural,

educational, and linguistic background, are typically most familiar with the general

educational goals related to curricular and exam requirements.

Student Views on L1 Use for Social Goals

This category focuses on the use of L1 in creating a better affective, emotional,

empathetic, and sympathetic environment for learning the TL. Student responses to the open

question on the advantages of L1 use appear to confirm the sense of emotional security

provided by L1 use, judging from the frequent use of terms such as "a sense of security,"

"relax," and "a feeling of intimacy":

> Use of Japanese gives me a sense of security. (Student #3)
>
> Use of Japanese makes me feel an affinity with the speaker, and reduces my anxiety
>
> about learning. (Student #18)
>
> Use of Japanese removes the fear of being exposed to an unknown language.
>
> (Student #24)

The results of the quantitative analysis for Closed Question 8, regarding the reassuring role of

L1 use, indicate that 23 students (74%) strongly agree or agree that they feel a sense of

security when teachers use L1 in class, 6 (20%) neither agree nor disagree, none disagrees,

and 2 (6%) strongly disagree.

In the case of Closed Question 9, focusing on student perceptions of the relationship

between L1 use and human contact in class, 5 students (16%) strongly agree or agree that L1

use is better for human contact with English teachers in class, 19 (61%) neither agree nor

disagree, 5 (16%) disagree, and 2 (6%) strongly disagree. The students' comparative

neutrality on this question suggests that some may conceive of such use as implying

overreliance on the L1, or may find it possible to develop human affinity using the TL alone.

At the time of the investigation, students were well-advanced in a global communication

course that was taught only in English by native or near-native English teachers, in which

they may already have established a good relationship with these teachers; thus, further, in-depth investigation is required to explain their neutral position.

The results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of student responses concerning the affective domain of L1 use suggest that such use plays a role in reducing classroom anxiety, helping to create a safe space or less threatening atmosphere, and establishing positive teacher-student and inter-peer relationships in the classroom. Littlewood & Yu (2011), for example, highlight the reassuring role that the learners' L1 can play in class, counteracting the potentially alienating effects of monolingual teaching;, while Levine (2003) suggests that principled and meaningful L1 use can contribute to a reduction in learner anxiety. Finally, Auerbach (1993) emphasizes that L1 use "reduces anxiety and enhances the affective environment for learning, takes into account sociocultural factors, facilitates incorporation of learners' life experiences, and allows for learner-centered curriculum development" (p. 20).

Thus, a significant body of research suggests that L1 use is effective in the affective domain, as evidenced by expressions such as "the affective-humanistic benefits of mother tongue use," "affective and interpersonal functions of L1 use," "L1 use for promoting class unity and identity in a variety of ELT contexts," and "L1 use in encouraging learner motivation and positive attitudes toward the language being learned" (e.g., Camilleri, 1996; Nikula, 2007; Schweers, 1999; Stibbard, 1998).

Closed Question 11 investigated students' identity as learners in an EFL context. The quantitative results indicate that 8 students (26%) strongly agree or agree that L1 use in English classes is a natural form of support for the self as a learner, 10 (32%) neither agree nor disagree, 13 (42%) disagree, and none strongly disagrees. This relatively high frequency of disagreement may be partly owing to students' difficulty in articulating their response to complex identity issues. Additional research, such as a case study with in-depth interviews,

165

may be needed in order to investigate such complicated issues of identity in this area, which typically vary with the social context.

However, L1 use in ELT may be significant not only in pedagogical terms (i.e., how language is learned), but also with respect to learners' sense of who they are and what they want to be in an era of globalization. This dual significance would appear to be illustrated by the present study, because the students' sense of security through L1 use is evident from the data, suggesting that the L1 is the strongest identity marker in their everyday lives. In addition, much recent ESL research has focused on speaker-identity support in various social contexts incorporating English as a *lingua franca* among nonnative speakers of English in a multi-lingual community (e.g., Norton, 2000; Seidlhofer 2011).

Student Views on Perceived Dangers of L1 Use

The qualitative responses concerning the disadvantages of using the L1 in TL classes, indicate that L1 use has some drawbacks. The perceived dangers of L1 use include lack of exposure to the TL, overuse of L1, and dependence on L1 use. A number of students appear to recognize lack of exposure to the TL as a detrimental aspect of L1 use, which may impede language development:

Unable to acquire English proficiency. Less exposure to English. (Student #10)

Cannot improve English proficiency. Less exposure to English in everyday life.

(Student #11)

These remarks indicate that students see exposure to the TL as an advantage in learning the language. Such exposure helps learners to improve listening comprehensive skills in English, while L1 use impedes this type of learning:

Less exposure to English reduces the opportunity to listen to English. (Student #8)

Less exposure to English reduces listening comprehension skills. (Student #13)

English-only lessons improve listening comprehension for the TOEIC test.

(Student #22)

Some respondents see L1 use as impeding the acquisition of English pronunciation:

> L1 use makes it difficult to learn pronunciation for English words and sentences.
>
> (Student #1)
>
> Cannot learn the native nuances of expressions and pronunciation. (Student #9)

Thus, some consider L1 use as detrimental because it does not allow them to properly address the phonetic features of the TL. Exposure to the TL also appears to foster natural and spontaneous use of the TL, whereas L1 use impedes such use:

> Use of Japanese forces learners to promptly go back to translating spoken English into Japanese, which makes the learning process inefficient. Utterance in English tends to become unnatural. (Student #7)
>
> Unable to speak in English when I have to. (Student #29)

Furthermore, it is obvious from the respondents' frequent use of the word "practical," that exposure to the TL is typically perceived to promote practical use of the foreign language spoken in real-world settings:

> Less opportunity to use practical English, because only English lessons allow me to use it. (Student #10)
>
> Unable to learn real-life, practical English, such as idiomatic and slang expressions used in real-world settings. (Student #25)

Lack of exposure to the TL appears to be seen as detrimental to development of the learners' overall practical skills, including listening comprehension, pronunciation, and the spontaneous and natural use of the TL in real-world contexts; though the L1 plays a positive role in the functionality of core, framework, and social goals for learning the TL.

Another perceived danger, separate from but related to lack of TL exposure, is overuse of the L1; that is, excessive use of the L1 in the classroom:

> Tend to provide excessive information about a textbook. (Student #1)

167

Reduce the amount of time spent using English. (Student # 6)

Tend to use Japanese without consideration. (Student #17)

As the above comments suggest, some students complain about excessive L1 use, which, among other things, deflects from the essential aim of learning the target language. Such overuse of the L1 is also seen by some students as resulting in cognitive dependence on the L1, which hampers language learning due to lack of attention to the TL:

Rely on Japanese and pay less attention to listening to English. (Student # 6)

Dependent on Japanese and unable to learn English. (Student #9)

These responses indicate that students may feel difficulty in freeing themselves from the L1. Dependence on the L1, focusing on L1 explanations without TL linguistic input, may have a negative effect on the mental process of learning, which in turn demotivates learners by reducing their willingness to learn the TL:

Dependent on using Japanese, and explanation in Japanese reduces the effort

to learn by yourself. (Student #12)

Reduce the opportunity to learn the language by yourself. (Student #16)

Lose the positive tension to learn the language. (Student #21)

Still worse is that such demotivation may in turn have a negative effect on classroom management related to classroom atmosphere:

Create an atmosphere of hesitation in speaking English with proper pronunciation.

