

JACET INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
SELECTED PAPERS
VOL. 8



ISSN 2188-8612

ISSN 2188-8612

JACET International Convention
Selected Papers
Volume 8



The JACET 60th Commemorative International Convention

English Language Education to Endure Changing Times: Facing the Reality of Society 5.0

August 27 – 29, 2021

Online

JACET International Convention Selected Papers, Volume 8

Published by the Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET)

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First published in March 2022

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Le Van Canh. ELT in the uncertain future: Re-envisioning the goal of our profession
(August 27)

Invited Papers

Looking Back Into the Future: Re-Envisioning the Goal of English Language Education in the 21st Century

Le Van Canh

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Abstract

As English language educators and teacher educators, we live in critical times. Our future is becoming uncertain due to rapid development in artificial intelligence. Societies are becoming increasingly digitalized, creating unprecedented changes in all aspects of human life, including verbal communication. In such a world, the narrow focus of teaching English as a language per se as well as the high-stakes standardized testing, which are dominant in the field of English language education, become obstacles to the promotion of students' whole-person development. In this article I argue for the need to re-envision the goal of English language education by expanding the conventional concept of communicative competence to multimodal communicative competence. Also, I recommend that ELT move beyond its instrumentality with a focus solely on linguistic skills to take on its educational function by integrating digital citizenship education into English lessons.

Keywords: twenty-first century ELT, re-envisioning the goal, multimodal communicative competence, digital citizenship education, transdisciplinarity

We hope that the human sciences and humanities will rise to the challenges of our time, exploring new and transformative strategies to meet concrete problems in the world, both local and global in character. (Anderson & Braud, 2011, p. 15)

As English language educators and teacher educators, we live in critical times. Our future is becoming uncertain due to rapid development in artificial intelligence. Societies are becoming increasingly digitalized, creating unprecedented changes in all aspects of human life, including verbal communication. In such a world, the narrow focus of teaching English as a language per se as well as the high-stakes standardized testing, which are dominant in the field of English language education, become obstacles to the promotion of students' whole-person development. In order to argue for the need to re-envision the goal of English language education, it is necessary to pinpoint the irrelevance of the existing goal. The first and foremost usefulness of the act of re-envisioning the future, as I see it, is to turn the professional lens critically and reflexively back on ourselves and our own practices. Thus, in this paper I will reflect on the long journey that we, English language educators, have travelled so far. The purpose of this retrospection is to achieve better awareness of how our profession has changed itself in terms of its goals and the approaches to those goals, and of what should be changed but have not been changed. Insights into these issues, I believe, are critical in planting the signposts for our future journey, which is speculated to be of more twists and turns. However, English language teaching (ELT) is so complex and diverse that it is impossible to provide a comprehensive account of its developments within a short article. While looking back on what shapes the past of ELT, I am, therefore, fully aware of the complexity that is likely to be sacrificed in the interests of presenting a coherent narrative. For this, the perspective presented in this paper is moderately enlightening to some and a stimulus for further debate and discussion to others.

The article starts with my personal reflection on ELT practices as I see them occurring since the mid-twentieth century. In this part, my focus is on the relevance of the concept of communicative competence to the multilingual, digitalized societies. This is followed by my speculation on the changes in the way humans communicate under the influence of digital

technology, and how they challenge conventional ELT practices. Finally, I present some recommendations for the changes that need to happen for ELT to move forward.

Reflection on Twentieth-Century English Language Teaching (ELT)

Although the teaching of English has a long history (Howatt with Widdowson, 2004), ELT emerged as a distinctive and recognizable enterprise in the early twentieth century. Accompanied by globalization, the spread of English on the global scale is a complex, historical phenomenon, that is closely connected with British colonialism and globalization alongside numerous other political and social forces. Graddol (2006) framed the field within two models: the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) and the teaching of English as a second language (ESL). Seargeant (2012) defines EFL as,

the use or variety of English in contexts where it neither has an official status nor is widely used as a means of intranational communication. Instead, the language is taught as being explicitly associated with countries traditionally perceived as English-speaking (e.g., the UK, the USA) (p. 191).

By contrast, ESL is,

a term used to refer either to the use of English in countries where it has some official status (mostly due to the legacy of colonialism), or in which it is the predominant means of communication and is being learnt by people (often immigrants) from non-English-speaking backgrounds (Seargeant, 2012, p. 192).

Unfortunately, this conceptual distinction between two educational contexts has not been sufficiently considered albeit of the newly-initiated umbrella label of ‘additional language’ as an alternate to the ESL-EFL dichotomy. Consequently, the pedagogy of EFL has been largely shaped by ideas on the nature of language and the learning conditions that make

learners to acquire the language that were developed and exported from ESL contexts. These ideas were constructed around five following influential language ideologies:

- English is best taught through English;
- The use of learners' first language (L1) is inhibitive to the success of learning English;
- The earlier English is taught, the better the results;
- The native-speakers' linguistic performance is the norms that learners of English, regardless of their learning contexts, should try to achieve; and
- Native-speakers are ideal teachers of English.

Influenced by the essentialist views of language, language learner, native-speaker, and communicative competence, both producers and consumers of pedagogical approaches to ELT took it for granted that language learning was universal regardless of the context in which it occurred. Leung and Valdés (2019, p. 349) comment,

...it is often the case that language-teaching professionals, including both researchers and practitioners, tend to assume that the conditions that govern language instruction are broadly similar across settings and contexts; alternatively it is often assumed that additional language teaching and learning is an autonomous activity in that it is non-susceptible to the influences of the sociocultural and political environment in which it is situated.

These essentialist views led to the emphasis on communicative competence as the ultimate goal of ELT. The concept of communicative competence, which has informed English language teaching since the 1970s, was initially coined by Chomsky (1965), who initiated the concept of linguistic competence to refer to a homogeneous, fixed set of grammatical rules that “any speaker of a language knows implicitly” (p. 9). Chomsky (1965,

p. 3) made a distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. For him, linguistic competence is the language knowledge of an ideal speaker-hearer in a homogeneous community and unaffected by performance variables. In his critiques of Chomsky's view, Hymes (1974) coined the term communicative competence to reflect that "social function gives form to the ways in which linguistic features are encountered in actual life" (p. 196). Since then, the concept of communicative competence has been used for marketing ELT and adopted uncritically in the language-in-education policies in many countries, where English is taught as an additional language in the school curriculum. Thus, the goal of teaching English as a school subject outside English-speaking countries is misconceptualized as the acquisition of the linguistic characteristics of the educated native speaker of the language being taught and learned (Cook, 2007) for the purpose of communicating successfully with native speakers within their speech communities. As Roberts et al. (2001) argue,

Although the foreign language learner may not be joining a new community in any permanent way, their goal is to understand the social practices of that community and to behave in ways which will allow more continuing relationship with it. (p. 10)

In a nutshell, for most part of the twentieth century, the western monolingual, native-speakerism discourse was uncritically adopted as the Bible in global EFL. Normative commitments to it were seen as the right approach to curriculum development, classroom pedagogies, and test designs. Any divergence to it was marked as negative. This has made most of learners struggle with their English language learning and many have become frustrated and demotivated. Graddol (2006) has observed that the practice of teaching English as a foreign language in many countries suffers high levels of failure because a native speaking model sets an unrealistic target for most learners.

Early in the twenty-first century, there have been recommendations (e.g. Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004) for viewing English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), a variety of

the language that “has taken on a life of its own, independent to a considerable degree of the norms established by its native speakers [which] warrants recognition (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 212). Despite these recommendations, detailed pedagogical proposals remain much desired because of many barriers. Kuo (2006), who considers the adoption of an intelligibility-driven model suggested by Jenkins (2000) is problematic as it ignores the significant role of English in educational gate keeping that requires the native speaking linguistic norms of the academy. It is the gate-keeping function of English as pointed out by Kuo that accounts for why the ELT industry continues to focus on native English norms, and as a result, ELT educators continue to adhere to ‘standard’ norms. Personally, I think it may make better sense to refer to teaching English as an International Language (EIL) rather than as a lingua franca (ELF). The concept of EIL is an easily-to-understand term and it refers to a shared agenda of all related fields to inform and innovate ELT. The term also implies that students learning English to become ‘globalized speakers’ (Deshors & Gilquin 2018), meaning those who may start out by learning English as a foreign language in the school curriculum, but then become exposed to a range of English varieties through travelling or work experiences. They may also become active online bloggers routinely communicating with speakers with various proficiency levels in English and from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds..

The multilingual turn (May, 2013) has challenged the monolingual view on language and language learning. As bi/multilingual speakers are recognized as different from monolinguals in several ways, the well-established concept of communicative competence, which framed ELT for most part of the twentieth century, has been contested (Farr & Song, 2011; May 2013; Ortega 2013). Applied linguists (Cook 2012; Cook & Li, 2016) proposed the concept of multi-competence in an attempt to better capture the diversity of language knowledge of bilinguals and multilinguals. For similar reasons, the Douglas Fir Group (2016) used both communicative and interactional competence to refer to “the holistic sum of [multilingual speakers’] multiplelanguage capacities,” noting that their use of competence “is

significantly different from its use by Chomsky, perhaps even its use by Hymes” (p. 26). Hall (2016, 2018, 2019) used the term repertoire, which was originally initiated by Gumperz (1986), to refer to the totality of an individual’s language knowledge, defining it as “conventionalized constellations of semiotic resources for taking action” (Hall, 2019, p. 86).

Drawing on the translanguaging perspective (Garcia & Li 2014; Li 2018), Ou and Gu (2021, p. 11) conceptualize communicative competence “beyond individuals’ ready linguistic repertoires and relate it to spatiality, i.e., the whole material ecology and social networks of communication.” Such a view fits well the view of language learning as “co-adaptation” (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) between interlocutors and between human and non-human agency.

Put briefly, the goal of ELT is to develop decontextualized communicative competence in English. This leads to the common belief that teaching English is teaching the language *per se* among ELT researchers. This “lingua bias” (Block, 2014) overlooks not only the role of multimodal interactional resources in teaching and learning but also the educational function, which requires ethically-centred and future-oriented deliberation and action. Thus, ELT has to be reframed within a new discourse, which emphasizes both the instrumentality and the educational purpose of developing students’ capacity to choose their identities, entitlements and social obligations to respond to the new requirements of the new century. As a result, ELT has to “aims to enable students to effectively acquire a foreign language while empowering them with the knowledge, skills, and commitment required by world citizens to solve global problems” (Cates, 2002, p. 41). Put differently, there should be a complementarity between the instrumental and educational functions within ELT. What follows is my speculation about the twenty-first century and the changes that are needed in ELT.

The twenty-first century world

From the beginning of the twenty-first century, our world and our lives have been increasingly globalized and digitized. As a result, the ways we communicate, learn, work, use technology, produce knowledge, and interact with others have profoundly changed. The changes we are experiencing today are driven by three major forces: digital technology, neoliberal ideology, and post-humanist thinking. Digital technology will mediate all social relationships via language. This means that how we relate to ourselves and to each other is dependent upon not only the words we exchange but also upon the conceptualization that language makes possible. Language itself is epistemic: Language makes ‘reality’ real. New media, including wikis, blogs, vlogs, video-conferencing, text messaging, facebook, and twitter have helped to shift the meaning of interaction itself. Arguably, they have collapsed what had been imagined historically as a local interactional context. From the privacy of our homes, we can enter an endlessly public space. Truth, authenticity and reality are no longer easily assumed or clearly apparent. According to Taylor and Iverson (2013, p. 665):

The twenty-first century has been characterized by the digital revolution.

Societies are becoming increasingly digitalized. Digital technologies have started to change the way we communicate in terms of communication modes, genres of expression, communicative situations, and communicative events (Deshors & Gilquin, 2018). This raises an important question whether a ‘static’ normative native-speaker standard or a norm constantly in the making should be the goal of English language education.

Neoliberalism, which is based on the market-driven economic rationale of supply and demand, education, has redirected teaching and learning to skills-driven learning and hands-on experiences so as to prepare learners for their future participation in the economic and working lives. That neoliberal discourse ignores the role of education in fostering core knowledge, ethical values, and citizenship. Thus, the question is: ‘Should education be

primarily aimed to satisfy learners' individual needs and interests as demanded by the work market and technological demands?' or 'Should it primarily help young generations belong to their societies successfully?' Van Dijk (2001) argues that education tends to be at the service of the interests and needs of a specific set of actors by enacting practices that are associated with power abuse and discursive reproduction. Echoing Van Dijk, Seymour (2004) claims that education should, first and foremost, focus on developing learners' more inclusive mind. Seymour's concept of inclusive mind can be understood as successful belonging, which involves knowledge and skills to act as socially responsible citizens in their societies.

While technology and neoliberalism have unquestionable positive impact on human life, their devastating effects have recently been foregrounded. The anthropocentric premises on which human materialism-oriented activities are based have raised serious concerns about ecological sustainability. Such an awareness has generated a theoretical perspective so-called post-humanism, addressing two interrelated questions 'who am I?' and 'what am I?'. As Pennycook (2018, p.5) explains,

Posthumanism thus draws on multiple strands of thought and points in multiple directions, from a questioning of the centrality and exceptionalism of humans as actors on this planet, or the relationship to other inhabitants of the earth, to a re-evaluation of the role of objects and space in relation to human thought and action, or the extension of human thinking and capacity through various forms of human enhancement.

From the post-humanist perspective, language is redefined as "embodied, embedded and distributed across people, places and time and not a determinate or determinable object of analysis" (Pennycook, 2018, p. 51). This means recognizing multimodal meaning-making (Kress, 2003), which emphasizes the fact that language practice is intertwined with spatial elements other than what humans have in their minds. Posthumanism provides an incentive to broaden the understanding of communicative competence from the terms of internalized

individual capacity (Wardhaugh, 1986) to modes of thinking that decentralize human agency and reorient the term to the multimodal and multisensory semiotic communication.

Post-humanism is aligned with the socio-cultural theories (Vygostky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) that “the human is not approached as an autonomous agent, but is located within an extensive system of relations” (Ferrando, 2013, p. 32). With reference to English language education, post-humanist thinking means “The emergence of a language is a cognitive process that takes place in an evolving cognitive ecosystem that includes a shared world of objects and events as well as adaptive resources internal to each member of the community” (Hutchins, 2014, p. 37). This line of thinking shares a number of affinities with the Vygotskyian sociocultural theory,

Our counter-narrative ...is to put forward a linguistics of communicative activity that is based on a view of language as a historically contingent emergent system, one that provides a repertoire of semiotic devices that people can use to realize their communicative intentions, to interpret the communicative intentions of others and, perhaps most importantly, to foster the conditions of possibility for transforming self and community (Thorne & Lantolf, 2007, p. 171).

According to Porto and Zembylas (2020), post-humanist perspectives suggest that language education create spaces for cultivating political, ethical, and social justice responsibilities for changing socially unjust societies.

Putting the three aforementioned driving forces together, there emerges one thorny question about the twenty-first century, ‘What’s next for humanity?’ Historian Yuval Noah Harari, in his recent best-seller *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (Harari, 2018), notes that “Humankind is facing unprecedented revolutions, all our old stories are crumbling, and no new story has so far emerged to replace them. How can we prepare ourselves and our children for a world of such unprecedented transformation and radical uncertainties?” (p. 259). In answering his question, Harari argues,

So, what should we be teaching? Many pedagogical experts argue that schools should switch to teaching the four Cs – critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. More broadly, schools should downplay technical skills, and emphasize general-purpose life skills. Most important of all will be the ability to deal with change, to learn new things, and to preserve your mental balance in unfamiliar situations. In order to keep up with the world of 2050, you will need not merely to invent new ideas and products – you will above all need to reinvent yourself again and again (p. 262).

With reference to ELT, I see three major questions that need to be responded by researchers, scholars, practitioners, and teacher educators. The first question is “What should be the goal of ELT in the new century?” The second is ‘What lifeworlds are we preparing our learners to participate in?’ And finally, ‘How can all those discursive changes be considered in EFL classrooms?’ In the following section, I provide my tentative answers to these questions.