(Student #9)

Dependence on Japanese impedes the development of an active conversation style

peculiar to English-speaking people. (Student #12)

Much empty talk in Japanese among students. (Student #31)

These negative views on L1 use imply that exposure to the TL helps students learn the language for practical use in real-world settings, and directs attention to the TL.

The closed questions relating to the amount of TL exposure are Questions 4, 7, and 10, which assess students' perceptions of instruction either solely or mainly in the TL. The responses to Closed Question 4, concerning TL-only instruction, indicate neutrality: 6 students (20%) strongly agree or agree that English teachers should use only the TL in the classroom, 18 (58%) neither agree nor disagree, and 7 (22%) disagree or strongly disagree.

The responses to Closed Question 7, focusing on primarily TL instruction, indicate a high frequency of agreement: 25 students (81%) strongly agree or agree that English teachers should use the TL most of the time in class but explain difficult parts in the L1, 4 (13%) neither agree nor disagree, 2 (6%) disagree, and none strongly disagree. The difference in the frequency of responses between Questions 4 and 7 suggests that students tend to prefer primarily TL instruction to TL-only instruction in the language classroom.

Closed Question 10, inverting Questions 4 and 7, tests the reliability of the latter two questions. Here, 21 students (68%) strongly agree or agree that excessive use of the L1 by English teachers hampers the learning of the real-life, practical TL, 8 (26%) neither agree nor disagree, 2 (6%) disagree, and none strongly disagrees. The results indicate a relatively high percentage of agreement, echoing the preference for primarily TL instruction.

The qualitative and quantitative analysis of student responses regarding the perceived dangers of L1 use suggests that students attribute a positive role to TL exposure, with respect to learning the language for practical use; however, as their responses to the functionality questions illustrate, their perception of the dangers of L1 use does not argue for eliminating L1 use in the classroom. These results support those of Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008), recall the views of Levine's (2003) respondents, who saw TL use as a rewarding experience, and echo the conclusions of Atkinson' study (1993), which warns that while there are positive aspects to L1 use, it may present the single greatest danger to foreign language acquisition if it threatens the primacy of the TL.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

This section summarizes the analysis of the results for the four categories, discussed in the previous section. In the context of this study, students attribute a positive role to L1 use in pursuing core functional language-learning goals, with the open responses indicating that such use is effective for understanding the content of English lessons as a whole, particularly the difficult aspects of the TL, such as grammatical elements, and the meaning of new vocabulary terms, with use of translation when necessary. The closed responses also indicate that L1 use is conducive to learning the linguistic features of the TL. Similar conclusions were reached in several previous studies (e.g., Chaves, 2003; Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney, 2008), which demonstrated that learners prefer L1 use in learning grammatical elements.

The students' observed preference for L1 communication during collaborative tasks appears to be supported by studies exploring strategic learner use of the L1 (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2000), undertaken within a sociocultural framework shaped by the importance of classroom interaction for language learning (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2000), which showed that learners use the L1 to solve difficult problems involved in TL learning during group tasks. At the same time, the students' emphasis on the benefit of L1 use for efficient learning of the TL is echoed in the conclusions of SLA studies, that code-switching and L1 use in classroom discourse can lighten the cognitive load on learners, and offer efficient shortcuts for the learning process (e.g., Macaro 2006).

Nonetheless, a neutral or dissenting attitude toward L1 use for core functionality was evidenced by a minority of the respondents, similarly to studies in the European and Australian contexts (Macaro, 1997; Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney, 2008). Further research should investigate the individual characteristics of these respondents, such as their language-learning aptitude, learner identity, and overseas experiences. Overall, the results concerning student views on L1 use for core goals suggest that TL lessons should not preclude L1 use, because

such use provides effective ways of enhancing the learning process; however, as the responses regarding the dangers of L1 use suggest, TL use should be maximized.

Students also see a positive role for L1 use in pursuing framework functional goals, with their open-question responses suggesting that they perceive L1 use as effective for classroom management, including instruction related to English examinations, and the quantitative analysis revealing that a significant percentage of students favor L1 use in such management. Supporting these results, Macaro (1997) found agreement among English high school students in favor of classroom management in English, while Chavez (2003) reached a similar conclusion in the context of a U.S. university. Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008), on the other hand, reached a slightly different quantitative conclusion, in favor of *TL* use, at an Australian university, due to the teachers' employment of successful TL teaching techniques, which reminds us of the importance of contextual factors such as the departmental policy regarding L1 use and teacher training. Several studies also value the framework functionality of L1 in terms of maintenance of discipline, evaluation issues, and curricular and exam requirements (e.g., Cook, 2001; Medgyes, 1994).

With respect to the functional domain of social goals for creating an affective environment in learning the TL, the results of qualitative and quantitative analysis indicate that L1 use appears to play a role in alleviating classroom anxiety and helping to establish positive relationships between teacher and learners, and among learners. Abundant research suggests affective domain benefits to be derived from L1 use in TL classrooms, in various social contexts (e.g., Auerbach, 1993; Edstrom, 2006; Levine, 2003, Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Stibbard, 1998). One closed question (11), focusing on student identity by investigating the naturalness of L1 use in supporting the self as learner, received a relatively high degree of disagreement. Further longitudinal case studies, with in-depth interviews, would help to elucidate such complex issues of identity construction in this area.

While students valued the core, framework, and social functionality of L1 use, they nevertheless viewed such use as having some drawbacks. Their qualitative responses indicate a perception that lack of exposure to the TL, overuse of L1, and dependence on the L1 not only impede TL development, but also demotivate students by reducing their willingness to learn the TL; however, their quantitative responses suggest that the students prefer primarily TL instruction to TL-only instruction, suggesting that their perception does not preclude L1 use. Given their positive view of L1 functionality, yet concern about the perceived dangers of L1 use, the students would appear to hold somewhat conflicting views on L1 use in TL learning; a similar conclusion to that reached by Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008).

In addition, some studies suggest that contextual factors, such as an EFL or ESL context, teacher training, student characteristics, student TL proficiency, department policies, and instructors' teaching methods and classroom practices, may influence student views on the L1/TL balance (e.g., Chavez, 2003; Levine, 2003; Macaro, 1997). In this study, involving scholarship students with high motivation for learning the TL, the respondents appeared to prefer L1 use for the most important and valuable communicative purposes, such as matters related to evaluation, important information for English proficiency examinations, and linguistic knowledge of the TL; while they preferred TL use for acquiring practical mastery of the language.

Conclusion

The results of the present study suggest that highly motivated Japanese college students attribute a positive role to L1 use, in terms of its core, framework, and social functionality. Such use is perceived to perform a core function in developing linguistic knowledge of the TL, framework function in the management of classroom activities, and social function in reducing classroom anxiety. Thus, the L1 would appear to be useful for TL learning, especially in an EFL context where learners typically share a common language with the

teacher (Hall & Cook, 2012; Medgyes, 1994). At the same time, students are aware of the need for exposure to the TL, in order to gain practical ability in the language, recalling Atkinson' study (1993), which, while acknowledging positive aspects to L1 use, cautions that such use can present the single greatest danger to TL acquisition if it reduces TL use.

The view that students need both languages for effective language learning is a first step toward researching optimum strategies for maximizing TL use. The learner views here could, indeed, be reframed within the task-based approach to language learning supported by the SLA and sociocultural perspectives, where the L1 is seen as a potential, form-focused tool (Laufer & Girsai 2008) for completing tasks that maximize exposure to the TL. The concept of translanguaging in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) could also revise the learner perspective, which aims to maximize learner acquisition of context-specific knowledge and academic TL proficiency through the purposeful use of L1 and TL (Ikeda, 2017). Further longitudinal research is needed to investigate the optimal L1/TL balance, taking into account the various contextual factors discussed.