Re-envisioning the goal of ELT in the new century

The changes resulted from the three driving forces of the twenty-first century (digital technology, neoliberalism, and post-humanism) deem imperative to rethink ELT in a wholly different light than what was established in the twentieth century. The merger of the three components (i.e. translanguaging, sociocultural theory, and critical pedagogy) of the transdisciplinary approach I suggest above requires that the concept of communicative competence be reconsidered within the multimodal communicative competence perspective. Put differently, the conventional concept of communicative competence should be expanded into multimodal communicative competence as the goal of ELT. Classroom pedagogy should encourage and support students to co-deploy all the semiotic resources accessible to them in learning the language and using the language for communication. This pedagogy is to empower learners. “Language learning is not about conformity to uniformity; it is about

empowering students to make meaning and to present themselves to the world as they so choose” (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p.73).

Another dimension of the re-purposing of ELT is the move beyond the instrumental view towards new ways of serving the digitalized societies. ELT cannot isolate itself from the shift to the development of students’ socio-ethical capacities. English language education in the digitalized societies should be contextualized within a discourse of love, empathy, and sympathy. As educators, ELT educators cannot view the acquisition of English as our goal. Instead, English should be viewed as a vehicle through which digital citizenship is fostered. While there has not been, and there will never be, a conclusive definition of digital citizenship, for the sake of oversimplicity, digital citizenship can be defined as the relationships between individuals and digitally-interconnected communities in digitalized societies. Fostering digital citizenship through English language education is to ensure digital responsibility, digital ethics, and digital wellbeing in navigating the online world. In other words, digital citizenship and communicative competence should be insured concurrently so as to equip students not only with language abilities but also a moral compass when participating in society online.

ELT needs to adopt a transdisciplinary approach (Leung & Vadés, 2019), which integrates three main components: i) translanguaging as an applied linguistics theory of language practice (Li, 2018); ii) socio-cultural theory; and iii) critical pedagogy. Translanguaging allows the reconceptualization of language as a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource for sense- and meaning-making, and the multilingual as someone who is aware of the existence of the political entities of named languages and has an ability to make use of the structural features of some of them that they have acquired. It has the capacity to enable us to explore the human mind as a holistic multicompetence (Cook, 1992; Cook & Li, 2016), and rethink some of the bigger, theoretical issues in linguistics generally (Li, 2018, p. 22).

The sociocultural theory takes up the issues of the co-relationships between language, culture, context, and identity. According to Hawkins (2004, p. 3), language, viewed from the sociocultural perspective, does not exist as a general object. “Rather, each language is composed of different ‘social languages’, that is different styles of language that communicate socially-situated identities (who is acting) and socially-situated activities (what is being done).” Accordingly, language is never decontextualized, never used outside of a particular ‘discourse’.

Critical pedagogy in language teaching (Akbari, 2008) is ‘about connecting the word with the world. It is about recognizing language as ideology, not just system. It is about extending the educational space to the social, cultural, and political dynamics of language use’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.70). As Gee (1990, pp. 67–68) argues,

The English teacher can cooperate in her own marginalization by seeing herself as a “language teacher” with no connection to ...social and political issues. Or she can ...accept her role as one who socializes students into a world view that, given its power [in the United States of America] and abroad, must be viewed critically, comparatively, and with a constant sense of the possibilities for change. Like it or not, the English teacher stands at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time.

There have been scholarly voices in academia (e.g., Byram 2014; Roux, 2019; Serrano, 2008) that ELT should not limit itself to the teaching of language knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, phonology) and language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to embrace its educational dimensions in equipping students with tools which allow them to be active citizens, and be awoken to global issues. Byram (2014), for example, calls for a greater attention to the educational purpose of foreign language teaching, stating that foreign language teaching is more than teaching a language and that “foreign language learning is

educational” (p. 1). He goes on to argue that, “The language teaching profession has significant educational and political tasks and responsibilities before it” (p. 16).

Conclusion

The certainty of uncertainty is becoming a new way of life. Re-envisioning reflects our capacity for making informed predictions and an ethics of possibilities. Re-envisioning also presents us with the chance to rethink and reorganize our profession. The purpose of this article is revisit the goal of ELT that was framed within the concept of communicative competence based on the twentieth-century monolingualism with a view to navigating the journey into the twenty-first century.

As discussed, ELT, throughout the twentieth-century, was informed by the ‘linear thinking’ embodied in western reductionism, essentialism and dualism. As a result, the one-size-fits-all communicative approach was promoted as the only right approach to teaching English regardless of the situated and dynamic reality of English language classrooms (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013), and communicative competence, which is composed of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence, was used as the uniform construct in assessing all learners’ proficiency in English. When the complex phenomena were reduced to essences, teaching and learning were viewed as of causal relationship. The dominance of ideologies extends even to the present second decade of the twenty-first century when digital technologies have changed radically the way humans communicate within their digitally nested speech communities. Despite the frequently promoted pedagogical possibilities, the hegemony of western knowledge and ideology replaces one trend by another, supported by unchanged oversimplified linear causality in additional language teaching and learning. Language learning is about meaning-making, and the development of digital technology puts meaning-making in a new light. With the support of digital technology, meaning is made, distributed,

interpreted, and remade through many communicational resources, not just language. The old mindset, therefore, has to be challenged.

As societies are becoming increasingly digitalized, new challenges and opportunities for ELT require that ELT renew itself. For good or bad, there is a great likelihood that English is here to stay as a language of international communication, at least for the foreseeable future. Yet, English is no longer conceptualized essentially as it was. Teachers need to renew themselves as well. They need to take the role as language educators rather than language teaching practitioners. As language educators, they do not only teach language, they teach and educate students as well. I have recommended in this article that multimodal communicative competence and digital citizenship should be two peas in the ELT pod in the twenty-first century.

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Selected Papers

Research Articles

A Hybrid Online/Face-to-Face Approach to Intercultural Interactions in a Japanese Education Major University Context

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Abstract

This project was conducted as part of a small-sized seminar course from 2019 to 2020 to investigate an effective approach to promoting on-campus intercultural experiences between local and international students in a Japanese education major university context as part of pre-service teacher training and of developing Japanese students' intercultural competencies through self-reflection over actual and online contacts. The hypothesis was that virtual communication may compensate for the disadvantages of in-person intercultural contacts. The study revealed that online interactions using Zoom at the outset of friendship formation successfully resolved scheduling problems and reduced shyness toward foreigners among the Japanese student participants without prior intercultural experiences. Following a series of online interactions followed by direct contact, the Japanese students seem to have acquired self-confidence and motivation to actively participate in the project, which enhanced their awareness of other cultures and modified their attitudes toward international students. Moreover, it could be said that they attained personal growth in problem-solving, project planning, and cooperative attitudes, which ultimately led to the recognition of language minorities in Japan itself and to self-directed volunteer activities helping foreign students with adaptation in a local elementary school.

Keywords: pre-service teacher training, online intercultural interactions

The number of foreign residents living in Japan in 2021 reached about 2.9 million

(Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2021), and accordingly, foreign students learning in Japanese elementary to senior high schools are reported to be over 93,000 (MEXT, 2019).

Thus, there is an acute need for teachers who possess the skills and understanding to deal with culturally and linguistically diverse students in Japanese public schools. Given current as well as future demand, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT, 2011; 2017) urged each prefectural board of education to recruit teachers with overseas experiences and intercultural literacy.

However, Izumimoto and Iwasaka (2016) point out that most Japanese education major university students are domestic, mainly as a result of teacher training program curricular constraints, which have resulted in their disinterest in studying abroad. To gain a teaching certificate from a Japanese university, students usually need to acquire 45 or more credits from education-related courses on top of regular graduation requirements for a bachelor's degree. They are also required to participate in off-campus duties such as a one-month teacher practicum and one-week training in a special education school and a nursing home. Moreover, the teacher training curriculum based on the current MEXT teaching certification system is a purely domestic one, in which international students cannot involve themselves (Iwata, 2014). Such circumstances presumably facilitate Japanese teachers' passive attitudes toward intercultural understanding and foreign students' education despite MEXT's recognition of their significance.

In response, this study investigated a possible approach to on-campus intercultural interaction in Japan using online and face-to-face exchanges to promote intercultural experiences as part of pre-service teacher training in an education major university program. A project was undertaken in the author's seminar course to offer Japanese students unable to avail themselves of the chance and benefits of studying abroad with authentic intercultural encounters on-campus in order to prepare them for intercultural engagement in their future professional fields, especially in diverse educational contexts. In particular, the study

investigated how intercultural learning can be fostered so as to develop local students' awareness, attitudes, and skills toward intercultural communication.

Literature Review

Japan's Internationalization at Home and Abroad

Japanese universities began giving international exchanges serious consideration in the 1980s in response to an OECD report on the urgent need to open up Japanese universities to international students and scholars (Takagi, 2009). The Japanese government enacted a policy called the "100,000 International Student Plan" in 1983 to attract more international students to higher educational institutions, with a target number of 100,000 by the early 21st century. This goal was attained in 2003, and MEXT then set forth a further plan called the "300,000 International Student Plan" in 2008 to triple this number by 2020, which was also achieved in 2019 (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2021).

In addition to internationalizing Japanese universities, the Japanese government regards global education for Japanese nationals as an urgent task and has put forth various guidelines since 2007. To this end, a Global Human Resource Development Promotion Meeting was organized by the Prime Minister's office in 2011, defining three essential skills global citizens need to acquire. In addition to the first qualities of basic language and communication skills, elements such as self-managing ability, a challenging spirit, flexibility, and responsibility were listed. Furthermore, an understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as a Japanese citizen were also categorized as the third qualities.

However, the Council on the Promotion of Human Resources for Globalization Development (2011) report that the number of Japanese university students studying abroad has been decreasing since 2004, a trend it attributes to "inwardly looking attitudes" (p. 5) caused by the specific employment requirements of Japanese companies, the financial burden involved, and an inflexible school curriculum. This inward trend has been particularly

apparent in education major university programs (Tokyo Gakugei University, 2014).

To facilitate globalized human resources development, since 2014, MEXT has led a campaign called the “*Tobitate Study Abroad Initiative*.” This promotion aimed to double the number of university students studying abroad from 60,000 to 120,000 and the number of high school students from 30,000 to 60,000 by 2020 (Tobitate Ryugaku Japan, 2021). However, the number of Japanese university students studying abroad to acquire a degree or even degree credits reached only 58,720, and the number of high school students who studied abroad in 2017 was 46,869, or 78% of the goal; however, over 91% of them stayed overseas for less than three months. In brief, Japanese students at the secondary and tertiary levels appear somewhat reluctant to study abroad for extensive periods despite the MEXT-initiated promotion.

Intercultural Education in Japan

Kato (2009) warns that teaching intercultural communication under current English teaching conditions in Japan often tends to be superficial and fails to provide systematic analysis or self-reflection due to time constraints, poor teacher quality, and difficulty in evaluating students’ intercultural outcomes. Thus, in present-day intercultural communication education, experiential learning has been promoted in independent courses set apart from English language instruction.

Yet even under such teaching conditions, Kawanabe (2006) argues that while knowledge, one of the three core elements constituting intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006), has been instructed, the other two factors of attitudes and skills have been less developed in intercultural education courses. Bennett (2009) also emphasizes, cognitive, affective, and behavioral components play a crucial role in developing intercultural competence. Thus, merely transmitting knowledge is insufficient, and providing opportunities for self-reflection and self-analysis through actual contact and communication in collaborative

learning and group projects is highly recommended (Yabuta, 2015).

Face-to-Face Intercultural Contacts

Wu et al. (2015) stress the value of international students in academic prestige, cultural exchanges, and financial rewards, explaining that international students, many of whom are highly ranked in their home countries, enhance academic excellence and contribute to diversity and internationalization in classrooms, campuses, and communities. Eisenchlas & Trevaskes (2007) also point out the value of developing local students' understanding and tolerance of different cultures.

However, the level of voluntary contact between domestic and international students is reported to be generally low or even rare (Ward et al., 2009) despite international students' desire to establish personal relationships with host students. Generally speaking, international students have difficulty making friends with host students (Brebner, 2008). This is due to the fact that international students lack confidence in speaking the target language (Else & Kinnell, 1990), local students' disinterest in making contact with their international counterparts (Brebner, 2008; Ward, 2001), and other factors such as a lack of common interests as well as cultural differences (Brebner, 2008).

In Japan, Kojima et al. (2015) report that while 47% of their participants had intercultural learning experiences in class, only 5% had intercultural exchanges outside the classroom. They further stated that 80% of the students in their study had an intrinsic interest in participating in intercultural exchanges in order to acquire international skills helpful to their future careers as well as job-hunting. The researchers offer the following reasons for Japanese students' passivity regarding intercultural exchanges: lack of English skills, psychological distance or uneasiness about cultural differences, the financial burden of limited funds to spend on socialization, and busy schedules, the last two of which are new to the Japanese case. In sum, discrepancies have been noted in levels of motivation toward

intercultural interactions between international and local students due to technical difficulties such as language, scheduling, and psychological distance, including cultural barriers.

Online Intercultural Exchange

Online intercultural exchange (OIE), or “virtual exchange,” has become one of the main tools for developing intercultural competence, foreign language learning, and digital skills, thanks to merits such as the low cost of international activities and authentic language use with distant speakers of other languages.

First, OIE has strong potential for developing ICC (O’Dowd, 2016), especially through synchronous videoconference exchanges, which foster students’ abilities to interact with members of the target culture and intercultural negotiating skills through real-time communication and face-to-face dialogue. Moreover, OIE can be used as preparation for physical mobility as it engages forthcoming exchange students in virtual interaction with students in their future destination, and thus becoming accustomed to the educational system and daily life in the target culture (Kinging, 2009).

OIE also creates opportunities for authentic language use as well as intercultural interactions, thus allowing students in different geographical locations to communicate directly with one another (Guth, 2016). This authenticity motivates foreign language learners (Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016) and makes language classrooms more content-based since they involve a group of target language speakers (Guth & Helm, 2010). In addition, this approach utilizes digital learning (De Wit, 2016), a critical dimension of internationalization policy aiming to foster interactions along with active forms of learning such as collaborative online international learning (COIL) by engaging students in collaborative projects involving global classrooms, which in turn brings about further academic outcomes.

Thus, OIE is regarded as a cost-effective alternative to physical mobility in support of students who are unable or unwilling to take part in studying abroad (Kinging, 2009). Lewis

& O'Dowd (2016) report that only 4% of European university students had participated in international exchange programs due to economic and target language barriers despite the advanced promotion of multiculturalism and a heavy emphasis on overseas experiences. De Wit (2016) also demonstrates a high discrepancy between the intention to study abroad and the realization of such intention, even though this implies students' intrinsic interest.

In view of this background, this study explored intercultural opportunities offered in a small-sized seminar course from 2019 to 2020 using both online and face-to-face interactions. The initial assumption was that in and out-of-class intercultural interactions through experiential learning, or "learning by doing" (Lewis & Williams, 1994, p. 5), effectively cultivate Japanese students' intercultural competencies to the degree that the interactions modifies their attitudes and actions. Second, because online intercultural interaction is reported to resolve physical distance and scheduling problems (Yogi, 2009), the hypothesis was that virtual communication may compensate for the disadvantages of in-person intercultural contact. If so, the hybrid use of the two approaches should be effective in improving students' intercultural competence.

The research questions for this study were the following:

1. Did the pedagogical activities improve Japanese students' ICC? Did they lead to modified attitudes and self-directed intercultural interactions?
2. Did online interactions affect the Japanese students' involvement in the project?

Method

Objectives and Background of the Project

An intercultural exchange project named "FINFID" (A **F**riend in **N**eed is a **F**riend **I**ndeed) was implemented in 2019 and 2020 in the author's seminar courses in a university in the Kanto region of Japan. The primary goal of the project was to offer on-campus intercultural interactions for busy EFL education major students unable to enjoy study abroad

opportunities due to curricular or economic constraints. In the circumstances in which international students are kept largely apart from the Japanese EFL education major students housed on a different campus, chances of the latter encountering international students on campus are drastically diminished, especially as many of the Japanese students are from local, relatively rural districts with fewer foreign residents and students than more urban areas. This lack of contact with foreigners in their daily lives is assumed to be behind the students' passive or shy attitudes toward people of foreign origin.

Another objective of this study was to encourage more in-depth intercultural interactions through experiential learning, which may arouse students' recognition and reflective analysis of cross-cultural issues. In the author's intercultural communication course, where international exchange students study alongside Japanese students, few opportunities for intercultural contacts are provided due to its large class size as well as time constraints. Thus, this study aimed to develop affective and behavioral dimensions of Japanese university students' intercultural communicative skills.