Acknowledgements

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University Press.

Appendix

Q1. This is a questionnaire concerning English lessons. How strongly do you feel about the

following statements? Please circle one of the appropriate numbers for each statement (1.

Strongly agree; 2. Agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Disagree; 5. Strongly disagree).

1. I find it easier to understand English grammar when English teachers explain it in Japanese.

2. I find it easier to understand English words (phrases) when English teachers explain them

in Japanese.

3. I find it easier to understand long English sentences when English teachers translate them into Japanese.

4. English teachers should only use English in the classroom.

5. English teachers should give instructions (about classroom outlines, assignments, details of testing and assessment) in Japanese.

6. English teachers should use Japanese for explaining important information regarding English proficiency examinations.

7. English teachers should use English most of the time in class, only using Japanese to explain difficult elements.

8. I feel a sense of security when English teachers use Japanese in class.

9. I think it is better to communicate in Japanese with English teachers in class.

10. When English teachers often use Japanese in the classroom, it impedes the learning of real-life, practical English.

11. It feels natural to use Japanese in English lessons, to support the self as a learner.

Q2. List three or more advantages of using Japanese in English classes.

Q3. List three or more disadvantages of using Japanese in English classes.

Frequency of Asking Personal Questions: A Case of Japanese EFL Learners at a University in Tokyo

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Abstract

The present study investigated how often 90 Japanese university students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at a university ask personal questions to interlocutors with two kinds of status variables, higher in status or older and equal in status or of the same age, in English. Types of personal information included age, marital status or if he or she is in a relationship, and family-related information. The students were asked to select either scale from *never*, *not so often*, *sometimes*, *often*, and *always* on an on-line questionnaire written in Japanese. They also answered the frequency of doing so in Japanese. The frequency and response patterns in the two languages were compared to examine the presence of first language (L1) transfer into the criteria for asking personal questions in English. The frequency was higher in English to both types of conversational partners. Some students selected the same scales in the two languages, thus suggesting the transfer, but other selected higher or lower frequency scales in English. In all the cases, majority of them seem to have different criteria from those of English native speakers (NSs). The results indicate that they need an opportunity to become aware of the difference.

Introduction

Scope of the Study

The present study examined how often non-English-major Japanese students at a university may choose seemingly inappropriate conversational topics while communicating in English. With an online questionnaire saved as a *Google Form*, the present researchers asked 90 students how often they ask personal questions while speaking their L1 Japanese and target language (TL), or second language (L2), English. The personal topics included age, marital status or if he or she has a girlfriend or boyfriend, family composition such as having a brother or sister. Such aspects of a language would be included in pragmatics, which may not be paid attention in classroom compared to other components (i.e. phonetics and phonology, semantics, and syntax). A study on assistant language teachers (ALTs) done by Sophia University (2017) revealed that pragmatics is not often taught at high schools in Japan.

In the field of linguistics, pragmatics is to explain why people talk in a specific way or choose certain expressions rather than other and how they understand what is meant, or implicated, from what is said. Austin (1962), Brown and Levinson (1987), Grice (1989), Leech (1983), and Searle (1969) are among the earlier studies that tried to answer these questions. Learners' pragmatics is in the scope of a research filed called interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), or second language pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993; Kasper & Rose 2001; Shimizu 2009). Defining the scope of ILP, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993, p. 3) describe that studies in ILP have primarily focused on "the comprehension and production of linguistic action" by learners. Common examples of linguistic action may be *speech acts* proposed by Searle (1969).

Leech (1983, p. 10) differentiates *general pragmatics*, the universal rules and manners of language use in human language, and *sociopragmatics*, unique rules and manners in a specific language. Asking personal questions to a conversational partner can be simply

regarded as a request for information but the intent behind this linguistic action may be interpreted differently among cultures. Such culture-specific interpretation seems to fit into sociopragmatics, which the present study focused on.

Asking Personal Questions

Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61) propose that every adult has *face*, a public image of him/herself that a person wants to show to other members of the society. Face comprises of two different kinds, *positive* and *negative faces*. Positive face is "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction ― i.e. freedom of action and freedom from imposition." Negative face is "the positive consistent self-image or *personality* [crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of] claimed by interactants." Brown and Levinson call any actions that can threaten these two types of faces *face-threatening acts* (*FTAs*). Asking personal questions can threaten both faces. In a sense, it may threaten one's negative face by asking the information that he does not want to disclose, which means requesting him to do what he does not want to. At the same time, by mentioning taboo topics to him, it may threaten his positive face by suggesting that the person asking the question does not care about his feelings.

Asking personal questions seems more acceptable in Japanese than English, especially in public (e.g., TV interviews), from an older person to the younger, and between people at the same age or equal in status. Mimaki (1999, p. 51) observed conversational topics chosen by 38 pairs of Japanese university students, who met each other for the first time. She found 23 common topics categorized into (a) campus life; (b) groups where the students belong such as faculty, department, clubs, and years at the university; (c) residence; (d) similarities with the conversational partner; (e) where they are from or which school they graduated from; (f) research interest, dissertation, or major; (g) future plan after graduating; or (h) entrance

examinations that they took to enter the university. This finding led her to claim that the students have a *scheme*, or a set of knowledge, for choice of topics. She also found that they tried to look for what they have in common and emphasized the similarities, showed interest on the similarities or differences, and avoided unsafe, or face-threatening, topics such as if he or she has a girlfriend or boyfriend, academic records such as grades or exam scores, and parents' occupation.

Kumagai and Ishii (2005) conducted a questionnaire and interview survey to compare Japanese and Korean preference of conversational topics for strangers of their age. The participants were 631 Japanese and 807 Koreans at different age groups, who were born between 1934 and 1983. They found that the Japanese preferred topics such as (a) hobbies; (b) sports, TV programs, films, and celebrities; (c) how to spend holidays; (d) where they are from; and (e) their age. In addition, young Japanese people tended to prefer relationship issues, marriage, and classes or work. The topics that both Japanese and Koreans were likely to avoid included their or their family members' income and body measurements such as height and weight. They conclude that the two important factors for choosing topics in the two languages were if the topic can promote further exchange of talk and if the topic is unrelated to conversational partners' privacy.

The two studies indicate that NSs of Japanese may tend to avoid asking about his or her privacy when conversing with a stranger. However, what *privacy* includes and to what extent it is respected in Japanese seem unclear. Self-help manner books for conversation may provide some clues. Sugiyama (2005) shows strategies to dodge answering to questions on age, marital status, and other personal issues when being asked by bosses or colleagues (p. 85) and recommends not asking such information because the person being asked may feel embarrassed (p. 41). Noguchi (2009, p. 105) explains that with the increased awareness of privacy protection in these twenty years, more people are unwilling to disclose their privacy.

Yet he shows some indirect question forms to ask about personal issues (p. 87, pp. 106-107). The topics included marital status or if he or she is in a relationship, age, residence or residential area, educational records, and income (to a person with apparently high income). These two books suggest that the types of information just mentioned may be part of privacy but that asking them can occur and possibly be tolerated.

Regarding the situation in English, some research in the field of sociolinguistics (e.g. Coupland, 2000), psychology (e.g. Haas & Sherman, 1982; Johnson & Aries, 1983) and medicine especially language disorders (e.g. Barnes et al., 2013; Nadig et al., 2010; Stibling et al., 2009) deal with choice of topics. However, few studies appear to deal with personal questions. It may be because such studies investigated conversations between people who know each other. Mimaki (1993, p. 52) divides a conversation between those who have met each other for the first time into three phases. They are (a) exchange of basic information about the participants, (b) increased exchange of talk on topics introduced in the first phase, and (c) closure of the conversation with decreased exchange. She reports that her participants actively exchanged information about themselves in the first phase by asking questions. If this is also true in English, personal questions may be seen at the beginning of conversations between those who do not each other well. With the limited number of earlier studies, it seems very difficult to determine if personal questions are asked in such situation or whether it is preferable in English. In addition, speakers of different English varieties such as British, American, Canadian, and Australian may possibly have different criteria for the choice of such topics as well as individual preferences.

Manner books and a textbook targeted at Japanese EFL learners would be helpful to consider these points. Vardaman (2009, 2013) and Vardaman and Morimoto (1999) show some inappropriate and impolite topics for questions in conversations: age, relationship or romance-related issues, if he or she has children, income, price of objects that he or she wears

or owns, blood type, religion, and body measurements or weight. Sakamoto and Sakamoto (2008) quote one of the common Americans' complaints about speakers of Japanese: *Japanese ask too many personal questions*. They mention *Why don't you have children?* and *Why don't you stop smoking?* as the examples. They explain, "To Japanese, such questions show warm interest in the other person's well-being. But to Americans, they seem to be an invasion of privacy" (p. 27). These publications indicate that Japanese learners are likely to ask such information and that this may be impolite. Yet it is important to note that the books are based on Americans' viewpoints and not on speakers of other English varieties.

Learners and Conversational Topics

In the field of ILP, Zuengler (1993) studied the influence of topics as a factor affecting learners' performance. However, there seems little research dealing with learners' sociopragmatic knowledge of preferable topics in their TL and how this is projected to their performance. It may be because majority of studies in ILP have focused on speech acts as typical examples of linguistic action. Asking questions to introduce a new topic for a conversation seem a type of linguistic action but different from speech acts. Speech acts have a clear goal of communication and can end when a certain action is performed. On the other hand, asking questions with such an aim may occur throughout a broader discourse to keep a conversation going.

Shimizu (2017, p. 132) states that people are likely to spend overwhelmingly more time on talks without a purpose, small talks, than those with a purpose, talks to perform specific tasks such as asking directions or shopping, in daily conversation. He also did a questionnaire survey with his colleague, of which respondents were international students learning Japanese at universities in Japan. More than 100 students identified what they found difficult in Japanese small talks and what they expect to be taught in classroom. The results indicated that

the students were finding difficulties with substantial aspects of Japanese small talks such as how to have small talks in the first place, choosing good, icebreaking, or appropriate topics according to whom they are talking to, how to keep the conversation going, how to respond to what he or she has just said. Japanese learners of English may face the same difficulties.

Difficulties in pragmatics of a TL may cause leaners to talk differently from NSs. For instance, studies by Beebe and Takahashi (1989), Takahashi (1996), Takahashi and Beebe (1993) suggest that Japanese learners of English do not always employ the same strategies or expressions as the ones NSs use in the speech acts of disagreeing, requesting, and correcting respectively. In the study done by Sophia University (2017), the majority of ALTs reported that some students and Japanese teachers of English sound inappropriate in manner and expressions while speaking English. Such deviant examples from the NSs' norm can be regarded as *pragmatic failure* (Thomas, 1983), which refers to the incidents where learners' true intention is not understood by a conversational partner. An influential factor associated with pragmatic failure is *pragmatic transfer* (Kasper, 1992), which refers to transferred pragmatic norm into an L2, which was originated in leaners' L1 or what they have learned in and outside classroom. The present study tried to investigate the association of the students' L1 pragmatics with the frequency of asking personal questions in English.

Method

The purpose of the present study was to find out how frequently university students learning EFL ask personal questions, which seem to be common in Japanese, in English. Ninety non-English-major students at a university in Tokyo responded to an online questionnaire with 71 questions saved as a Google Form. They belonged to four intact classes in a compulsory course for academic English communication. There were 43 male and 47 female students, whose age ranged from 18 to 20 ($M = 18.9$, $SD = 0.59$). They were assigned

to classes according to the scores on a placement test, which employed Test of English for Academic Purposes (TEAP) developed by Eiken Foundation of Japan. One of the four classes was labeled as *elementary* (*N* = 24) and the rest were labeled as *intermediate* (*N* = 66). Thirty students had an experience of staying in English-speaking countries for more than two weeks, with 17 having stayed up to 1 month, 5 having stayed up to 3 months, and 8 having stayed more than a year (*M* = 6.2 months, *SD* = 11.1). A Spearman's correlation coefficient test revealed no significant correlation between the response patterns and their proficiency or the experience, so the participants were regarded as one homogeneous group for the proceeding statistical analyses.

The questionnaire, written in Japanese, composed of four sections. They were (a) asking personal questions in Japanese, (b) asking personal questions in English, (c) attitudes for conversation in English, and (d) students' awareness and background. The present study focused only on the first and second sections with the limitation of pages. These sections asked how often the students ask questions to elicit personal information while talking with a NS of Japanese or English with two age or status (hereafter written as simply *status*) variables, older or higher in status (hereafter referred as *higher in status* or *with higher status*) and equal in status or of the same age as theirs (hereafter indicated as *equal in status* or *with equal status*), while conversing in Japanese or English respectively.

The sections focused on six types of personal information. They were (a) age, (b) if he or she is in a relationship or married (hereafter referred as *marital status*), (c) types of person he or she would like for a romantic relationship, (d) blood type, (e) body weight, and (f) family-related information such as if he or she has brothers or sisters (hereafter written as *family issues*). Although the degree of intimacy, such as close or distant, seems to be another important variable that can affect the frequency (Mimaki, 1999), it was not focused since the total number of questionnaire questions was already large, which would have demotivated the

students. Instead, one question was created to ask with which topics of the six the students consider solidarity is important when deciding if they ask or not. For the frequency, the students were asked to choose either scale from (a) *always*, (b) *often*, (c) *sometimes*, (d) *not so often*, or (e) *never*. In addition to these questions to inquire the frequency, the sections included questions to ask uncommon or common types of information that they ask. The students were first asked to select either *yes* or *no* and then those who selected *yes* were asked to write down the types of information.

The third section asked to what degree they agree with the statements describing necessary attitudes for communication in English. The fourth section asked their basic information such as age, gender, English learning background such as where they learned English, scores on English proficiency tests, experience of having stayed in English speaking countries for more than two weeks, and if they have learned English pragmatics. The section also asked their awareness levels in English pragmatics.

The students answered the questionnaire with anonymity as part of an awareness-raising activity in class as an introduction to the concepts of pragmatics and speech acts. Only data from the 90 students, who gave permission to the use of their responses for the present study, was analyzed and reported on this paper. The measurement of the frequency data was regarded as ordinal and the scales were substituted as *0* (*never*), *1* (*not so often*), *2* (*sometimes*), *3* (*often*), and *4* (*always*) for the statistical analyses. Although the data was not on ratio scale, the average and the standard deviation on each question was calculated to help further understand the dynamics of the data. Using IBM's SPSS, a Spearman's correlation coefficient test was performed among all possible pairs of the questionnaire questions excluding the open-ended to see how the students' response patterns in one question was associated with those on others. In addition, on pairs of questions to inquire the frequency, the numbers of students who chose the same and different scales were counted. To find the

possible causes of correlations, their response patterns were categorized into three types. These were (a) choosing the same scale on both of a question pair, (b) choosing a higher frequency scale on a question than the other, and (c) choosing a lower frequency scale on a question than the other.