Finally, personal development such as enhanced student self-confidence and leadership is expected to be an outcome of the project. By taking part in the project, which required project planning, problem solving, IT use, and presentation skills as well as active and cooperative attitudes in team or pair work, it was expected that students would attain multiple competencies and abilities and eventually grow in self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment similar to that generated by studying abroad.

Participants

The participants in the FINFID project were 25 Japanese education major students (13 juniors in 2019, 7 seniors and 12 juniors in 2020, with 7 students participating in two consecutive years, 9 males and 16 females) in the university. Of the 25 participants, 14 had overseas experience in the US, Canada, or Southeast Asia lasting from one week to two

months, mainly for English language study or sightseeing. Their overall English levels were low to intermediate, with an average TOEFL score of 450 ranging from 385 to 507.

All participants took the author's seminar, a small-sized course taught over two consecutive years from the junior to the senior years. This course was chosen for conducting the study because of its greater flexibility in teaching content and approach, small class size, and the students' interest in intercultural exchanges.

Task Design

The project consisted of three primary facets implemented each semester: in-class get-together opportunities, out-of-class events organized by the Japanese students to enhance opportunities for intercultural interactions, and semester-end presentations and self-reflection reports on their experiences.

At the beginning of each semester, an in-class get-together was held in order to initiate friendships and exchange contact information. Once initial contact was established, out-of-class events organized by the Japanese students followed in order to deepen the friendships by inviting the international students to the events. Each pair or group of three Japanese students led an event once a semester, and each attended another pair's or group's event as a supporter, also at least once a semester. The reason for requiring the Japanese students to plan and initiate these out-of-class events was to help develop their project planning, leadership, and active attitudes. In addition, an in-class party was also held on campus in the middle of each semester to develop and monitor the students' friendships and induce more involvement in the project. In consideration of the Japanese students' busy schedules, they were encouraged to participate in at least four exchanges on or off-campus, including two mandatory in-class get-together opportunities per semester.

Based on the idea that acquiring ICC involves reflecting on one's own cultural norms and values and shaping one's own identities, semester-end reflection papers and in-class self-

analysis presentations were made mandatory so as to require them to report any findings, outcomes, challenges, self-evaluation, and recommendations for future projects.

Thus, participation in and out-of-class events, reflective papers on their intercultural progress, and in-class presentations and discussions were required and counted for 25% of course evaluation. In other words, the project did not consist of purely extra-curricular activities but was integrated into the course syllabus as part of course requirements.

Procedures in 2019 and 2020

As part of face-to-face interactions in 2019, the Japanese students observed a Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) class in which international students gave individual Japanese presentations about friendship and the Japanese students participated in class discussions on the topic in late April. This followed out-of-class events held from May to July, including chatting in the international lounge, going to noodle restaurants in the local town, visiting nearby shrines, playing board games, visiting tourist spots, and so on. In June, an in-class party was held on campus to develop the friendships, and all the Japanese students and many of the international students attended the parties, sharing the tasks of shopping, cooking, and cleaning up. The same procedures were followed in the Fall semester, except for an in-class get-together in mid-October organized by the Japanese students in place of a JFL class observation so as to welcome new international students. The interactions in 2019 were conducted face-to-face, and 12 international students from the US, Norway, Thailand, Bolivia, Taiwan, South Korea, and China attended the events.

In Spring 2020, all the interactions were conducted on Zoom, and the in-class party was cancelled due to the COVID-19 crisis. Following the first get-together in early June because of the delayed start, the Japanese students working in pairs launched weekly Zoom events for six consecutive weeks, including an object-hunting race, online Japanese cooking, online tours of Japan, colloquial expressions used by young Japanese, English lessons with an

international student, and “Discover Norway Day.” Three US and one South Korean exchange students living on campus participated in the interactions, and one Norwegian and one US student attended the sessions from their home countries.

In Fall 2020, all international exchange students left Japan due to the COVID pandemic, so those international students, mainly from Asian countries, who were enrolled for degree purposes were invited to the face-to-face exchanges. The four participating international students were from China, Bolivia, and Malaysia, and the language used in the exchange was Japanese. To compensate for the lack of opportunities to interact with international students on campus, the Japanese students planned a new volunteer activity to help younger foreign students in the vicinity adapt to Japanese’ life in the city’s Acculturation Center for newly arrived foreign elementary and secondary students. While the Japanese students participated in the 90-minute-volunteer activities at least twice in the Acculturation Center, several students assisted more than five times due to their interest in the activity.

Table 1

Project Summary

Timeline	Events	Features
Late April 2019	First in-class get-together	Observation of JFL class, Exchanging of contact information
May to August	Small-group out-of-class events	Casual on-and off-campus interactions
June	In-class <i>okonomiyaki</i> party	Shopping, cooking, cleaning done together
Early September	Reflected presentations of in- and out-of-class events	
Mid-October 2019	Second in-class get-together	Self-introduction and playing games organized by the Japanese students
Late-October to early January	Small-group out-of-class events	Casual on-and off-campus interactions
December 2019	In-class <i>nabe</i> party	Joint shopping, cooking, cleaning
Late January	Reflected presentations of in- and out-of-class events	
Early June 2020	First online in-class get together	Delayed semester due to COVID-19, Organized by the Japanese students, Exchanged contact information

Mid-June to late July	Out-of-class Zoom events organized by the Japanese students	Japanese pairs organized weekly Zoom events for 6 weeks
Early August	Reflected presentations of in/out-of-class events	
Mid-October	Second in-class get-together, PowerPoint presentations of cultural events: Shinto shrines, Japanese Halloween, and Christmas	Organized by the Japanese students, Information exchanges about cultural events in Japan and overseas (South Korea, Bolivia, and Malaysia)
Late November to early January	Volunteer activity helping foreign elementary students	New project initiated by the Japanese students: In-class 1-hour orientation offered by Board of Education staff
Mid-December	In-class year-end party PowerPoint presentation of Japanese New Year events and experiencing New Year games	Organized by the Japanese students, Teaching and experiencing writing greeting cards with Japanese calligraphy, <i>otedama</i> , <i>fukuwarai</i> , and <i>hyakunin-isshu</i> card games
Late January	Reflections on presentations of in- and out-of-class events and new volunteer projects	

Research Method

Since this study tried to capture the complex reality of the Japanese students' attitudes toward intercultural interactions, a qualitative case study approach was adopted. Three primary research methods—participant observation of in and out-of-class events, unstructured interviews with all Japanese students, and document analysis of Japanese students' written reflections and presentations—were scrutinized. To investigate the international students' perspectives, seven students who consistently participated in the interactions were interviewed individually as supplementary data. All data in the reflection papers and interviews were translated into English by the author with the participants' consent.

Results

Table 2

Summary of the Results

ICC	Face-to-Face in 2019	Hybrid in 2020
Affective dimensions (awareness & attitude)	Improved	Improved
Compassion & patience toward international students' difficulties	✓ Speaking easy Japanese slowly	✓ Zoom tour of Japan, adding <i>hiragana</i> to slides

Modified image toward international students	✓ Showing respect for Asian students	✓ Non-threatening image after Zoom interactions
Increased appreciation of cultural differences	✓	✓
Desire for overseas experiences	✓	✓
Behavioral dimensions (skills)	Not much improved	Improved
Modified passivity	✓ Partially, along with reflective attitude	✓ Increased confidence in dealing with foreigners
Self-directed action	Lack of motivation	✓ Volunteer activities in Acculturation Center
Other skills	Moderately improved	Improved
Project planning	✓ PR through SNS	✓ Appealing content
Problem-solving		✓ Zoom rehearsals, volunteer activities
IT skills		✓ Effective visuals
Careful preparation		✓
Cooperative learning		✓ Incorporated international students
Creativity		✓ Appealing events with movement
Friendship & cooperation	Discrepancy in motivation among members	✓

Face-to-Face Interactions in 2019

Japanese Students' Recognition of Challenges and Efforts by the International Students

Several students responded that observing the JFL class and seeing the international students struggling to speak Japanese made them realize that learning foreign languages requires courage, discipline, and perseverance from every language learner. This recognition resulted in compassion and empathy toward the international students by speaking Japanese at a slower speed and choosing vocabulary and expressions appropriate to the international students' proficiency levels. The international students' motivation to learn Japanese led the Japanese students to respect the international students. One student said,

I learned about the Japanese proficiency test called *nihongo-kentei* from my Thai students. I took a look at her textbook and I found it's quite difficult even for Japanese native speakers. I respect X for studying Japanese so seriously. I should learn more about my country and try hard to use English even though my English is not good.

The Japanese students' image of the international students also changed. One male

student commented as follows about one of the Taiwanese students, who is fluent in both Japanese and English:

I see them as highly motivated to lead life positively in Japan and willing to communicate in Japanese despite the challenges. After mingling with B, I feel like visiting Asian countries. This is the first time for me to think this way. I only wanted to visit countries like Europe and the US.

This episode indicates that the Japanese students' contact with the Asian students, many of whom had multiple foreign language skills and internationally-minded attitudes, modified the students' over-admiration of the West or of English-speaking people and aroused their interest in various cultures. Thus, it seems that real-life contact with the hard-working and cosmopolitan Asian students positively influenced the Japanese students' perceptions of cultural relativity and foreign language learning.

Learning about Cultural Differences First-Hand

The international exchanges brought about a feeling of exoticness. One student said:

Just going to the international lounge was an exciting thing for me. I was so excited to be surrounded by international students in the lounge. It's as if it was a foreign country.

Other students converted the failure derived from language and cultural barriers into a learning experience:

I felt uneasy in the conversations with international students because maybe I was nervous. I was silent at first, but I realized that just waiting to be asked questions by the international student didn't work when I saw their bored faces.

The students realized that they had to act on unsuccessful experiences, which led them to modify their passive behaviors and attitudes. The Japanese students also worked on finding common interests and sought more effective ways to interact. They held events such as "Game Day," where the Japanese and international students played games such as Monopoly. They also set up Instagram and Facebook pages to advertise upcoming events to allow international and Japanese alumni to learn about the FINFID project, which they thought would help preserve their friendships even after leaving the university. These efforts can be interpreted as increased motivation to get involved in the project.

Lack of Motivation: Scheduling Problems and Communication Breakdowns

However, quite a few students recognized their passivity or shyness toward foreigners, which was pointed out by the American and Bolivian students in the interviews. This was probably due to the busy lives of the Japanese and international students as well as physical distance of studying on different campuses, and it was challenging to find mutually convenient times for both parties to meet.

Nonetheless, technical problems were not the sole reason for the passivity noted. In fact, many students revealed uneasiness or puzzlement about being among international students. One male student said that he did not know what to talk about and that an uneasy silence prevailed. Moreover, the Japanese students' high expectations and positive images of intercultural interactions as fun may have brought about disappointment about face-to-face interactions caused by communication breakdowns and lack of common interests.

As the project required the students to spend time and energy on pursuing the project, the students needed solid commitment to engaging with the project. Those with high motivation criticized the less-motivated students, whereas the less motivated ones blamed the motivated students for never helping them assimilate into their closely-knit community. One outcome of this constraint was that six of the 13 participants in 2019 showed reluctance to engage in the project in 2020 after some communication breakdowns. Of the six withdrawers, four had no prior overseas or intercultural experience.

Zoom Interactions in Spring 2020 and Face-to-Face Interactions in Fall 2020

Technical Merits: Resolving Scheduling and Economic Problems

Many students pointed out that practical convenience was the most appealing feature of Zoom interactions. Meeting online for 30 minutes over lunch was no burden or obstacle for either party. These interactions also made it possible to include participants from faraway

places, such as past international students from the US and a forthcoming exchange student from Norway. Several students also referred to the economic benefit of needing no primary tools or money to participate in the Zoom events. Thus, OIE turned out to be an effective alternative for involving busy Japanese university students in international exchanges.

Educational Merit 1: Improved IT and Project-Planning Skills

OIE also brought about various educational merits. Most Japanese students referred to the need to prepare for Zoom events more carefully than for face-to-face events. One reason is a lack of technical skills needed to use Zoom effectively. When this project began in Spring 2020, most Japanese students were unfamiliar with Zoom. In response, some pairs conducted rehearsals before their planned events, assuming that technical problems might occur due to their unfamiliarity with Zoom operations and functions, such as sharing files and trying out breakout sessions.

The students carefully prepared content as well, including PowerPoint slides to show online to the participants. They argued that messages on the screen tend to be flat unless the content of the events attracted participants' attention. Thus, the students needed to resort to various devices in order to create effective visuals by adding appealing images. Moreover, the Japanese students carefully organized the online events with exciting topics, presuming that online activities include little movement or action, thus potentially making the events somewhat dull. Several pairs tried to add physical movement or actions to the activities. One pair planned the "object-hunting race" so as to introduce and show objects with names starting with a specific letter or Japanese syllable within a maximum traveling time of one-and-half minutes from their house. In one scene, the Norwegian student brought a huge popcorn machine from her kitchen for the task of introducing an item whose name started with either the letter *p* or one of the Japanese *pa*, *pi*, *pu*, *pe*, or *po* syllables. Another Japanese student showed a *katori-senko* (anti-mosquito incense) as an example of an item starting with

the letter *k* or one of the *ka*, *ki*, *ku*, *ke*, or *ko* syllables in Japanese. As both the popcorn machine and anti-mosquito incense were culturally new to the students from different cultures, explanations of what they were and why they are present in traditional homes became a learning experience about each other's daily lives and cultures.

Since the students recognized physical distance and two-dimensional displays as demerits of simultaneous online interactions, they worked to make the exchanges joyful and fruitful through creativity and problem-solving skills in order to attract participants' attention. In sum, the careful planning and student-initiated rehearsing involved in staging the events demonstrated their strong motivation to make the interactions successful as well as possibilities for online intercultural exchanges as an effective learning approach given good task design, careful preparation, and technical skills.

Educational Merit 2: Incorporating Learning Experiences and Collaborative Activities

The Japanese students emphasized the significance of incorporating learning experiences into their events. The students also referred to the necessity of providing academic input:

We should make our events into learning opportunities not only for the international students but also for ourselves.... We came to discover Japanese culture by introducing it to the international students. We also chose topics related to our daily lives to induce active discussions and so learn something new together. More in-depth discussions reduced the psychological distance between us.

This comment supports Eisenchlas & Trevaskes' (2007) suggestion of establishing common ground for both parties so that students can focus on features of interest to them and identify interactions with broader topics. They further suggest involving international students in the events and incorporating their opinions at the planning and executing stages so that communication may be enjoyed in both directions. One pair, which included the Norwegian student, who was forced to postpone her studies in Japan due to the COVID pandemic, offered an event called "Discover Norway." Another pair conducted a collaborative English online lesson with an American exchange student. Thus, following some events conducted by the Japanese students only, some of them realized that collaborative activities involving the

international students brought about greater accomplishment and friendships and helped bridge the language and cultural gaps separating them psychologically from one another.

Educational Merit 3: Building Friendships and Cooperation among Members

All the Japanese students in this study experienced roles as organizers and MCs for out-of-class events. Even shy students who were unwilling to appear front stage had to engage in the task at least once a semester and thus gained a sense of achievement from the challenges:

I learned the importance of cooperation through this project. Some are good at creating a good atmosphere, but others are not. Some special talent is necessary to become a good MC, but anyone can become an adequate MC with a supportive audience. We helped one another to compensate for our shortcomings. Other Japanese students supported the organizers from the back. This kind of backstage support is indispensable for a Zoom event like this.

Several students also reported their appreciation of the cooperative and supportive attitudes of the exchange students. As a result, the Japanese students constantly paid attention to the international students' language barriers, adding *hiragana* (phonetic) versions of *kanji* characters to online slides and using repetition. Thankful for the international students' support, some Japanese students came to sympathize with the international students' situation:

Our pair planned an Online Bus Tour of Japan to entertain our international students. I'm sure they all wanted to go and visit Japanese tourist spots. This must be one of their reasons for coming to Japan. We felt so bad for them with the timing of the COVID crisis, so we wanted to reduce their frustration at having to stay home and to make them happy... Some of the international students didn't have high Japanese skills, so we decided to provide them with an online Bilingual Bus Tour with one of us acting as a Japanese tour guide and the other as an English one.