The response patterns were regarded to reflect the students' perception of sociopragmatic rules, or criteria, for asking specific types of information mentioned earlier. The rules were concerned with (a) difference between Japanese and English, and (b) necessity of style-shifting, or changing the frequency of asking, according to the status of a conversational partner. As a presupposition, every student was assumed to have different absolute value for the frequency, which they may adjust based on their own criteria.

Possible types of perceptions about the difference between Japanese and English are (a) *the degree of acceptability for asking personal information X is the same in Japanese and English*, (b) *asking personal information X is more acceptable in English than in Japanese*, and (c) *asking personal information X is less acceptable in English than in Japanese*. The first type imply that the students may be transferring L1 rules into English. Considering the earlier studies (Sakamoto & Sakamoto, 2008; Vardaman, 2009, 2013; Vardaman & Morimoto, 1999), the second would reflect their incorrect understanding since it may be the opposite. Given the possibility that the information can be asked more often in Japanese, the third seem to be the most appropriate.

Possible types of the rules concerned with the necessity of style-shifting according to the status of a conversational partner are (a) *the degree of acceptability for asking personal information X is the same regardless of the status of an interlocutor*, (b) *asking personal information X is more acceptable to an interlocutor equal in status*, and (c) *asking personal information X is less acceptable to an interlocutor equal in status*. With the limited number of earlier studies, it seems difficult to decide if status difference is an influential factor for asking

personal information in English. The default would be the second since this variable comes into play when people decide whether to do an FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, considering the advice from the earlier studies (Vardaman 2009, 2013; Vardaman & Morimoto, 1999), not asking regardless of his or her status may be safer, so the first one would also be possible. The third seems the least common in both English and Japanese, so the response patterns were expected to reflect either the first or second of the above.

The next section discusses the students' responses on (a) *asking age*, (b) *marital status*, and (c) *family issues*, which indicated statistically significant correlations with higher reported frequencies to be noted. Uncommon conversational topics reported by the students were also analyzed to find out their perception about unsafe topics in the two languages. On the data from the questionnaire questions that elicited *yes* or *no*, logistic regression analyses of general equation model were performed to examine the difference of the students' response patterns between the two languages or the two status variables, *higher* or *equal*.

Results and Discussions

The Spearman's correlation coefficient test indicated significant correlations of the students' response patterns in Japanese and English on questionnaire questions that asked the frequency of asking (a) age, (b) marital status, and (c) family issues. It may be important to note again that asking these types of information does not seem preferable in English (Sakamoto & Sakamoto, 2008; Vardaman, 2009, 2013; Vardaman & Morimoto, 1999). The following subsections present the results on the three topics respectively and then the uncommon topics reported by the students.

Age

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of students who chose each frequency scales

for asking age to persons with the two status variables in Japanese and English. To a person

higher in status, the most selected scales were *not so often* in Japanese (*N* = 39, 43%) and

sometimes in English (*N* = 28, 31%). In English, more students chose higher frequency scales

from *sometimes* to *always.* The ratio of those who answered that they ask age with different

frequency levels reached at about 80% in Japanese and 70% in English. To a person equal in

status, the students selected *sometimes* the most in Japanese (*N* = 39, 43%) and *often* in

English (*N* = 30, 33%). Compared to cases with an interlocutor with higher status, less

students, 4% (*N* = 4) in Japanese and 11% (*N* = 10) in English, selected *never* and they

generally selected higher frequency scales. In English, more students selected higher

frequency scales *always* and *often* than to a person higher in status. The total of those who

selected other than *never* were 96% in Japanese and 89% in English. The average of the

frequency was the lowest in Japanese to a person with higher status and the highest in English

to a person with equal status. In the study of Kumagai and Ishii (2005), age was one of the

topics that the Japanese participants preferred. The great percentage of those who chose other

than *never* in Japanese seem to support this though the general frequency was not very high.

Table 1

Frequency of Asking Age in Japanese and English

	To Higher Status		To Equal Status	
	Japanese	English	Japanese	English
Always	1 1%	5 6%	3 3%	10 11%
Often	6 7%	11 12%	24 27%	30 33%
Sometimes	23 26%	28 31%	39 43%	27 30%
Not so often	39 43%	20 22%	20 22%	13 14%
Never	21 23%	26 29%	4 4%	10 11%
Total	90	90	90	90
M	1.19	1.43	2.02	2.19
SD	0.91	1.18	0.89	1.15

The Spearman's correlation coefficient test indicated significant correlations among

pairs of questions where the comparison was made between languages and the status

variables. Table 2 shows the list of pairs with significant correlations.

Table 2

Asking Age: Pairs of Questions with Significant Correlations

Pairs of Questionnaire Questions			r	
Between Languages				
Pair 1	To Higher Status in Japanese	– To Higher Status in English	.33	*
Pair 2	To Equal Status in Japanese	– To Equal Status in English	.40	*
Between Status Variables				
Pair 3	To Higher Status in Japanese	– To Equal Status in Japanese	.40	*
Pair 4	To Higher Status in English	– To Equal Status in English	.65	*

*Note. * p < .01*

A weak positive correlation and relatively strong positive correlations were indicated in Pair 1

and Pairs 2 to 4 respectively. Such positive correlations imply a specific tendency: the higher

are the scales that the students chose on one of a question pair, so are the scales on another.

Table 3 shows the ratio of the three response patterns seen in Pairs 1 and 2: (a) selected

the same scales in both languages ($J = E$), (b) selected higher frequency scales in English ($J <$

E), and (c) selected lower frequency scales in English ($J > E$). In both pairs, the least common

pattern was J > E.

Table 3

Asking Age: Response Patterns in Pairs 1 & 2

Question Pairs	$J = E$		$J < E$		$J > E$		Total
Pair 1	33	37%	33	37%	24	27%	90
Pair 2	38	42%	31	34%	21	23%	90

Note. J = E = selected the same scales in Japanese and English, J < E = selected higher
frequency scales in English, J > E = selected lower frequency scales in English

In Pair 1, the same number of the patterns fit into J = E and J < E. In J = E, more students

selected *never* (*N* = 10), *sometimes* (*N* = 10), and *not so often* (*N* = 9). In J < E, the students chose *not so often* (*N* = 18) and *never* (*N* = 11) the most in Japanese but selected *sometimes* (*N* = 17) and *often* (*N* = 8) in English. In J > E, they chose *not so often* (*N* = 12) and *sometimes* (*N* = 11) the most in Japanese and *never* (*N* = 16) and *not so often* (*N* = 7) in English. It seems that majority of the students having responded with J = E or J > E pattern may have chosen lower frequency scales than those who have responded with J < E pattern.

In Pair 2, the most common pattern was J = E. More students chose *sometimes* (*N* = 16) and *often* (*N* = 14) in the two languages thus selected higher frequency scales than in Pair 1. In J < E, they selected *sometimes* (*N* = 16) and *not so often* (*N* = 11) the most in Japanese but *often* (*N* = 15), *always* (*N* = 8) and *sometimes* (*N* = 7) in English. In J > E, which was the least common, they chose *often* (*N* = 8) and *sometimes* (*N* = 7) the most in Japanese then *never* (*N* = 8) and *not so often* (*N* = 8) in English.