The students' recognition of online interactions as handy but complex interaction tools led them to carefully plan and execute activities, establishing rapport and friendships among seminar members and their international counterparts. In the next section, the further outcomes of the online interactions in this project acting as anxiety relief and reducing various types of linguistic, cultural, and psychological barriers will be discussed.

Motivational Merit 1: Reducing Language Barriers with Half-Scripted Scenarios

The bilingual bus tour event mentioned above ultimately led to greater confidence in

their English communicative skills. One student responded:

I've learned English for exams, but I felt I was using English in authentic conversational situations. When the international students understood my prepared English explanations, I got excited and got motivated. I know I can't respond in English smoothly, but I came to communicate with them in English with my ready scenario.

In fact, many students pointed out the advantages of online interactions in lowering the language barriers, saying that online exchanges allowed them time to reflect and plan their utterances and procedures before the online interactions. Of course, some utterances in the online interactions also had to be impromptu, just as in face-to-face interactions, but the students with little confidence in English communicative skills felt a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in using the target language with ready-made English scenarios. This implies that face-to-face interactions force participants to respond in the target language on the spot, thus potentially creating communication breakdowns and deterioration in their motivation.

Thus, because online interactions induced careful preparation, including ready-made English scenarios or prepared utterances, the students with little confidence in English skills overcame language-related anxiety. However, in direct contact, all communication is simultaneous, which may be too high a hurdle for the less confident students to conquer.

Motivational Merit 2: Diminishing Cultural Barriers to Nonverbal Pressure

The students recognized the challenges involved in receiving online verbal and non-verbal messages adequately. They felt anxious about a lack of pragmatic information on the screen, which prevented them from understanding their counterparts' utterances correctly:

I overreacted and nodded more often online than in face-to-face interactions to avoid giving cold impressions of me to the international students. Online silence gives much colder messages than in direct interactions. Our seminar classmates understood the tendency well, and they all overreacted.

However, some Japanese students mentioned that the online exchanges were manageable pragmatically or even beneficial because all the non-verbal cues except facial expressions were blocked on the Zoom screen, which made them concentrate on listening to the components of verbal statements. One student elaborated such merits as follows:

Interacting with foreigners face-to-face was really threatening for me because all the unspoken messages or pressure coming from my counterparts were transmitted through the air. We already have language anxiety, which often results in communication breakdowns, but we are also exposed to the hidden pressure and tense mood of meeting foreigners. This creates an alien atmosphere with different non-verbal messages. The fear and anxiety overwhelmed me. But in OIE, all the negative messages were blocked on the screen. We were physically apart from one another, and only minimum non-verbal messages such as facial expressions were shown on the screen. They are so dry or unreal that I didn't feel scared of them. I could also concentrate on English sounds, so it was easier to understand them even if they spoke English.

Another student also analyzed how the two-dimensional display helped them concentrate on listening to the utterances only:

In actual face-to-face interactions, we see many other things while listening to the conversation. All the distractors are blocked on Zoom, so we can pay attention to the sounds only. Maybe we see fundamental facial expressions, but we don't get detailed nonverbal messages from the screen. That's why we don't have to get tense on Zoom.

One student also referred to a pragmatic merit of the approach, arguing that the time limit in Zoom interactions covered up uneasiness about finishing a conversation:

Saying goodbye to foreigners properly was always a big concern for me. I didn't know how to finish our conversation smoothly in English. There is a long silence, and finally, I say goodbye, but both of us always feel awkward. But in our Zoom sessions, the closing time was set, and we only had 30 minutes. We say, "Too bad. We need to finish now" at one o'clock. It was so easy, and people accepted the timing in any situation.

Thus, the apparent disadvantages of online intercultural exchanges as two-dimensional unreal communication tools were perceived as advantages by the shy Japanese students suffering from anxiety toward language and cultural barriers. Since the beginning stage of the interactions seems crucial in sustaining passive students' motivation to involve themselves in intercultural interactions, online intercultural exchanges effectively reduced their anxieties and boosted their continuing willingness to challenge the barriers.

Motivational Merit 3: Overcoming Fear among Students without Intercultural Experience

Among the 25 Japanese participants, only three had frequent intercultural contacts with foreigners in their private lives. One of the three students showed disappointment with the lack of use of the target language in this project, complaining that the language used in FINFID was primarily Japanese. However, students without prior intercultural experience noted major changes in their attitudes and behaviors toward cross-cultural learning through

the project. One student with lower English skills clarified such progress as follows:

I was fearful of foreigners. When I saw them in town, I was hoping they'd never talk to me. I know I was sending them the message, "Never talk to me, even in Japanese." I just didn't know how to deal with them and how to respond to them. I wasn't interested in foreign countries until my junior year. I know I'm majoring in English, but I was hopeless and lacked self-confidence in English. Now I know I can respond to them without any problem. I want to go to places like Norway, Indiana, and Australia because I want to meet the international students I met in FINFID.

Another student without overseas experience elaborated on her feelings as follows:

I entered this university expecting international exchanges, but the hurdles involved in contacting foreigners were too high for me. I wasn't bold enough to mingle with them on my own initiative. But with the help of FINFID, I overcame these hurdles and realized that we don't need much courage to enjoy communication on simple everyday topics.

The confidence in intercultural contacts and empathy toward foreigners they gained from the Zoom interactions ultimately resulted in the self-initiated volunteer activity of helping foreign students in the local Acculturation Center:

I was moved to see the little kids studying *hiragana* so hard. Because they didn't understand Japanese at all, I tried to draw pictures, I used my poor English, I made gestures, and I did everything I could to make myself understood. When they understood my messages, they gave me a big smile. I wanted to do anything to help and entertain them. I ran and skipped ropes with them. We laughed together, and I realized we could understand each other with limited language skills because we are the same humans. Now that I got accustomed to young foreign children, I can manage adult foreigners, too.

A few students with prior overseas experience are likely to seek target language learning opportunities rather than simply appreciating cross-cultural encounters, which they already experienced in their prior contacts and may lead to unsatisfactory results. They thus regarded the intercultural interactions as tools for improving their target language skills, while the shy students, who lacked advanced target language skills, and those with little or no intercultural experience (the majority) gained a deeper understanding of intercultural learning as well as greater self-confidence in dealing with foreigners. It seems that they succeeded in substantial—as opposed to superficial—meaning making in intercultural learning, which also brought about behavioral and cognitive modifications and identity formation.

In conclusion, for the shy Japanese students, the hybrid form of Zoom interactions at the outset and moving toward face-to-face interactions was effective in gradually developing their self-confidence, appropriate cultural identity, and positive attitudes as well as facilitating

other technical skills needed to lessen the language, cultural, and psychological barriers.

Table 3

Summary of Barriers to Intercultural Interactions

Barriers to intercultural interactions	Face-to-Face – 2019	Hybrid – 2020
Technical barriers	A lot	Moderate
Scheduling problems	✓	
Physical distance	✓	
Economic burden	✓	
IT skills		✓ But useful for the future
Two-dimensional representation		✓ Flat message, need for creativity
Need for careful preparation		✓
Language barriers	A lot	Reduced
Impromptu utterances	✓	Reduced with half-scripted scenarios
Understanding target language	✓	✓ But clearer due of limited nonverbal distractor
Cultural barriers	A lot	Reduced
Non-verbal pressure	✓	✓ But only facial expressions
Pragmatic cue: Timing to finish	✓	
Psychological barriers	A lot	Reduced
Uneasiness, puzzlement, fear	✓	
Tension	✓	Blocked on screen

Discussion

In the intercultural interactions conducted face-to-face in 2019, most students commented that they found the project useful and that parts of their ICC improved. Although the assessment was based on their impressionistic judgments, it can be concluded that some improvement was achieved, as seen in their more profound understanding of the international students' difficulties, increased appreciation of cultural differences, and attitude changes such as greater tolerance in speaking simple Japanese at a slow pace. Despite a general appreciation of the project and its outcomes, some of the host students' lack of motivation to

participate in out-of-class events became apparent, implying that the face-to-face project in 2019 was not influential enough for some Japanese students to be self-directive. For the less-motivated students, their busy schedule and shyness derived from language and cultural barriers were two main demotivating factors in 2019.

In contrast, the online interaction using Zoom in Spring 2020 made it possible for participants to interact with one another smoothly even though they studied on different campuses. It also enabled participants from overseas to attend the events, and the preparatory adaptation to the target culture and language and friendship formation became possible for future international students. Moreover, the online approach in 2020 developed students' various skills and reduced linguistic, cultural, and psychological barriers for the novice students taking part in intercultural interactions thanks to the limited tension due to semi-planned scenarios, two-dimensional screen blocking distracting non-verbal cues, and careful preparation with creative planning.

Following a series of online interactions, which made the students accustomed to intercultural exchanges followed by real direct contacts in Fall 2020, the Japanese students longed for face-to-face interactions with the international students. In this sense, online intercultural exchanges in 2020 effectively motivated the more timid Japanese students to meet international students face-to-face as the first step in forming comfortable relationships.

The participants' increased self-confidence in challenging language and cultural barriers ultimately led to the recognition of language minorities in Japan. By working with younger foreigners, they also discovered the importance of spending time together without paying undue attention to differences in language or culture and realizing the common ground every person shares with others. Especially for the shy Japanese students who felt pressure to deal with adult international students, associating with international students of a younger age was a preparatory stage to reducing their anxiety toward foreigners of their own age.

Furthermore, the OIE experiences brought about additional educational outcomes and

personal development such as creative planning, careful preparation, pertinent problem-solving skills, cooperative attitudes, and friendship with international students. Although they admitted that the advantages of face-to-face interactions are so substantial that OIE cannot fully replace them, most participants, especially students new to intercultural exchanges, valued the advantages of OIE. Thus, it can be said that the hybrid use of actual and remote interactions decreased the local students' fear and increased their confidence levels.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The COVID-19 crisis, which prevented the students in this study from having in-person contacts in Spring 2020, coincided with trying online interactions as a substitute and turned out to be an alternative approach to intercultural interactions. Interacting remotely at the beginning of friendship formation followed by in-person contacts compensated for the disadvantages of face-to-face intercultural exchanges caused mainly by the language and pragmatic barriers some shy Japanese university students without prior intercultural experience faced. In brief, it could be said that their cognitive skills and cultural sensitivity were enriched, and the course objectives were met in the form of direct and online involvement through experiential learning to the degree that the interactions modified their attitudes and actions, especially thanks to the hybrid use of both formats.

Multiculturalism and globalism have been proceeding rapidly in Japanese schools, and the development of ICC for teachers has been a crucial goal of pre-service teacher training. Considering that teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism and intercultural understanding affect students' sense of internationalization, intercultural experiences and skills should be given greater value in pre-service teacher education. Specifically, OIE has shown solid educational potential for developing ICC domestically thanks to its benefit of virtual mobility, which helps resolve scheduling problems, physical distance, and economic burden.

Turning to specific suggestions for improving a tendency toward cultural inwardness

among education major Japanese students, we should consider the constraints built into their busy academic schedules. As shown in the literature review above, these students need to fulfill various requirements in order to gain a teacher certificate. As a result, it is difficult for students to find time for extensive overseas study during their four years in college under current pre-service teacher training programs. Even if they wish—and can afford—to postpone their graduation to attend extensive overseas study programs, such overseas experience is not adequately valued by local education authorities in prefectural screening exams for hiring full-time tenure-track certificated teachers.

According to MEXT (2020), only fourteen prefectural boards of education offer a gap year system whereby applicants who passed the screening test can postpone the start of their employment to attend graduate school overseas, although quite a few prefectural boards of education offer the gap year system to those who wish to study in graduate schools in Japan. Given that studying in a graduate school overseas for degree credit purposes is enormously challenging for pre-service teachers in elementary and secondary schools, the gap year system should be also applied to other forms of extensive overseas stay, including learning in language schools and doing educational volunteer work overseas.

Moreover, some students' primary or even sole purpose for taking part in the intercultural interactions offered by the FINFID project was to develop their target language skills. Although it is understandable that language learners should enjoy its outcomes, such utilitarian intentions could affect the counterparts' feelings, and friendships may not develop appropriately. As seen in the students' responses, the images of intercultural exchange for some Japanese students are related to English-speaking people or the West. Fostering more balanced and relativistic views of intercultural interactions is another challenge to be met.

We have to accept that international students on campus will not automatically engage in intercultural exchanges and contact with local students in most Japanese university settings. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that international students on campus are a vital resource for

providing local students with opportunities for intercultural experiences domestically. MEXT (2012) suggests that Japanese teacher education programs avail themselves of the skills offered by foreigners and international students living in Japan in order to cultivate prospective teachers' intercultural communicative competence domestically. With educational supervision of semi-structured intercultural friendship formation by teachers and—ideally—institutional commitment and involvement, we can lead Japanese students to the intercultural arena without physical mobility with the hybrid use of face-to-face and virtual interactions for building understanding and skills necessary for present and future globalized classrooms in Japan.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the participants of this study for their cooperation and the three anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions. I also appreciate Dr. Paul Bruthiaux for stylistic improvements to this paper.

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A Self-Worth Perspective of Japanese First-Year Junior High School Students' Attitudes Towards Studying English¹

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Abstract

In this qualitative study, the attitudes of 159 first-year Japanese junior high school students towards studying English were investigated from the perspective of the self-worth theory. Students were required to write three essays about how they would react under hypothetical circumstances in which their feelings of self-worth might be threatened. The contents of the students' essays were analyzed and matched with quadrants of Covington's (1992) Quadripolar Model of Achievement Motivation. Although a clear conclusion could not be reached, the results did indicate that few students could be described as optimists in their English studies. Pedagogical implications to increase the number of students with optimistic views of their English studies will also be discussed. The results of this study and the implications discussed within will be especially useful for junior high school teachers, university professors involved in language education, and university pedagogy students seeking for insights to what drives junior high school students to study English.

Keywords: L2 learning motivation, self-worth theory, achievement motivation

Students in Japan's English as a foreign language (EFL) environment have developed a reputation as being relatively unwilling to take risks in their studies. Students appear to be overconcerned with the grammatical accuracy of their linguistic output and too shy to raise their hands to ask questions in class (Harumi, 2011). Japanese students' seemingly negative

attitudes towards language learning have been discussed from various theories of motivation. However, despite a plethora of research in psychology, the amount of literature related to the self-worth theory in the EFL context of Japan is almost non-existent. In this study, I focus on the self-worth theory and aim to understand why Japanese students react the way they do when faced with situations in which they feel they may fail. It is hoped that the results of the study and discussions within this paper will be useful for language teachers, both current and prospective, as they search for ways to increase their students' love of English.

Motivation Research in Japan

There has been an enormous amount of research on a global scale related to what drives humans to achieve their goals, whether those goals be related to sports, academia, or personal relationships. The field of English education in Japan is no exception, with second language (L2) learning motivation being one of the most popular topics appearing at conferences and in journals related to language learning and teaching. Researchers have focused their studies on L2 learning motivation in Japan from various fields, such as the self-determination theory, willingness to communicate, the L2 motivational self system, and demotivation. A common theme appearing in the results of these studies is the passiveness of Japanese learners and seemingly lack of drive in their language learning.

The self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is perhaps the theory of motivation focused upon most comprehensively in second language acquisition (SLA) studies. It advocates that humans' drive in their chosen fields becomes more intrinsic when they maintain strong feelings of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competency, and relatedness. Much of the SDT research in the Japanese EFL context has been based on the early work by Hiromori (2006). Researchers have suggested that feelings of autonomy in English studies are lacking within Japanese students (Nakata, 2010), which may be due to a teacher-centered approach seen in many Japanese junior high schools and senior high schools.

Some studies have considered techniques to call upon in the language classroom, especially those that trigger a sense of autonomy, to increase students' intrinsic motivation. Tanaka (2010), for example, encouraged self-reflection and self-regulation in students' language learning. These techniques, along with feedback given during group-work sessions over a five-week period, saw heightened levels of intrinsic motivation among the students. The effects of vocabulary size on intrinsic motivation in extensive reading (Tanaka, 2017a) and in demotivating learning environments (Tanaka, 2017b) have also been discussed within the Japanese EFL context. Although Mizumoto and Takeuchi (2009) presented various effective strategies for increasing the intrinsic motivation of Japanese EFL learners towards vocabulary learning, such as explicit vocabulary instruction, classroom teachers are still searching for more classroom techniques that effectively move students towards being more intrinsically motivated. More practical research clearly needs to be conducted in this field.