The response patterns in Pairs 1 and 2 would be reflecting the students' different perceptions: (a) *the degree of acceptability for asking age is the same in Japanese and English* (J = E), (b) *asking age is more acceptable in English* (J < E), and (c) *asking age is less acceptable in English* (J > E). In Pair 1, majorities seem to be following either the first or second. Those who are applying the first or third seem to have a relatively low absolute value of the frequency. In Pair 2, they are likely to be following the same rules but with higher values. In both Pairs 1 and 2, more than 30% seem to be following the third, which may be the opposite of the reality.

Table 4 indicates the ratio of three response patterns seen in Pairs 3 and 4: (a) chose the same scales regardless of his or her status (*H* = *E*), (b) chose higher frequency scales to a person equal in status (*H* < *E*), and (c) chose lower frequency scales to this type of interlocutor (*H* > *E*).

Table 4

Asking Age: Response Patterns in Pairs 3 & 4

Question Pairs	H = E		H < E		H > E		Total
Pair 3	31	34%	55	61%	4	4%	90
Pair 4	43	48%	46	51%	1	1%	90

Note. H = E = selected the same frequency scales to both types of the interlocutor, H < E = selected higher frequency scales to a person equal in status, H > E = selected lower frequency scales to a person equal in status

The most frequent pattern was H < E in both Pairs 3 and 4. In Pair 3, most students selected either one of *not so often* (*N* = 26), *never* (*N* = 18), or *sometimes* (*N* = 10) to a person higher in status and *sometimes* (*N* = 25) and *often* (*N* = 22) to a person equal in status. In H = E, majority selected *not so often* (*N* = 13) and *sometimes* (*N* = 12). In H < E of Pair 4, they mostly selected *never* or *sometimes* (*N* = 16 for each) and *not so often* (*N* = 12) to a person with higher status and *often* (*N* = 22) and *sometimes* (*N* = 15) to a person with equal status. In H = E, they chose *sometimes* (*N* = 13) and *never* (*N* = 12) the most. With only a few students having fit in H > E in Pairs 3 and 4, the students' response patterns in Pairs 3 and 4 would be due to either perception of (a) *the degree of acceptability for asking age is the same regardless of the interlocutors' status* (H = E) or (b) *asking age is more acceptable to a person with equal in status* (H < E).

The difference of the coefficients from weak to relatively strong in Pairs 1 to 4 would be due to the varying number of those who consistently style-shifted or maintained the same pattern and the average of the frequency. The consistency may have been the greatest in Pair 4 with the highest average. In summary, the students' responses can be described in three ways. Firstly, each student seems to have different absolute values for the acceptability of asking age as they chose different scales. Secondly, some students may have style-shifted according to the status of an interlocutor but others did not, which suggests different levels of sensitivity to this variable. Finally, some students appear to have style-shifted based on the perception that

193

Japanese and English have different rules for asking age though others do not. They are also likely to have different levels of sensitivity to the difference.

To a person higher in status, they do not seem to ask age so often in English, but the frequency went up when talking to a person equal in status. Since asking age appears to be impolite (Vardaman 2009, 2013; Vardaman & Morimoto 1999) choosing other than *never* would be unsafe. In addition, some students responded with J < E pattern, which would also be problematic. The students seem to have different rules for asking age in English, which include acceptability of doing so and when or how to style-shift. The existence of those who responded with J = E pattern suggests that they seem to be transferring the measures of asking age in their L1 into L2.

Marital status

Table 5 shows the frequency of asking marital status in Japanese and English to persons with higher or equal status. To an interlocutor with higher status, the students selected *not so often* the most in both Japanese and English (*N* = 39, 43% for each). In English, more students chose *often* (*N* = 11, 12%) and one chose *always.* Those who selected other than *never* occupied 68% in Japanese and 70% in English. To a conversational partner equal in status, they chose *sometimes* the most both in Japanese (*N* = 40, 44%) and English (*N* = 32, 36%). In English, 4 students chose *always* though less chose other higher frequency scales. The ratio of those who selected other than *never* was 86% in Japanese and 87% in English. The average of the frequency was the lowest in Japanese to a person with higher status and the highest in English to a person equal in status and this tendency corresponds to that in asking age. Compared to asking age, about twice more students chose *not so often* to both types of interlocutors in English. In Japanese, about 10% more students chose *never*. The students may be less likely to ask this type of information than age. In Mimaki (1999), if he or she has a girlfriend or boyfriend was one of the topics that the students avoided. The higher

percentage of *never* to a person equal in status than asking age in Japanese would support this

point.

Table 5

Frequency of Asking Marital Status in Japanese and English

| | To Higher Status | | To Equal Status | |
	Japanese	English	Japanese	English
Always	0 0%	1 1%	0 0%	4 4%
Often	1 1%	11 12%	18 20%	16 18%
Sometimes	18 20%	12 13%	40 44%	32 36%
Not so often	39 43%	39 43%	19 21%	26 29%
Never	32 36%	27 30%	13 14%	12 13%
Total	90	90	90	90
M	0.87	1.11	1.70	1.71
SD	0.76	1.00	0.95	1.05

Table 6 shows the pairs of questionnaire questions with statistically significant

correlations. A weak positive correlation, relatively strong positive correlations, and strong

positive correlations were indicated in Pair 1, Pairs 2 and 3, and Pair 4 in order.

Table 6

Asking Marital Status: Pairs of Questions with Significant Correlations

Pairs of Questionnaire Questions			*r*	
Between Languages				
Pair 1 To Higher Status in Japanese	−	To Higher Status in English	.34	*
Pair 2 To Equal Status in Japanese	−	To Equal Status in English	.45	*
Between Status Variables				
Pair 3 To Higher Status in Japanese	−	To Equal Status in Japanese	.54	*
Pair 4 To Higher Status in English	−	To Equal Status in English	.74	*

Note. * $p < .01$

Table 7 shows the response patterns seen in Pairs 1 and 2. In both pairs, the students

responded with J = E pattern the most and the percentage was nearly 60%.

Table 7

Asking Marital Status: Response Patterns in Pairs 1 & 2

Question Pairs	J = E		J < E		J > E		Total
Pair 1	52	58%	24	27%	14	16%	90
Pair 2	51	57%	17	19%	22	24%	90

Note. J = E = selected the same scales in Japanese and English, J < E = selected higher frequency scales in English, J > E = selected lower frequency scales in English

In Pair 1, majority of such students chose lower frequency scales, *not so often* (*N* = 27), *never* (*N* = 16), and *sometimes* (*N* = 8). In Pair 2, from the most, they selected *sometimes* (*N* = 23), *not so often* (*N* = 11), and *often* (*N* = 10), thus chose higher frequency scales than in Pair 1. In Pair 1, the second most common pattern was J < E. They selected *never* (*N* = 16) the most in Japanese and *often* (*N* = 10) and *not so often* (*N* = 9) in English. In Pair 2, the second most common was J > E. Majority selected *sometimes* (*N* = 13) and *often* (*N* = 7) in Japanese and *not so often* (*N* = 13) and *never* (*N* = 5) in English. However, there were still about 20% who responded with J < E pattern. They chose *never* (*N* = 6), *not so often* (*N* = 6), and *sometimes* (*N* = 4) the most in Japanese, but *often* (*N* = 6), *sometimes* (*N* = 5), and *always* (*N* = 4) in English.

Possible types of the students' perceptions adjusting their value for the frequency of asking the information may be (a) *the degree of acceptability for asking marital status is the same in Japanese and English* (J = E), (b) *asking marital status is more acceptable in English* (J < E), and (c) *asking marital status is less acceptable in English* (J > E). Majority of the students are likely to be following the first one. In Pair 1, they seem to have lower absolute value for the frequency than in Pair 2. However, it may be important to note the existence of those who appear to be applying the third, who responded with J < E pattern.

Table 8 indicates the ratio of the three response patterns seen in Pairs 3 and 4. There was no student who responded with H > E pattern.

Table 8

Asking Marital Status: Response Patterns in Pairs 3 & 4

Question Pairs	H = E		H < E		H > E		Total
Pair 3	35	39%	55	61%	0	0%	90
Pair 4	47	52%	43	48%	0	0%	90

Note. H = E = selected the same frequency scales to both types of the interlocutor, H < E = selected higher frequency scales to a person equal in status, H > E = selected lower frequency scales to a person equal in status

In Pair 3, more students fit in H < E pattern. To a person higher in status, from the most, they chose *not so often* (*N* = 27), *never* (*N* = 19), and *sometimes* (*N* = 9). To a person equal in status, they selected *sometimes* (*N* = 31), *often* (*N* = 17), and *not so often* (*N* = 7). In *H = E* pattern, they mostly chose *never* (*N* = 13), *not so often* (*N* = 12), and *sometimes* (*N* = 9). In Pair 4, about the same number of the students responded with H = E or H < E pattern. In H = E, majority selected *never* (*N* = 18), *not so often* (*N* = 12), or *often* (*N* = 9). Differing from Pair 3, the third most selected was *often*. In H < E, they chose *not so often* (*N* = 21) and *never* (*N* = 15) the most to a person higher in status and *sometimes* (*N* = 25), *not so often* (*N* = 8), and *often* (*N* = 7) to a person equal in status.

Compared to cases of asking age in both pairs, the students generally chose lower frequency scales in H = E pattern and style-shifted with low frequency. The strong correlation in Pair 4 appears to reflect this consistency with lower frequency scales but with the highest average among the four pairs. Since there was no student who responded with H > E pattern, the students' possible perceptions regarding interlocutors' status can be either one of (a) *the degree of acceptability for asking marital status is the same regardless of the interlocutors' status* (H = E) and (b) *asking marital status is more acceptable to a person equal in status* (H < E). Majority of the students are likely to be applying the first one for asking this type of information in English with relatively low absolute values. Those who seem to be following

the second also appear to have lower values than when asking age.

In sum, the students' responses may be explained as the following. Firstly, each student seems to have a different but lower absolute value for the acceptability of asking marital status than that for asking age. Secondly, some style-shifted according to the status of interlocutors but others did not. Their levels of sensitivity seem to vary. Finally, some may have style-shifted based on the perception that Japanese and English have different rules for asking marital status, but others do not. They appear to have different levels of sensitivity to the difference.

In English, the students are not likely to ask this type of information to a person higher in status very often but there were still over a quarter of students who selected higher frequency scales from *sometimes* to *always*. To a person equal in status, about 60% selected the higher frequency scales. The students' response patterns suggest that more students appear to be transferring L1 sociopragmatic rules into English than when asking age.

Family Issues

Table 9 shows the numbers and percentages of those who chose each frequency scale for asking family issues in Japanese and English. To a person with higher status, they chose *sometimes* the most in both Japanese (*N* = 42, 47%) and English (*N* = 33, 37%). In English, about twice more students selected *often* than in Japanese and 5 more students chose *always*. The number of those who selected *never* was the least among the three types of information. Those who selected other than *never* occupied 91% in both Japanese and English. To a person equal in status, the students selected *often* the most in both Japanese (*N* = 37, 41%) and English (*N* = 33, 37%). In English, 2 more students chose *never* but 5 more students selected *always*. The ratio of those who selected other than *never* were 96% in Japanese and 93% in English. Overall, the highest percentages of those who selected other than *never* among the three topics in English imply that the students may regard asking this type of information is

safe, though it does not seem so in reality.

Table 9

Frequency of Asking Family Issues in Japanese and English

| | To Higher Status | | To Equal Status | |
	Japanese	English	Japanese	English
Always	1　1%	6　7%	7　8%	12　13%
Often	13　14%	27　30%	37　41%	33　37%
Sometimes	42　47%	33　37%	35　39%	32　36%
Not so often	26　29%	16　18%	7　8%	7　8%
Never	8　9%	8　9%	4　4%	6　7%
Total	90	90	90	90
M	1.70	2.08	2.40	2.42
SD	0.86	1.05	0.90	1.03

Table 10 indicates the pairs of questionnaire questions with significant correlations. Again, the Spearman's correlation coefficient test presented a weak positive correlation, relatively strong positive correlations, and strong positive correlation in Pair 1, Pairs 2 and 3, and Pair 4 respectively. The correlation coefficient was the highest in Pair 4 among all the other pairs including those in earlier subsections.

Table 10

Asking Family Issues: Pairs of Questions with Significant Correlations

Pairs of Questionnaire Questions			*r*	
Between Languages				
Pair 1　To Higher Status in Japanese	−	To Higher Status in English	.34	*
Pair 2　To Equal Status in Japanese	−	To Equal Status in English	.47	*
Between Status Variables				
Pair 3　To Higher Status in Japanese	−	To Equal Status in Japanese	.41	*
Pair 4　To Higher Status in English	−	To Equal Status in English	.83	*

Note. * $p < .01$

Table 11

Asking Family Issues: Response Patterns in Pairs 1 & 2

Question Pairs	J = E		J < E		J > E		Total
Pair 1	39	43%	36	40%	15	17%	90
Pair 2	49	54%	23	26%	18	20%	90

Note. J = E = selected the same scales in Japanese and English, J < E = selected higher frequency scales in English, J > E = selected lower frequency scales in English

Table 11 shows the response patterns seen in Pairs 1 and 2. In Pair 1, about the same number of students responded with J = E or J < E pattern. In J = E, majority selected *sometimes* (N = 18), *often* (N = 8), or *never* (N = 8). In J < E, they selected *not so often* (N = 17) and *sometimes* (N = 14) the most in Japanese and *often* (N = 19) and *sometimes* (N = 11) in English. In Pair 2, the most common was J = E. Majority selected *sometimes* and *often* (N = 19 for each). The second most common pattern was J < E. They chose *sometimes* (N = 13) and *often* (N = 6) the most in Japanese and *often* (N = 14) and *always* (N = 7) in English. In Pairs 1 and 2, the prevailing patterns were J = E and J < E as they were in other two topics excepting Pair 2 of marital status. The difference is that the students kept the same frequency or changed it with relatively high frequencies.

Possible types of the students' perceptions regarding the difference between Japanese and English would be (a) *the degree of acceptability for asking family issues is the same in Japanese and English* (J = E), (b) *asking family issues is more acceptable in English* (J < E), and (c) *asking family issues is less acceptable in English* (J > E). The least students seem to be following the third one, which seems the most appropriate. The rest are likely to be following either the first or second with relatively high frequency.

Table 12 shows the students' response patterns seen in Pairs 3 and 4.

Table 12

Asking Family Issues: Response Patterns in Pairs 3 & 4

Question Pairs	H = E		H < E		H > E		Total
Pair 3	25	28%	65	72%	0	0%	90
Pair 4	58	64%	31	34%	1	1%	90

Note. H = E = selected the same frequency scales to both types of the interlocutor, H < E = selected higher frequency scales to a person equal in status, H > E = selected lower frequency scales to a person equal in status

In Pair 3, more than 70% of the students' response patterns fit in H < E. This would suggest that they commonly change the frequency of asking the information according to the status of an interlocutor in Japanese. To a person higher in status, from the most, they chose *never* (*N* = 44), *not so often* (*N* = 12), and *sometimes* (*N* = 9). To a person equal in status, almost all students selected *sometimes* (*N* = 34), *not so often* (*N* = 17), or *often* (*N* = 13).