The work of Yashima (e.g., 2002) has led research in the field of willingness to communicate (WTC). She suggested that Japanese students' international posture—their attitudes towards the international community—acted as a clear indicator of students' willingness to communicate in the second language (L2) and, in turn, their motivation to learn English and their proficiency. Anxiety has also been discussed as having an apparent effect—both positive and negative—on Japanese students' WTC (Noro, 2013). Factors that have been noted as helpful in increasing Japanese students' WTC included an increased sense of agency, a feeling of obligation to speak, and being challenged (Sato, 2019, 2020).

Another viewpoint of motivation that has received much attention over the past two decades is the L2 Motivational Self System (e.g., Dörnyei, 2009), which describes language students' drive to learn from three components: the ideal L2 self (i.e., the optimal future image of oneself as an L2 speaker); the ought-to L2 self (i.e., the pressure one feels from external expectations); and L2 learning experience (i.e., the influences of teachers, family, others, and academic institution environment).

The L2 Motivational Self System has received much attention in Japan, but many studies have demonstrated that Japanese students struggle to create vivid ideal L2 self images. Yashima (2009), for example, suggested Japanese learners' attitudes towards studying English to be highly extrinsic; the focus of their studies appeared to be more on passing tests than realizing visions of themselves speaking fluently in the future. Konno (2014), who argued that there was a lack of suggestions of techniques for language teachers to call upon to strengthen students' ideal L2 self images, suggested strong positive relationships between feedback based on concepts of the SDT (i.e., autonomy, competency, relatedness) and the L2 motivational self system. Over the 10-week intervention period, clear trends were observed in heightening the clarity of students' ideal and ought-to L2 self images, as well as statistically significant increases in most of the concepts behind the SDT. The importance of having vivid future self images is backed up in a qualitative study spanning four years by Cooke (2021), whose findings “highlighted the importance of the formulation of a robust future self and the maintenance of this vision over time to sustain motivation for the L2” (p. 35).

A further area of motivation that, rather worryingly, has been widely investigated in Japan is L2 learning *demotivation*. So apparent is the dwindling drive of Japanese students to study English that Ushioda (2013) claims, “it is no exaggeration to say that nearly all the leading empirical research on demotivation in foreign language learning currently derives from Japan” (p. 5). In addition to the pressures of high-stakes exams—such as high school and university entrance exams—contributing to Japanese students' weakening will to study English, other factors have also been proven as demotivating, such as lack of intrinsic motivation (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), comparisons of oneself and other students who appear to be more highly proficient in English (Falout et al., 2009), and boredom due to both the subject itself and instructors' teaching styles (Kikuchi, 2019). Despite boredom being seen as one of the principal contributors to L2 demotivation, it is yet to receive much attention, with the exception of a recent study by Nakamura and her colleagues (2021), which, although

conducted in the Thai EFL environment, provides many hints for preventing demotivation of Japanese students.

Despite the amount of literature related to motivation, and lack thereof, in the Japanese EFL context being quite extensive, very few studies have considered the reasons for Japanese students' apparent lack of enthusiasm from the perspective of the self-worth theory. In this study, I aim to help fill this gap by investigating the reasons why Japanese students of English react the way they do when faced with challenging situations. The principles behind the self-worth theory and what can be gained from researching it may provide valuable hints for language researchers and instructors alike. Like the expectations of Covington (2009) through the self-worth theory, I hope that the results and implications from this study will “not only draw students to their best effort academically, but also increase their willingness to learn and profit from their learning” (p. 141).

The Self-Worth Theory

The self-worth theory is established on the philosophical ideas that one's sense of self is the center of human existence (Covington 1992, 1998; Covington & Beery, 1976) and gives meaning to how one thinks, how one dreams, and how one behaves (Elliot & Covington, 2001). In a simple definition, the self-worth theory advocates that “individuals strive to give their lives meaning by seeking the approval of others” (Covington, 2009, p. 142); one's performances and successes in tasks reflect one's ability, which subsequently affects one's feeling of worth (Beery, 1975). Therefore, if we demonstrate high performance in a particular field, we feel more confident and worthy as human beings. Conversely, if our performances are inferior, it results in declining confidence and feelings of self-worth.

The self-worth theory was derived from a response to the need achievement theory (e.g., Atkinson, 1964) and criticisms of the developments by Weiner (1972, 1974). The need achievement theory explains individuals' motivation as coming from two directions: the drive

to succeed or to avoid failure. Although Atkinson's model had described these drives from affective and emotional angles—individuals' strive for success describes their "capacity to experience pride in accomplishment" (Atkinson, 1964, p. 214)—Weiner (1972, 1974) focused on the cognitive aspects of motivation and aimed to interpret *how* individuals perceive the outcomes of events and the processes they go through as they seek to interpret their emotions.

The interpretation of Atkinson's model presented by Weiner (1972, 1974) moved away from an emotional perspective (i.e., the pride felt in success and the shame of failure) to describing achievement as "a capacity for perceiving success as caused by internal factors, particularly effort" (Weiner et al., 1971, p. 18). However, the focus on how the amount of effort one makes as a dominant factor in one's success was criticized in some circles, largely by supporters of the self-worth theory and its principles. They argued that "if a student tries hard and fails anyway, then attributions typically go to low ability, which consequently—according to the self-worth theory—implies unworthiness" (Covington, 2009, p. 143).

The notion that *the harder I try, the more successful I will be* may appear as a fitting guide in studying; many people are brought up with the mentality that *practice makes perfect*. However, the focus on effort may present a dilemma, especially after experiencing failure or in circumstances in which we are not confident of being successful. When college students, for example, make decisions about which elective courses to take—simple ones which will be easy to pass and require little effort or demanding ones which call for much hard work but from which they will learn a lot—they find themselves in a predicament: Do I place more value on effort and improving my ability through high-level courses, or more weight on my reputation as a talented student who gets high scores? In most cases, the commitment to preserve one's reputation wins (Cavazza et al., 2015; Covington & Omelich, 1979).

The self-worth theory proposes that as they seek self-acceptance, humans tend to use two powerful strategies when experiencing failure or are faced with the risk of failure: *defense pessimism* (i.e., strategies that allow the individual to prepare for possible negative settings)

and *self-handicapping* (i.e., strategies to divert failure away from the individual's ability, such as task avoidance). A third mechanism of the self-worth theory is seen in the individual's response to a sense of *helplessness*. A student's response to a feeling of helplessness is displayed by their "attributing failure to insufficient ability, the onset of negative affect and expectancies, decrements in persistence and performance, and avoidance of subsequent challenge" (Elliot, 2005, p. 53). Table 1 provides an overview of the traits of individuals showing high and low defensive pessimism strategies, self-handicapping strategies, and helplessness. It should be noted that the lower the individuals' adoptions of strategies are, the more willing they are to take risks.

Table 1

Traits of High and Low Defensive Pessimism, Self-handicapping, and Helplessness

Strategy	Level	Trait
Defense Pessimism	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● negative outlook about future test results ● feel that they have lost control of the outcomes of their efforts
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● optimistic about future test results ● interested in improving their own performances
Self-handicapping	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● try to avoid challenging situations ● look for ways to get out of taking on the task until the last minute
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● thrive on challenges ● always looking for ways to improve
Helplessness	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● view failure as embarrassing ● give up easily when faced with failure
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● view failure as opportunities to learn ● persistent through failures

Note. The above summaries are based on the descriptions given by Norem (2008) (defensive pessimism), Martin et al. (2003) (self-handicapping), and Elliot (2005) (helplessness).

In addition to the negative commentary related to the cognitive nature of Weiner's (1972, 1974) interpretation of the need achievement model, a further critique was its bipolar scale: One would be described as *either* highly oriented towards success *or* highly driven to

avoid failure. However, because “individuals can be simultaneously attracted to and repelled by the same task” (Covington, 1998, p. 40), the bipolar model does not consider those who are *both* highly success-oriented *and* high failure avoiding, nor individuals who display low success orientation *and* low failure avoidance. Thus, while maintaining the original affective nature of Atkinson’s need achievement model, Covington (1992) suggested that it may be more fitting to consider individuals’ motivation in a quadripolar model.

The Quadripolar Model of Achievement Motivation

As an improvement of the bipolar model of need achievement and to overcome the failure to recognize linking between the forces of success orientation and failure avoidance (Covington, 1992), Covington recommended a Quadripolar Model of Achievement Motivation (QMAM) that would include the interactions between humans’ fear of failure and focus on success (Covington, 1992; Covington & Omelich, 1991). As shown in Figure 1, the QMAM describes four categories in which individuals may fall into: Optimists, Overstrivers, Self-protectors, and Failure Acceptors.

Figure 1

Covington’s Quadripolar Model of Achievement Motivation

Low success orientation	High fear of failure		High success orientation
	<u>Self-Protectors</u> High self-handicapping High defensive pessimism Low helplessness	<u>Overstrivers</u> Low self-handicapping High defensive pessimism Low helplessness	
	<u>Failure Acceptors</u> Low self-handicapping Low defensive pessimism High helplessness	<u>Optimists</u> Low self-handicapping Low defensive pessimism Low helplessness	
	Low fear of failure		

Note. The above quadripolar model of achievement motivation is based on Covington’s (1992, p. 40) model with summarized descriptions added from De Castella et al. (2013, p. 53).

Optimists

Optimists display the traits of students oriented toward being successful in their chosen field but do not necessarily show signs of avoiding failure. They are willing to take risks and are resilient to challenges they face as they strive to reach their goals (Covington & Omelich, 1991). These students are confident and believe they can achieve anything if they put their minds to it.

Overstrivers

Overstrivers are highly oriented towards success; they will do anything it takes to avoid failure. When faced with possibilities of failure, Overstrivers tend to do more than is expected of them (Thompson & Parker, 2007), running the risk of becoming burnt out. The short-time benefits may suggest success, but the long-term results may be ominous, both physically and psychologically (Covington, 1992).

Self-protectors

Self-protectors are those with a high fear of failure but low success orientation. They are described as those who lack confidence and look for strategies to blame low performance on their unwillingness to exert effort rather than lack of ability (Martin et al., 2001).

Failure Acceptors

Those in the Failure Acceptors category are the students who, as the name suggests, have given up and are motivated by neither a drive to succeed nor a fear of failure. These students tend to come to school with an attitude of “It’s all too difficult for me, so why even bother?” Among the four quartiles, students described as Failure Acceptors are the least likely to reach their academic potential (Martin & Marsh, 2003).

Self-Worth Theory Research in SLA

Much research in second language acquisition (SLA) has considered language students’ fear of failure while focusing on anxiety, willingness to communicate, and demotivation.

There has also been a recent trend towards a focus on implicit theories of intelligence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), or as is more commonly known, mindsets (Dweck, 2006, 2017), both internationally (e.g., Lou & Noels, 2016) and in Japan (e.g., Imai, 2020). Implicit theories describe humans' beliefs regarding the innateness of intelligence, and recent studies suggest many techniques for language instructors to call upon that strengthen the belief among their students that their efforts will bring about future success in their learning. However, most of these studies have focused on strengthening students' growth mindsets (i.e., a belief that one is in charge of their potential). Based on my own studies of mindsets in Japan (e.g., Leis, 2021; Leis et al., 2020), I feel a broader view of Japanese students' drive to study, especially from the angle of how students react to face-threatening experiences, is necessary. I believe the self-worth theory offers this perspective.

One of the few attempts to examine the self-worth theory in SLA was conducted by Matsuguma (2013), who suggested that introducing the thought of self-compassion in a content-based language teaching course may be effective in increasing Japanese students' self-confidence and sense of self-worth. Furthermore, Matsuguma (2013) argued that introducing the thought of self-compassion may effectively decrease the rate of suicide in Japan, which, disturbingly, had been showing an increasing trend.

Although the QMAM has been investigated in the Japanese schooling system (De Castella et al., 2013) to validate the QMAM in the Asian context, to my knowledge, no research to date has attempted to describe into which quartile of the QMAM Japanese students tend to fall. This study attempts to fill this gap and elicit ideas about how to help Japanese EFL students have optimistic views in their studies, even when faced with possible failure.

This Study

Research Question

In this study, I aimed to answer the following research question: Which quartile of the

QMAM do Japanese adolescents tend to fall into when it comes to their English studies?

Because the self-worth theory has received such little attention in the field of SLA to date, in this study, I intended to provide a basic overview of Japanese adolescents at one particular academic institution and their reactions to situations in which they feel they may fail. I hope the results of this study will act as a springboard to initiate further studies to look at a broader range of language learners and in more detail. By focusing on junior high school students, the results will be especially suitable for university professors specializing in education and university students aiming to become English teachers in the future, as they look for ways to stimulate a love for English among their students.

Participants

A total of 159 Japanese first-grade junior high school students participated in this study. The students all attended the same public junior high school in a large city in northeast Japan. Although it was a public junior high school, which generally anyone can attend, because it was affiliated with a national university and students were required to take an entrance test, the school had a reputation as being more academically sound with pupils more focused on studying for the highly competitive entrance exams in comparison to students at other junior high schools. Thus, it could be said that the students at this school have a reputation as being decidedly more motivated to study than those at the majority of public junior high schools.

The participants' ages ranged from 12–13 ($m = 12.70$; $SD = 0.50$). There were 79 female and 78 male participants. Two participants chose not to indicate their gender. No objective tests were conducted to measure students' English proficiency as part of this study. However, the students had been taking official English lessons for at least two years at elementary school and reported that they had passed Level Pre-1 ($n = 1$), Level 2 ($n = 6$), Level Pre-2 ($n = 12$), Level 3 ($n = 23$), Level 4 ($n = 24$), or Level 5 ($n = 19$) in the English proficiency test run by the Society for Testing English Proficiency in Japan. A total of 74

participants reported that they had never taken an English proficiency test.

In order to grasp students' linguistic self-confidence, which I assumed might have an impact on the students' feelings of self-worth, I asked the students to describe their English ability on a scale of 1 (very low) to 10 (very high). Overall, the students' self-perceived proficiency (SPP) was intermediate ($m = 5.68$; $SD = 2.22$).

Methodology

To measure how the students would react when faced with possible failure, I partially referred to the methodology used by Covington and Omelich (1979) as a guide for the present study. Covington and Omelich had university students rate hypothetical failures in tests from affective perspectives and then describe the kind of feedback they would give if they were in a teacher's role. Assuming it would be unrealistic for junior high school students to imagine how to give feedback from a teacher's viewpoint, in my study I had them write essays to describe how they would react in three circumstances in which they may experience failure. To my knowledge, no study has previously used this approach to investigating students' feeling of self-worth in language learning environments.

The topics were presented to students in booklets with four sections. Section 1 contained items related to students' demographics (e.g., age, gender). In Sections 2–4, students wrote essays in their native language to describe what they imagined doing in face-threatening circumstances. Upon consultation with the students' regular English teachers, it was decided that the students' English proficiency was not high enough to write the essays in English. Therefore, Japanese was chosen as the language for the tasks.

The students were given five minutes to complete Section 1 and 10 minutes to complete each of Sections 2–4. They were instructed not to turn the page to the following essay until told to do so. Including the explanations of the essay topics, overall, the task took approximately 45 minutes to complete. See the Appendix for the situations presented to

students in Japanese with their English translations.

Analyses

After the students completed the essays, I collected the booklets and shuffled them as not to reflect the order in which students were sitting in the classroom. The paper booklets were passed to three research assistants who entered the data into an online spreadsheet. Each essay was read and marked high or low depending on how they fit with the descriptions of defensive pessimism, self-handicapping, and helplessness, as was described in Table 1. Based on each descriptive's high and low combinations, the students were categorized into one of the QMAM quartiles. It should be noted that some combinations (e.g., high-high-high) did not fit any of the quartiles.

The data were then entered into NVivo for qualitative analysis based on an exploration of word frequencies. To avoid the possibility of cherry-picking the words and phrases I had hoped to see in the students' essays, the most populous keywords reported by NVivo were focused upon in the discussion of the results. It should be noted that pre-set regular Japanese stop words in the NVivo software and words occurring in the essay topics (e.g., *benkyou* [to study]) were not included in the exploration of word frequencies or other analyses.

Results and Discussion

First, I calculated the number of students for each high/low combination according to the students' essays. The combination of low defensive pessimism, high self-handicapping, and high helplessness was the most populous at 49.06%. This low-high-high sequence, however, did not adhere to any of the QMAM quartiles. Of the QMAM quartiles, Overstrivers was the most populous, with 23.26% of the students being described in this way. Less than one-tenth of the participants could be placed into the Optimist quartile. Table 2 displays the numbers of students for each combination, their QMAM quartiles, and the self-perceived

proficiency (SPP) levels for the students cleanly fitting into one of the QMAM quartiles.

Because I had assumed that SPP might affect the students' feelings of self-worth, I conducted a one-way analysis of variance with a Tukey-Kramer Honest Significant Difference post-hoc test to confirm whether any significant differences existed among the four groups. The test was not significant, $F(3, 60) = 1.93, p = .134$. Therefore, I can conclude that students' feelings of self-worth were not due to their linguistic self-confidence but other factors. I shall now focus on each of the three essays separately to investigate the factors that affected students' conduct when faced with the possibility of failure and suggest pedagogical implications to increase the number of students in the Optimist quartile.

Table 2

Combinations of Students' Essays and QMAM Quartiles

Responses	H-H-H	H-H-L	H-L-H	H-L-L	L-H-H	L-H-L	L-L-H	L-L-L
QMAM	None	Self-protector	None	None	None	Overstriver	Failure Acceptor	Optimist
Number	15	4	1	1	78	37	10	13
Percentage	9.43%	2.52%	< 1%	< 1%	49.06%	23.27%	6.29%	8.18%
SPP	N/M	7.75	N/M	N/M	N/M	6.03	6.20	7.38

Note. $n = 159$; H: high; L: low; SPP: self-perceived proficiency; N/M: not measured.

Essay 1

Based on the content of Essay 1, a great majority of the students ($n = 138$; 86.80%) were described as having low defensive pessimism. A sign of low pessimism was a very positive result, as it suggests students were not so concerned with comparing their test scores with others but more concerned with strategies for improving at the individual level. Two of the most populous keywords in Essay 1, *houhou* and *shikata* (i.e., method, way), appeared in four of the 13 Optimists' essays (i.e., 32.5%), 17 of the 34 Overstrivers' essays (i.e., 50%), and three of the 10 essays written by the Failure Acceptors. These keywords were also seen in more than a quarter (i.e., 25.64%) of the essays written by students with low-high-high

combinations. This suggested that these students, especially those described as Optimists, were placing more importance on the quality of their study time rather than the quantity:

- *I think you should find your own study method and use that time in a more meaningful way. (Optimist; SPP: 8)*
- *Maybe you didn't study in the right way? I think there are some things that you just can't learn if you don't do output and just focus on input work, such as vocabulary lists (although they are important too). (Optimist; SPP: 3)*
- *Ask your friends how they study and learn different ways to study from them. You can find out how to increase the amount you study, too. (Overstriver; SPP:7)*

It should be noted, however, that when creating this essay topic, it was thought that instead of suggesting that the students themselves were getting test scores below average, it would be sounder from an ethical perspective to create a situation in which the students' friends received below-average scores. It was expected that this would give examples of the kinds of self-talk students go through in this kind of situation. Whether the students would indeed have the same reactions in cases when they themselves were the ones below the class average remains to be seen.

Despite the possible ethical dilemma described above, the results suggested the students' self-talk to be very positive. As a pedagogical implication, it can be said that because students do not seem to be overly concern with class averages, one might question the reasoning behind categorizing students as sub-par or not when returning tests. As I have done in previous studies (Leis, 2021; Leis & Wilson, 2017), I urge teachers to consider incorporating an idio-comparative marking system when returning tests: a system that does not give comparisons among students, but rather bases the comparisons with each student's individual previous grades. For example, if a student got a score of 60 in a test and her previous score had been 40, the teacher could write +20 to indicate to the student that she her

score had improved by 20 points. If the teacher simply mentions the class average (e.g., 70), the above student might lose motivation as she thinks, “I tried really hard, but I am still not as good as others.” In a similar way, if a student got 75 in such a test and had received a score of 90 in the previous test, the teacher could write –15 to her test score to show that her result had significantly decreased. If the class average is made known to the class, this student may think, “I did not study as hard this time, but I was still above the class average. That is okay.” Although I have observed the idio-comparative marking system being successful in increasing students’ drive to study in classes at junior and senior high school, as well as university, empirical evidence is still needed to validate its success in increasing motivation over a broader range of students.

Furthermore, as Covington (1992) urges that school is not a place for academic competition, I call on schools to cease displaying students’ rankings on bulletin boards within the schools and on report cards. Showing students whether they have improved or not on their own previous efforts is sufficient. With comparisons among students being seen as a prime factor for demotivation (Falout et al., 2009), I hope teachers will consider these suggestions in their academic institutions.

Essay 2

Despite the positive response in Essay 1, a similar pattern was not observed in the second essay. When asked whether or not they would raise their hands when they had not understood the teacher’s explanation, an overwhelming majority of students ($n = 134$; 84.28%) indicated that they would not raise their hands. This result might not be surprising for anyone who has experience teaching in Japanese junior or senior high school EFL classrooms, as the deafening silence of English classes in Japan is often a topic among researchers (e.g., Donohue, 1998; Harumi, 1999, 2011). In previous studies, reasons behind the apparent lack of willingness to participate in classes actively were put down to lack of

confidence (Harumi, 2011) and as a strategy to avoid difficult situations that may lead to the embarrassment of making a mistake in front of others in the group (Donohue, 1998; Harumi, 1999, 2011). In the present study, two salient patterns that emerged were related to a fear of being annoying and causing troubles (i.e., *meiwaku*; 37 occurrences, 27.61%) for others in the class, and embarrassment (i.e., *hazukashii*; 30 occurrences, 22.39%) that they may be the only one who had not understood:

- *If I raise my hand and say, "I don't know" in front of everyone, I think the people around me will be a little annoyed.* (Overstriver; SPP:5)
- *Since we're in the middle of the lesson, I'm sure I'd bother the whole class. So, I'd ask the teacher after class.* (Self-protector; SPP:6)
- *I would be embarrassed, so try to ask my friends around me secretly. I think it's better for me to mark what I don't understand and do it later because I would feel embarrassed if I were the only one who didn't understand, and it stopped the class.* (Overstriver; SPP:7)

Among the responses of the remaining 25 students who indicated that they would raise their hands, three instances of *hazukashii* ($n = 3$) were observed. However, this embarrassment was directed at problems that might result from not understanding:

- *I would feel embarrassed raising my hand, but it's a different language in a different country, so if I use it without understanding it well, I may not be understood, or I may say something different from what I want to say to the other person.* (Failure Acceptor; SPP:4)
- *It's better to understand the material than to move on without understanding it, so don't be shy about raising your hand and asking questions.* (Optimist; SPP:8)

The content of the students' essays suggests that teachers need to consider ways to help students overcome the embarrassment of raising their hands and assure their students that they

are not causing problems for other students in the class by confirming the content of an explanation. A pedagogical implication that rises from these factors causing students to refrain from asking questions is effective praise.

The way teachers praise students can have a tremendous effect on subsequent efforts. Many teachers seem to feel that their students will be highly motivated when they receive a thumbs up and “Good job!” Research in the field of motivation suggests otherwise. As tempting as it might be to say, “Good job!” when students get the correct answer, such praise for ability has proven to be detrimental for students (Johnston, 2012; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). By praising the correct answer, the student might be happy in the short term, but later, when faced with a challenge in which she feels she might not get the correct answer, more often than not, she will refrain from answering out of concern for getting the wrong answer and consequently not being praised. Praise focused on students’ success should be avoided, as it results in children developing “a sense of contingent self-worth—that they are only able, good, and worthy when they are successful” (Johnston, 2012, p. 39).

Instead, praise could be focused on the processes that students undergo to reach the final outcome, whether that be a successful one or not. Examples of praise focusing on process include, “You must have tried really hard”; and “You found a good way to do it, can you think of other ways that may also work?” (Kamins & Dweck, 1999, p. 842). Considering the precision of the timing of when we give praise to the students can also be effective. Studies have suggested that optimal benefits for students can be achieved when praise and other kinds of feedback are given immediately after the behavior has occurred (Arbel et al., 2017). One way of doing this in regular EFL classes is to give praise such as “Great” or “Thank you” after students have raised their hands but before giving their answers. Such praise focuses on the efforts students have made to contribute to the class rather than whether their answers are correct or not (Leis, 2021).

Essay 3

In the final essay, the students were asked how they would react to being asked for directions when their friend who could speak English fluently was nearby. If the students took charge of giving directions, it was perceived as low helplessness. On the other hand, if the students did not take on the challenge, they were marked as having high helplessness. The majority of the students in this study indicated that they would prefer their friend give the directions ($n = 97$; 61.01%) than giving the directions themselves ($n = 55$; 34.59%) or doing it together ($n = 7$; 4.40%). When the essays were read in detail, however, it was discovered that in many cases, although the students indicated that they would take on the task of giving directions, they would, in fact, speak Japanese and ask their friend to translate. In such cases, the students were judged as having high helplessness. The analysis revealed that almost two-thirds of the participants (i.e., $n = 103$; 64.78%) were marked as having high helplessness, and 56 students (i.e., 35.22%) were judged as having low helplessness.

In a similar pattern to the second essay, concerns about causing problems (*komaru*; 20 instances, 19.42%) and being annoying (*meiwaku*; 11 instances, 10.68%) stood out as the most populous reasons for not giving directions. Students felt that their English was not good enough to give the directions successfully, and this would result in the listeners not understanding or even going to the wrong place:

- *I was the one who was asked to do it, but I'm not very good at English, so I might give the wrong directions or answer with strange words or grammar. This would annoy the person who asked me.* (Failure Acceptor; SPP: 5)
- *To be honest, if someone were asking for directions, I would want to tell them myself. But if I couldn't say it well, they would be in trouble, and it would take a lot of time for both of us, so I thought it would be better to leave it to my friend.* (Failure Acceptor; SPP: 8)

Among the students who indicated that they would give directions, a willingness to take

on the challenge (i.e., *chousen suru*) and try out (i.e., *yattemiru*) was a commonly seen theme throughout the essays ($n = 15$, 26.79%):

- *This would be a good opportunity for me to use English. I want to communicate with foreigners with my own skills. If I made a mistake, I would ask my friend for some advice after. I would be curious to try it.*
(Optimist; SPP: 8)
- *It's not every day that I get the chance to talk to a foreigner, and I want to know how well I can use the English I know.* (Optimist; SPP: 6)

With a willingness to try out their English based on their curiosity of how successful they would be, the importance of leadership in group work is a pedagogical implication that can be discussed here. Over the last few years, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2019) has been encouraging teachers in Japan to use a more communicative approach to their teaching. This focus on communication also reflects recent thoughts regarding learner agency. Whereas previously, learner agency was based around the individual, in the past decade, there has been a shift towards more collaboration between individuals and among group members (Seligman & Seligman, 2019).

Communication and collaboration are seen as critical parts of education. Therefore, including group work in regular English classes will be an essential part of helping students develop the courage to take on challenges without relying on others, even if they feel their English proficiency is lacking. In addition, as Johnston (2012) suggested, when using group work in the classroom, it may be beneficial to regularly rotate leadership roles, ensuring the less confident and more introverted students are given as many opportunities to be in control of the group as those with higher self-confidence.

Answer to the Research Question

In this study, I sought to discover which quartile of the QMAM Japanese adolescents

tend to fall into when it comes to their English studies. Like many studies, it is difficult to come to a clear conclusion, especially when one considers that 59.75% of the sample (i.e., 95 students) did not have a high-low combination that cleanly fit into one of the QMAM quartiles. However, what can be said based on the evidence, is that there were few Optimists. Furthermore, almost a quarter of the participants (i.e., 23.27%) were described as Overstrivers, suggesting a prevailing educational environment in which many students may be likely to experience burnout in their English studies.

Conclusions

In this study, a concerning pattern has been discussed in that less than one in 10 of the junior high school students in the sample could be described as Optimists in their English studies according to the QMAM.

Like any academic investigation, however, this study is limited by numerous factors that may have influenced the results. First, this study was conducted only once. Therefore, there is a possibility that various circumstances (e.g., students' moods or health) on the day the study was conducted may have affected the results. In future studies, it may be beneficial to consider a more longitudinal design, in which essays are written several times over an extended period.

Second, the number of participants in this qualitative study was relatively high. This number might be viewed as being too high to gain a deep understanding at the individual level, which is often the principal objective of conducting a qualitative study. In future studies, reducing the number of participants and including interviews and classroom observations may bring about a clearer understanding of the reasons why Japanese EFL students behave the way they do in these situations.

Third, the data analysis was conducted alone by the author. It is possible that the common words and phrases reported by NVivo could have been interpreted in various ways.

In future studies, it may be more beneficial to use a larger research team to discuss other possible interpretations of the data.

Finally, the students in this study were somewhat highly motivated in their English studies and thus may not reflect the broader description of Japanese adolescents. The self-worth theory is yet to receive much attention in the Japanese EFL context, but I feel that with more studies over a broad range of ages, proficiencies, and experience with the English language, I may be able to hone in on a better conclusion.

The weaknesses described above do, of course, illustrate the limitations of this paper, but, just as importantly, they also provide ideas for future directions in this approach to studying human motivation, which has been neglected for far too long in the field of SLA. Creating a classroom environment in which students are willing to take risks and be fearless in the face of failure is not easy, especially when it comes to learning second and other languages. I believe that the results of this study and the pedagogical implications suggested within this paper (i.e., refraining from giving class averages and using an idio-comparative marking system, careful use of praise, and well-managed groupwork) will help junior high school English teachers—both those already in the classroom and those currently studying at university—to have a clearer understanding of their students' actions when faced with possible failure and the reasons why they react in those ways. With further research, a better understanding of techniques to reduce the fear of failure can be achieved.

Note

1. This paper is a revised version of the manuscript presented at the 2021 JACET International Convention.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to the teachers and students who gave up their valuable class time to write the essays analyzed in this study. I would also like to show my gratitude to Simon Cooke for

his comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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Appendix

The essay topics presented to students in this study in the original format (i.e., Japanese) and with English translations. The mechanisms of the self-worth theory shown in parentheses after each essay number have been added for the purposes of this paper and were not included in the booklets given to the students in the investigation. Original Japanese versions of the essay topics can be obtained by contacting the author.

Essay 1. (Defensive Pessimism)

Your friend studied English for more than three hours every day, but his score on the final exam was below the class average. What advice would you give to your friend?

Essay 2. (Self-handicapping)

You are in English class, and you don't quite understand the grammar that the teacher was explaining in the first 10 minutes. Do you raise your hand and confirm the teacher's explanation, or do you not raise your hand? Circle either "raise your hand" or "not raise your hand" and write the reason.

Essay 3. (Helplessness)

You are shopping at the station with a friend who just came back from studying in the United States for a year. While your friend is using the restroom, a foreigner suddenly asks you for directions in English. Just as you are about to show him the way, your friend comes back. Would you leave it to your friend who speaks fluent English to show him the way? Or would you do your best to teach yourself? Please circle either "Leave it to my friend," "Don't leave it to my friend," or "Do it together" and write the reason.

A Study on the Instructions on the Use of Hedging in English Academic Writing Textbooks

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Abstract

When writing research papers, native English writers tend to use hedging to soften their claims and protect themselves against criticism from readers. However, non-native English writers generally use fewer hedges in their articles than native English writers. To clarify this discrepancy, this study investigated how hedging was introduced in a total of 10 academic writing textbooks used by upper-intermediate and advanced Japanese learners of English. The study consists of two components; the first investigation focused on the extent to which these textbooks provided instructions on the use of hedging, while the second investigation focused on how frequently hedging was actually presented in the textbooks. The results showed that the use of hedging was not directly introduced in some investigated textbooks although it was adequately used in sample paragraphs and essays. The explanations on hedging and the number of relevant exercises varied among the textbooks. These findings highlight instructional areas that require additional focus. As hedging is used in English research papers and learners of English study various lexical hedges during the early stages of learning, teachers need to discuss its functions in more detail to help learners raise their awareness of using English hedges appropriately in the academic context.