On the other hand, in Pair 4, the most common pattern was H = E, where the majority selected *sometimes* (*N* = 21) and *often* (*N* = 20). In H < E, they selected *sometimes* (*N* = 12) and *not so often* (*N* = 11) the most to a person with higher status and *often* (*N* = 13) and *sometimes* (*N* = 11) to a person equal in status. Compared to Pair 3, they selected higher frequency scales in H = E pattern and style shifted with higher frequencies in H < E pattern. With no or only one student having responded with H > E patterns, possible types of the students' perceptions may be (a) *the degree of acceptability for asking family issues is the same regardless of the interlocutors' status* (H = E) and (b) *asking family issues is more acceptable to a person with equal in status* (H < E). The greatest correlation in Pair 4 would be due to the consistency of the students' response patterns accompanied by the highest average.

So far, the students' responses would be explained as the following. Firstly, each student seems to have a different but higher absolute value for the acceptability of asking family issues than that for asking other two types of information. Secondly, some style-shifted

according to the status of interlocutors but others did not. They seem to have different levels of sensitivity to this variable. Finally, some may have style-shifted based on the perception that Japanese and English have different rules for asking family issues. They appear to have different levels of sensitivity to the difference.

Differing from other two types of information, the students seem to have higher absolute values. This seems to contradict with NSs' norm. The least students responded with J > E pattern, which would be the most appropriate. These tendencies may be problematic.

Uncommon Topics Reported by the Students

Table 13 shows the number of students who answered that there are kinds of information that they do not ask while interacting with NSs of Japanese or English. The number of those who answered *yes* was greater in Japanese. In Japanese, majority did so regardless of the conversational partners' status, but an opposite tendency was seen in English.

The results of the logistic regression analyses indicate that the students' response patterns differ according to the status of interlocutors and languages as shown in Table 14. This means that they may have changed their responses based on the interlocutors' status and have different criteria in the two languages. Other factors than their L1 appear to be affecting the criteria in their L2.

Table 13

Number of Students Who Listed Uncommon Topics

	To Higher Status				To Equal Status			
	Japanese		English		Japanese		English	
Yes	63	70%	39	43%	37	41%	27	30%
No	27	30%	51	57%	53	59%	63	70%
Total	90		90		90		90	

Note. Yes = answered that there are some types of information that they do not ask
   No = answered that there are none

Table 14

Results of the Logistic Regression Analyses among Pairs of Questionnaire Questions

Question Pairs			χ^2	*df*	*p*	
To Higher Status in Japanese	-	To Higher Status in English	20.35	1	0.00	*
To Equal Status in Japanese	-	To Equal Status in English	5.80	1	0.02	**
To Higher Status in Japanese	-	To Equal Status in Japanese	32.49	1	0.00	*
To Higher Status in English	-	To Equal Status in English	8.53	1	0.00	*

*Note. * p < .01, **p < .05*

To a person higher in status, the major types of uncommon topics included age ($N = 17$ in Japanese, $N = 8$ in English) and career-related issues such as his/her current or former positions and educational background ($N = 16$ in Japanese, $N = 4$ in English). Although her participants talked with an interlocutor equal in status, this corresponds to the finding of Mimaki (1999) that they avoided talking about academic records. To a person equal in status, the uncommon topics included appearance-related issues such as body weight or body parts for which he or she takes special care for beauty ($N = 11$ in Japanese, $N = 7$ in English). This also corresponds to the finding of Kumagai and Ishii (2005) that their Japanese participants did not prefer talking about body measurements such as height and weight. In Japanese, the second most mentioned were family issues such as what his or her parents do or if he or she has a mother or father ($N = 7$).

In English, small number of the students mentioned different kinds of information such

as blood types, religion, complexes that he or she has about him or her ($N = 2$ for each). The students seem to have common types of information that they do not ask in the two languages, but the number of the students who listed varied between the languages. It may be important to note that only small numbers of students listed age, marital status, and family issues as uncommon topics in English. In addition, the number of students who answered *no* was greater. This would suggest the students' misunderstanding that there are less taboo topics for conversation in English.

Conclusion

Earlier studies imply that asking personal information seems unsafe in both Japanese and English, or in American English, but the types of information included in this category may be different between the two languages. In Japanese, age appears to be one of common preferred topics, but this does not seem so in English as well as marital status and family issues. The results indicated that the students are more likely to change the frequency of asking age, marital status, and family issues based on the conversational partners' status in Japanese. In English, there were more students who selected the same frequency scales regardless of the status of the interlocutor. This may suggest their decreased sensitivity to status differences when asking personal information in English.

In addition, there were more students who selected higher frequency scales in English than those who selected lower frequency scales in English. In all the three topics, the average of the frequency was the lowest to a person with higher status in Japanese and the highest to a person with equal status in English. The students may regard asking such types of information to be more common in English than in Japanese. This perception appears to be the opposite of the reality.

The significant correlations between English and Japanese, Pairs 1 and 2, indicate that

there seem to be some students who employ the same criteria to decide the frequency of asking the three kinds of information in the two languages. This would suggest the transfer from L1. However, not all the students are likely to be acting so. There may be some other influential factors such as their stereotypes and inappropriate knowledge such as *people talk more openly in English* and *it is OK to ask about people's privacy in English*, which they picked up during their learning process.

The highest correlation coefficients in Pair 4 of all the topics, where the comparison was based on status variables in English, indicate that asking such information to a person equal in status would be a predictor of doing so to a person higher in status or vice versa. The higher coefficients than in other pairs may be due to the higher average of the frequency and the consistency of the students' response patterns, which were categorized into either H = E or H < E.

The logistic regression analyses indicated that their choice of conversational topics would have been influenced by the interlocutors' status in both languages and the criteria for doing so may differ between the languages. This may also indicate the existence of other factors other than their L1 that affect the choice. The results so far suggest that the students have unique criteria, or interlanguage-pragmatic criteria, for choice of conversational topics and for deciding if they ask or not in English. The criteria appear to differ from those of their L1 and possibly from those of English NSs.

These findings suggest two possibilities that the students may need to be aware of (a) the acceptability of asking personal questions in Japanese and English seem different and (b) the types included in personal information may also be different. Although the perception would vary according to individuals and the varieties of English, it seems important to let them aware that NSs of English may have different criteria. The role of instruction will be very important since majority of the students may not have opportunities to notice the

differences outside classroom.

At present, with the limited amount of earlier studies, to what extent their perceptions are deviant from that of English NSs is unclear. To do so, the same questionnaire survey to NSs, those who speak different varieties of English if possible, will be necessary. In addition, because of the limited data size and the fact that the students belong to only one university in Tokyo, whether students in other universities have the same tendencies is unknown. The questionnaire will need to be answered by more participants from other universities and in other areas. Furthermore, the reported frequency may differ from the actual frequency in natural conversations. Observations of the students communicating with a NS of Japanese or English will be also required. Finally, since the questionnaire did not ask why they selected specific frequency scales and with what kind of understanding they behave so, what the students really have in mind may not have been depicted. Interviews or additional questionnaire survey will help understanding their perceptions fully.

Acknowledgements

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