Keywords: hedging, metadiscourse, academic writing, textbook analysis

Hedging is an interactional source of metadiscourse used to soften a writer's claims, and native English writers tend to use it when making inferences in their results (Hyland, 1998a). However, previous studies have shown that Japanese writers of English tend to use fewer hedges when writing academic research articles (Fujimura-Wilson, 2019, 2020). In addition, as Japanese learners of English generally find it difficult to acquire epistemic modality, they tend to use it less often in their writing (Nakayama, 2021). This highlights the need for a focus on hedging in academic writing, especially in the pedagogical context. As such, this study investigated the extent to which hedging has been introduced and discussed in a sample of academic writing textbooks used by upper-intermediate and advanced Japanese learners of English to provide insights into how these learners are instructed on the use of hedging and its purpose.

In written communication, writers can persuade, inform, and engage readers through their choice of language. In this regard, they may also convey their attitude towards what they write as well as their readers. Hyland (2005a) emphasizes the importance of metadiscourse, which “represents a writer's attempts to guide a receiver's perception of a text as signals of the writer's attitude towards the content and the audience of the text in understanding language in use” (p. 3). Metadiscourse consists of interactive and interactional resources (Hyland, 2005a, p. 49). Interactive resources include transitions (e.g., *in addition* and *but*), frame makers (e.g., *finally* and *to conclude*), endophoric markers (e.g., *see Figure* and *in Section 2*), evidentials (e.g., *according to X* and *Z states*), and code glosses (e.g., *e.g.* and *such as*), while interactional resources include hedges (e.g., *might* and *perhaps*), boosters (e.g., *in fact* and *definitely*), attitude markers (e.g., *unfortunately* and *I agree*), self-mentions (e.g., *we* and *my*), and engagement markers (e.g., *note* and *you can see that*) (Hyland, 2005a).

The term “hedges” was originally used by Lakoff (1972), referring to “words whose job it is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (p. 195). The use of hedging has been analyzed in both spoken (Coates, 1987; Holmes, 1988) and written discourse (Hyland, 1996a, 1996b;

Salager-Meyer, 1994) in English and in other languages such as Chinese (Hu & Cao, 2011), Persian (Samaie et al., 2014), and Spanish (Lee & Casal, 2014). Hedges have also been studied in the context of academic research papers, with some researchers focusing on different languages to understand how it is variously used by native and non-native English writers (Hinkel, 2003, 2005; Kobayashi, 2016). However, there is limited emphasis on how hedging is taught in academic writing textbooks. To address this gap, this study investigated English foreign language (EFL) textbooks used in upper-intermediate and advanced academic writing classes in Japan to determine how hedging is introduced. It was anticipated that the results would indicate a lack of teaching pragmatics in this regard, thus suggesting that academic writing classes need to provide more detailed instructions on hedging in addition to highlighting its purpose.

This study initially discusses the common structure of textbooks used in academic writing classes, and then a definition of hedges and related previous studies are introduced. Following an explanation of the research methods used in this study, the results concerning the introduction of hedges in academic writing textbooks used in upper-intermediate and advanced classes in Japan are presented and discussed, along with some suggestions for teaching the use of hedges. Finally, the discussion also considers the importance of raising non-native English writers' awareness of hedging in discourse and pragmatics in writing.

Previous Studies on the Use of Hedging in Research Articles and Academic Writing Textbooks

Academic Writing Textbooks

Academic writing textbooks introduce strategies for paragraph construction and essay writing, including structures of various essays and research papers. These textbooks also introduce the language of academic writing and provide information on how to write citations and references. With regards to introducing academic language, appropriate language style

and tone, how to make points stronger and more precise, and word choices are typically introduced.

In his analysis of academic writing textbooks, Widodo (2007) illustrated the process of writing, including the steps of planning, drafting, reviewing, and editing. Widodo (2007) states that “the core goal of the textbook is the development of the college students’ essays in English, concentrating on writing good essays of different types through the integrated approach: process and text function based writing” (p. 119). He emphasized the importance of understanding the organization of structures and ideas in writing and suggested that according to the types of essays (e.g., descriptions and argumentations), general structure, organization of ideas, and syntactic patterns need to be defined in brief pieces of writing.

Moreover, writers need to understand the rhetoric of a text and carefully consider how to present the writing outcome more effectively while using patterns recognized by readers; therefore, writers need to be aware of appropriate language and structure in their texts (Hyland, 2019). It is also important for students to recognize appropriate discourse patterns within their disciplines, as acceptable patterns and forms differ depending on the genre and discipline (Hyland, 2004).

Theoretical Background, Definition and Categories of Hedges in Academic Writing

Hedges are an important means of mitigating directness that allow writers to distance themselves from a statement and help avoid to take direct responsibility for their claims while minimizing damage to their personal credibility (Hyland, 2005b, p. 96). Hyland (1998a) states that “hedging indicates unwillingness to make an explicit and complete commitment to the truth of a proposition” (p. 3). In this regard, “hedges emphasize the subjectivity of a position by allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore open that position to negotiation” (Hyland, 2005b, p. 61).

In terms of pragmatics, Hyland (1998a) proposed two main hedging categories in academic writing, namely, (1) content-oriented hedges, consisting of accuracy-hedges (further sub-divided into attribute and reliability hedges) and writer-oriented hedges, and (2) reader-oriented hedges. Attribute hedges are used to express results less explicitly and approximate the results of the attributes of phenomena described (e.g., *generally* and *approximately*). Reliability hedges are used to suggest possibility and probability when presenting results in terms of a writer's confidence in expressing subjective uncertainty (e.g., *may*, *could*, and *likely*). Writer-oriented hedges are used to suggest knowledge by writers with a high-level claim and refer to wider bodies of knowledge on the topic while protecting writers from the consequence of the claim (e.g., *suggest*, *indicate*, and *be assumed*). Reader-oriented hedges are used to try to involve readers in the discussion and communicate with them while minimizing any threat to readers' face (e.g., *I think*, *we predict*, and *if we*).

Hedges are often seen in lexical and grammatical forms. Hyland (1996b, 1998a) reported that scientific hedging could be frequently observed in lexical phenomena. Hyland (1996b) found that 79% of cases involved lexical items, including lexical verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and modal verbs. Consistent with this, Hyland (1998a) found that 85% of hedging in his data were lexical items, with the remaining 15% of hedges being strategic hedges, including references to limiting conditions, theories and methods, and admissions of lacking knowledge. Meanwhile, other studies have shown examples in syntactic structures, including if-clauses, question forms, passive constructions, and impersonal phrases (Hinkel, 1997; Jalilifar, 2011; Loi & Lim, 2019). Some hedges can be categorized as "possibility hedges" (e.g., *perhaps* and *possibly*) or "downtoners" (e.g., *little*, *slightly*, and *fairly*), which have lowering effects and scale downward from assumed norms (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 445).

Previous Studies on the Use of Hedging in Academic Writing Textbooks

Some studies have analyzed the use of hedging in academic writing textbooks. Among

these, Hyland (1994) investigated a total of 14 English academic writing textbooks ranging from post-beginners to advanced level and found that most textbooks tended to underrepresent the importance of hedging devices, suggesting more of a consensus view rather than discussing individual research articles. In his results, 10 textbooks (71.4%) introduced modal verbs; eight (57.1%), lexical verbs; four (28.6%), adverbs; three (21.4%), adjectives; and two (14.3%), nouns; however, the textbooks did not necessarily explain the use of hedging (Hyland, 1994). For example, when lexical verbs such as *seem*, *suggest*, and *indicate* were introduced, they were explained as ways to convey a writer's ideas with neutrality, connotation, opinion, or uncertainty; however, their use in situations where writers are not prepared to guarantee a proposition and try to protect themselves from criticism was not explained.

Myers (1992) also investigated linguistic features used in sentences in textbooks, finding that claims in the result sections were accredited as facts without hedging. There appears to be no clear consensus on the use of hedging; resultantly, students are likely to remain uninformed of their purpose in indicating uncertainty or in politely offering suggestions.

As these studies were conducted nearly three decades ago, this study also serves as an important follow-up on how and whether introductions of hedging have changed in academic writing textbooks for EFL learners.

Methods

Materials

This study analyzed a total of 10 academic writing textbooks used in upper-intermediate and advanced levels at Japanese universities. Of these, two textbooks were published by Japanese publishers, while eight were published by either American or British publishers. The 10 textbooks were: (1) *Academic Writing Skills, Student's Book 2* (Chin et al.,

2012), (2) *Academic Writing Strategies: Focus on Global Issues for Sustainable Development Goals* (Nakatani, 2020), (3) *Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers* (Kluge & Taylor, 2007), (4) *Effective Academic Writing* (2nd ed.) (Liss & Davis, 2012), (5) *Final Draft 3* (Aquino-Cutcher et al., 2016), (6) *Longman Academic Writing Series 3: Paragraphs to Essays* (4th ed.) (Oshima & Hogue, 2017a), (7) *Longman Academic Writing Series 4: Essays* (5th ed.) (Oshima & Hogue, 2017b), (8) *3-point Academic Writing, Organization, Content, Language* (Miyama et al., 2019), (9) *Writing Essays: From Paragraph to Essay* (Zemach & Ghulldu, 2020), and (10) *Writing Research Papers: From Essay to Research Paper* (Zemach et al., 2020). As shown, these textbooks were published from 2007 to 2020.

Procedure

First Investigation: Introductions of the Use of Hedging in Academic Writing Textbooks

The first investigation aimed at determining the extent to which the use of hedging was introduced in the 10 selected textbooks. The analysis focused on whether the authors introduced the concept of hedging and discussed its purposes and importance. This included the ways in which the use of hedging was introduced using explanations and exercises, with comparisons among textbooks. Within these explanations in the textbooks, the purposes and functions of hedging were examined in terms of pragmatics.

Second Investigation: Analyzing the Use of Hedging in Sample Paragraphs and Essays

The second investigation examined the number of hedges used in some sample paragraphs and essays from each of the 10 textbooks, using Hyland's (1998a) definitions of hedging. The sample paragraphs and essays used in this study consisted of 34,863 words in total. The primary focus of analysis was on lexical hedges, as they have been reported to make up 85% of all hedges used in research articles (Hyland, 1998a). In addition, the analysis included *if*-clauses and *we* and *I* expressions that can be understood as reader-oriented hedges.

The results of the second investigation were then compared with those from a previous study conducted by Fujimura-Wilson (2020), which analyzed the use of hedging in journal articles. In this study, MAXQDA software was used to code and count the number of hedges.

The analyzed sample paragraphs and essays consisted of material from both hard and soft disciplines, with approximately 29% of the texts related to topics in hard disciplines (e.g., health and environment) and approximately 71% of the texts related to topics in soft disciplines (e.g., history, education, and languages). Generally, hard disciplines include the fields of biology, engineering, and physics, while soft disciplines include the fields of philosophy, marketing, applied linguistics, and sociology. Previous research has compared the use of English hedges between these two major discipline groups, finding that native English writers in soft disciplines tend to use more hedging than those in hard disciplines. This is because research in soft disciplines has less control over variables and is more influenced by contextual vagaries, and writers need to express themselves more cautiously by using hedges (Hyland, 1998b). In other words, since results are not always mathematically verifiable in soft disciplines, writers have to negotiate their claims with readers (Vázquez & Giner, 2008).

Results and Discussion

First Investigation

In the first investigation, four textbooks were found to have introduced the use of hedging, including one from a Japanese publisher (i.e., textbook 2) and three British publishers (i.e., textbooks 1, 5, and 10). While all four explained the softening function of hedging, only textbook 2 explicitly explained the function of protecting writers (see Table 1). In addition, the explanations of hedging varied among the textbooks, with some focusing on lexical forms. The number of exercises also notably varied.

Table 1*Textbook Introductions to Hedging and its Functions*

Textbook number	Hedging	Softening	Protection
1. <i>Academic Writing Skills</i>	✓	✓	×
2. <i>Academic Writing Strategies</i>	✓	✓	✓
3. <i>Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers</i>	×	×	×
4. <i>Effective Academic Writing</i>	×	×	×
5. <i>Final Draft 3</i>	✓	✓	×
6. <i>Longman Academic Writing Series 3</i>	×	×	×
7. <i>Longman Academic Writing Series 4</i>	×	×	×
8. <i>3-point Academic Writing</i>	×	×	×
9. <i>Writing Essays</i>	×	×	×
10. <i>Writing Research Papers</i>	✓	✓	×

Note. Hedging = the term was introduced; Softening = described a softening function; Protection = described a protecting function towards the author

For example, textbook 1 published by a British publisher used approximately half a page to introduce hedges. It was explained that hedging is used to avoid overgeneralization: “overgeneralization gives the impression that the writer is unaware of, or has not considered other possibilities. This makes the writer’s arguments appear weak and less convincing to the reader. Overgeneralization can be avoided by the use of hedging terms ...” (Chin et al., 2012, p. 83).

In contrast, textbook 2, which was published by a Japanese publisher, used a total of eight pages to introduce hedges and boosters¹; on a different page, this textbook introduced metadiscourse to describe a writer’s stance², including opinions and ideas, unexpected or negative results, interesting points, pointing out and generalization, and similarity and alternatives. Particularly, textbook 2 clearly explained the function of protection, stating that “in order to protect your argument, you need to use hedges which downtone your claims with uncertain expressions such as modals” (Nakatani, 2020, p. 37). This was the only investigated textbook that introduced the use of language regarding the writer’s intention in terms of pragmatics.

Textbook 5 introduced the use of hedging in a section titled “Grammar for Writing: Modals for Hedging,” which only provided examples of modal verbs (e.g., *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might*) in hedging (Aquino-Cutcher et al., 2016). This textbook explained that modal verbs are used to change the sentence tone, which can soften a writer’s claims and make them appear more credible (Aquino-Cutcher et al., 2016).

Finally, textbook 10 introduced the use of hedges in a chapter titled “Academic Language” which explained that “a hedge can refine the shape of your argument – make it more tentative and less strict, absolute, and forceful, thereby making it easier for the reader to accept and believe as well as making your statement more likely to be true” (Zemach et al., 2020, p. 82). It also pointed out that an author “may feel that a strong statement does not fully reflect the facts uncovered in the research, and in this case, the language can be adjusted by using hedges” (Zemach et al., 2020, p. 82).

The ways in which examples of hedges were introduced also differed among the textbooks. For example, textbooks 1 and 10 published by British publishers introduced lexical hedges. Textbook 1 introduced different lexical forms, including verbs (e.g., *seem*, *tend*, and *suggest*), modal verbs (e.g., *may*, *might*, *can*, and *could*), adjectives (e.g., *many*, *some*, and *few*), adverbs of frequency (e.g., *usually*, *often*, and *sometimes*), adverbs of certainty (e.g., *probably*, *possibly*, and *perhaps*), and nouns (e.g., *assumption*, *possibility*, and *probability*). Textbook 10 included a section titled “How to use hedges” in which lexical and strategic hedges are introduced alongside exercises that ask learners to create more tentative sentences by using hedges. For examples, adverbs (e.g., *a little*, *slightly*, and *possibly*), modal verbs (e.g., *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might*), quantifiers of modifiers including adjectives and nouns (e.g., *several*, *some*, and *the minority of*), qualifying phrases (e.g., *it seems that*, *many people believe that*, *there is a tendency*, *it is possible that*, and *it might be the case that*), and conditional sentences using if-clauses are introduced in this section. Textbook 5 only briefly

introduced modal verbs as hedges and provided little information on other lexical hedges. Modal verbs can be used to change the tone of statements to soften the writer's claims.

In contrast, textbook 2 provided limited details concerning lexical forms of hedging. Instead, two specific types of hedging were introduced, including “approximators” (*kinjichi* in Japanese), which are used for softening explicitness of phenomena, and “shield”, which are used for softening the degree of certainty. Nakatani (2016) explains that “approximators help reduce the clarity of a fact and a shield weakens the strength of certainty to protect writers” (p. 74). Examples of “approximators” include the word *approximately*, which implies “roughly to” and “about” (*Harper Collins Publishers*, 1992, p. 25) and also means “fairly accurate but not totally precise” (*Oxford University Press*, 2006, p. 64). The textbook offered the following sample sentence for “approximators”: “Approximately 10,000 people visit Indonesia to see wild orangutans” (Nakatani, 2020, p. 38). An example of a “shield” in the textbook included the modal verb *may*, which indicates an epistemic possibility and is related to the degrees of certainty about the truth of a proposition (Huschová, 2015), as follows: “Unless we protect them properly, we may lose many endangered species” (Nakatani, 2020, p. 38).

Textbooks 1, 2, 5, and 10 each introduced modal verbs as hedges. Textbook 2 used a page to introduce the use of hedging with the four modal verbs of *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might* in a grammar explanation titled “Focus on accuracy: Hedges.” This page offered sample sentences for each of these verbs. For example, learners can compare and distinguish the use of *can* and *could* between sentence 1: “We **can** conclude that convenience stores are important for our life.” and sentence 2: “We **could** conclude that convenience stores are important for our life.” In sentence 1, *can* is used to indicate a possibility that can be seen objectively based on facts and experiences (Nakatani, 2020, p. 53), thus softening the claim as a possibility while still suggesting that convenience stores are important for our life. On the other hand, sentence 2 uses *could* to indicate a theoretical possibility, thus suggesting some

exceptions to the writer's claim. This option is used when something is possible in theory but is less likely to actually occur (Nakatani, 2020, p. 53). Swan (1980, p. 127) states that *could* can be used to imply the possibility that something can happen or is free to happen, while Hyland (1998a) explains that *could* expresses tentative possibility (p. 109).

The number of exercises also varied among the textbooks. Textbook 1 had only one exercise, asking learners to circle the hedging expressions in a model essay. Similarly, Textbook 5 had only one exercise, in which learners choose and circle the correct modal verbs from one of two choices in each sentence. Textbook 2 had the most number of exercises of all the textbooks in this study. First, learners are required to define differences between sentences that do and do not have hedges. After identifying hedges and their functions, they are also required to write a solution paragraph using relevant phrases from the template on the exercise page such as *I think we should (not), this is because, in my opinion, in order to solve, and for example*. After writing the paragraph, learners need to edit and check the use of all implemented hedges in their paragraphs. Moreover, a grammar explanation page titled "Focus on accuracy: Hedges" offered a quiz that is designed for learners to define the meanings of the three sentences with and without *can* and *could* in order to confirm differences in the meanings of the three sentences. Finally, textbook 10 had several exercises in which learners are required to insert hedges into sentences that lack them in order to practice some lexical and strategic hedges. Learners are required to practice using adverbs, modal verbs, and quantifiers of modifiers and creating qualifying phrases and conditionals involving if-clauses to construct sentences using hedging. There is also a paragraph in which learners have to identify sentences in which hedges can be inserted to soften the meanings; following this exercise, learners are required to share their rewritten paragraphs with other learners. In another exercise, they have to identify the use of hedges in a model research paper in this textbook.

These four textbooks introduced forms of hedging and provided exercises to help

learners identify differences between sentences that do and do not include hedges. However, the other six textbooks in this study did not mention or discuss the use of hedging. The language introduced in these textbooks primarily related to strategies for writing essays and research papers, without focusing on intentional meanings of sentences. For example, lexical forms such as adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and modal verbs were introduced without discussing their potential for hedging. Concerning academic language, noun clauses using a relative clause, adverbial clauses showing contrast and concession, adverbs of frequency and quantifiers, and if-clauses were often introduced in these textbooks. Some textbooks advised learners to avoid “overgeneralizations” when making sentences using modifiers and modal verbs.

Second Investigation

Although some textbooks did not mention the use of hedges, hedges were used in sample paragraphs and model essays in all the textbooks. Selected sample paragraphs and model essays in the textbooks were further investigated in terms of the use of hedges. From the 10 textbooks analyzed, a total of 1,095 hedges were used in this study, more specifically, 31.4 hedges per 1,000 words. Compound hedges, in which multiple hedges were used in one sentence, were observed in approximately 48% of hedges in the results. For example, the following sample sentence was taken from textbook 1, using a modal verb indicating a possibility (*can*), an adverb indicating generalization (*generally*), and a quantifier of an adjective (*some*), to suggest some general cases:

- (1) *While home school students can interact with each other via the internet and even participate in occasional field trips, they generally spend their day alone with a parent, or in some cases, a small group.*

(Academic Writing Skills, Student's Book 2, 2012, p. 99)

While the textbooks introduced similar writing strategies, each used a different layout. The overall lengths differed, with the number of pages ranging from 86 pages (textbook 8) to 344 pages (textbook 7). The number of sample sentences, paragraphs, and essays also varied. The numbers of hedges ranged from 20.4 (textbook 3) to 57.5 (textbook 8) per 1,000 words (see Table 2). The standard deviation for the number of hedges in the sample paragraphs and essays was 10.97.

Table 2

Number of Hedges Used in Sample Paragraphs and Essays (Number per 1,000 Words)

Textbook number	Number of hedges
1. <i>Academic Writing Skills</i>	33.3
2. <i>Academic Writing Strategies</i>	25.9
3. <i>Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers</i>	20.4
4. <i>Effective Academic Writing</i>	27.1
5. <i>Final Draft 3</i>	39.4
6. <i>Longman Academic Writing Series 3</i>	26.1
7. <i>Longman Academic Writing Series 4</i>	36.9
8. <i>3-point Academic Writing</i>	57.5
9. <i>Writing Essays</i>	44.7
10. <i>Writing Research Papers</i>	29.8

Both lexical and grammatical hedges were used in the analyzed sample paragraphs and essays. The hedges used included lexical verbs (e.g., *seem* and *suggest*), modal verbs (e.g., *can*, *may*, *could*, and *would*), nouns (e.g., *suggestion* and *a number of*), adjectives (e.g., *likely* and *possible*), adverbs (e.g., *sometimes* and *approximately*), if-clauses, and *we* and *I* expressions that can be understood as reader-oriented hedges. Table 3 shows a comparison between the frequencies of hedges found in the textbooks analyzed in this study and frequencies found in research papers as reported in a study conducted by Fujimura-Wilson

(2020). As shown, the two studies found similar frequencies, with modal verbs being used most frequently, followed by adjectives, verbs, and *we* and *I* expressions (see Table 3).

Table 3

Frequency of Hedges Used in Sample Paragraphs and Essays and Research Papers (Number per 1,000 Words)

Hedges	In the textbooks	In research papers
Verbs	2.2	3.7
Modal verbs	12.7	7.2
Nouns	0.4	1.0
Adjectives	7.8	4.6
Adverbs	2.1	2.4
If-clauses	0.7	0.3
<i>We</i> and <i>I</i> expressions	5.6	3.1
Total	31.4	22.2

Note. Data from the research papers were extracted from a study conducted by Fujimura-Wilson (2020).

The frequencies of various hedges used in the textbooks were slightly higher than those in the research papers. For instance, 12.7 modal verbs per 1,000 words were used in the textbooks, while 7.2 modal verbs per 1,000 words were used in the research papers. Furthermore, 7.8 adjectives per 1,000 words were used in the textbooks, whereas 4.6 adjectives per 1,000 words were used in the research papers. Sample paragraphs and essays used in the textbooks differed from research papers. While the writing styles and topics in the textbooks are generic in order to appeal to all learners of English, the research papers feature various writing styles and pertain to different disciplines and topics. As mentioned earlier, the use of hedges also differs between academic disciplines, with writers in the soft disciplines generally using more hedges than those in the hard disciplines (Hyland, 1998b). In this study, 71% of the sample paragraphs and essays extracted from the textbooks in this analysis pertained to soft disciplines.

In the analyzed textbooks, modal verbs were most frequently introduced when explaining hedging, and used in sample paragraphs and essays. The data analysis showed that *can* was the most frequently used, followed by *will* and *may*. *Can* is used to suggest possibility, and *will* indicates prediction for logical outcomes (Hyland, 1998a). *May* indicates possibility (Hyland, 1998a; Swan, 1980), and *would* represents hypothetical epistemic use (Hyland, 1998a). In the sentences below, example 2 suggests a possibility of meaning where listeners stare at a speaker with unblinking eyes, while example 3 indicates a possible disagreement in a discussion on multilingualism, in which there is a theoretical possibility that learning more languages causes confusion for learners. Modal verbs are used to indicate a tentative meaning as a possibility in a writer's claim. As Japanese learners of English may only remember the meanings in Japanese for these modal verbs and remain unaware of a writer's intention, teachers need to explain how native English writers use them to soften their claims.

(2) *However, if listeners stare at a speaker with unblinking eyes, this can mean that they are bored, distracted, angry, or defensive.*

(Longman Academic Writing Series 3: Paragraphs to Essays [4th ed.], 2017, p. 199)

(3) *Some people may disagree with multilingualism. They would argue that learning more languages may cause confusion among learners.*

(Academic Writing Skills, Student's Book 2, 2012, p. 87)

Textbook 10 explained that the use of quantifiers strengthens arguments by allowing writers to admit that this is not always the case (Zemach et al., 2020). Approximators and quantifiers, including *few*, *little*, *some*, *many*, *several*, *a number of*, and *the minority of*, were occasionally used. These can be defined as attribute hedges within accuracy-oriented hedges,

and represent approximately 26% of all the hedges examined in this study. Quantifiers such as *some* and *several* express the number or amount of the noun they respectively precede. In example 4 below, the sentence does not reveal the actual number of preceding years or number of investigated nations when discussing a large study.

(4) *In a large study conducted some years ago in several nations, 40 percent of participants in the United States rated themselves as shy.*

(Longman Academic Writing Series 4: Essays [5th ed.], 2017, p. 118)

This use shows that modifiers can be variously employed to indicate small or large numbers without direct specification. While *several* indicates “more than two but not many” (*Oxford University Press*, 2006, p. 1318), *some* means “unspecified amount, a considerable number” (*Oxford University Press*, 2006, p. 1374).

Regarding the use of quantifiers, textbook 1 stated that “it is common to use quantifiers when the exact number is unimportant or unknown” (Chin et al., 2012, p. 125). In the biomedical context, for example, Dubois (1987) explains that numbers are often presented with rounding, using hedges such as *approximately*, *about*, and *some*, suggesting the importance of using imprecise numerical expressions when reporting findings. In the previously discussed study on hedging in research papers, it was found that writers in the hard disciplines tended to use adjectival quantifiers such as *some* and *several* more frequently than those in the soft disciplines (Fujimura-Wilson, 2020). When examining the psychological effect of quantifiers, O’Brien (1989) found that the practice of using expressions of probability may lead to different understandings in a medical context, suggesting that patients may have differing interpretations when presented with quantifiers instead of explicit numbers. In addition, textbook 10 explained that quantifiers increase the credibility of an argument if writers admit that this is not always the case (Zemach et al., 2020).

In academic writing, Japanese researchers often acknowledge that they should not use subject personal pronouns. In this regard, textbook 1 stated that “using first- and second-person pronouns such as *I, you, we* make the tone of writing subjective and informal, and so should be avoided in academic writing” (Chin et al., 2012, p. 24). However, in terms of hedging, personal pronouns sometimes help make sentences appear more like personal evaluations. According to Koutsantoni (2006), they can be used to express personal opinions rather than present general statements. When presenting a claim, personal pronouns can be used as hedges to soften the degree of certainty and explicitness. For example, *in my opinion* can be used as a hedge, as shown in example 5 below:

(5) *Therefore, in my opinion, the policy of allowing single-sex classes in public schools should be continued and encouraged.*

(Longman Academic Writing Series 4: Essays [5th ed.], 2017, p. 74)

By defining the claim as a personal opinion, writers reduce the degree of certainty and protect themselves. In some analyzed textbooks, statements using the first pronoun *I* were often observed in the sample essays, as writers expressed what they thought and used their experiences as examples. The use of first pronouns in textbooks differed from their use in the actual research papers, although authors also tend to use *I*-statements in research papers to explain narrative stories and/or describe a study process.

Moreover, the personal pronoun *we* is sometimes used as a hedge in order to involve readers in discussions and communicate with them through appeals. In sentences that describe personal opinions with hedging, readers are allowed to choose an individual interpretation and an alternative view rather than a definitive statement (Hyland, 1996a). According to Hyland (1998a, p. 182), personal attribution is used to express reader-oriented hedges when introducing claims, and when epistemic verbs and verbs of judgement and deduction, such as

propose, *believe*, *calculate*, and *infer*, are typically used. In example 6 below, the writers indicate their intention by using the epistemic lexical verb *propose* and soften their claim by using a reader-oriented hedge. Hyland (1998a) states that the verbs *propose* and *believe* are used to indicate a judgement. In the study of hedges in research papers, reader-oriented hedges, including *we* and *I* expressions, were more frequently used by writers in soft disciplines than those in hard disciplines (Fujimura-Wilson, 2020).

(6) *In previous work [7] we have proposed the biomimetic development of digging robots based on the gopher tortoise that can be used to maintain the necessary number of burrows across the habitat until conservation efforts to restore tortoise populations take effect.*

(3-point Academic Writing, Organization, Content, Language, 2019, p. 48)

These lexical hedges are generally studied at the early stages of English learning. However, learners of English may lack an understanding of their pragmatic meanings. Although learners have to first learn to use these lexical items, instruction on the use of hedging in English writing at an early stage will help increase their variety and allow for alternation in their choices of lexical hedges (Hinkel, 2020). When teaching lexical words in English grammar, comparisons between sentences with and without lexical hedges can help learners better understand differences in their meanings and a writer's intentions.

Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which hedging is taught in the EFL context by analyzing textbooks of academic writing used in upper-intermediate and advanced English writing classes at Japanese universities, through two investigations. The first focused on the extent to which the selected textbooks introduced and discussed the use of hedging and

provided exercises for learners of English. The second focused on the extent to which hedging was actually used in sample paragraphs and essays as well as the number of hedging features used and the characteristics of their use. This study is intended to provide insights into how learners are taught about the characteristics of hedges used in academic writing.

The results showed that the manner in which the textbooks introduced the use of hedging varied, with only four textbooks introducing the concept. Some textbooks briefly discussed the use of hedging through simple explanations. Of the four that directly introduced the use of hedging, various explanations and a different number of exercises were provided, most of which were aimed at helping learners define hedges, distinguish between the meanings of sentences with and without hedges, identify hedges in paragraphs, and write sentences and paragraphs using hedges. Six textbooks fail to mention and explain hedging. The results suggest that teachers need to provide instruction on hedging by offering more detailed explanations and examples of their use and purposes, and discuss its importance in language use when seeking to understand a writer's intention in terms of pragmatics. Unless teachers introduce the use of hedging formally in the classroom, learners of English may find it difficult to acknowledge its usage and functions.

Nevertheless, the textbooks use hedges in sample paragraphs and model essays. The analysis of frequency in this study showed that certain lexical hedges were used, with modal verbs being used most frequently, followed by adjectives, including modifiers of quantifiers, and *we* and *I* expressions as reader-oriented hedges. In research papers, these lexical hedges are sometimes used to soften a writer's claims; that is, to make them more tentative. Teachers could use the examples provided in the textbooks to introduce the use of such English hedges in an academic writing classroom. As learners tend to study lexical items in early stages of their English studies, they could become more aware of the use of hedging and continuously increase their range of hedging.

The use of hedges is related to a writer's intentional meanings in sentences and proposition in pragmatics. However, this factor may not be of predominant concern in an academic writing classroom, since learners have to first acquire skills in writing strategies and academic language when writing essays and research papers. Nevertheless, regarding written discourse, writers still need to be capable of nuancing their stances and to negotiate claims with readers through the use of appropriate language. To effectively persuade and engage readers, writers have to carefully choose the most appropriate language tone, which can help increase the degree of influence they wish to exert in a given context. As such, the use of hedging should be taught in an advanced level in English classes. According to Okamura (2011), native English researchers are aware of hedging as a politeness strategy in research articles, which is used to help protect the writers, cited authors, and readers' face within the discourse community. In line with this, non-native English researchers also need to be aware of the significance of hedging.

Based on these findings, some suggestions are offered for introducing the use of hedging in academic writing classes. First, the introduction of several hedging examples, including lexical forms and strategic hedges, as well as sample sentences with and without hedges, is likely to help learners understand and differentiate the meanings of sentences and the purposes of their use, particularly when they can compare and define meanings between sentences. Second, teachers could focus on developing improved awareness of the appropriate places to use hedging. Hedges are often used in the results and discussion sections of research articles, as they help soften a writer's claims and therefore provide protection from criticism. Hyland (1995) found that over 80% of hedges were used to mitigate and soften claims and opinions in these sections. Third, learners need to become aware of the differences in the use of hedging between the hard and soft disciplines. Characteristics of specific hedging use, including the frequency and types involved, could be introduced to ensure that learners understand the appropriate applications in their own disciplines. Previous studies have shown

that native English writers in the soft disciplines tend to use more hedging than those in the hard disciplines, as soft disciplines often require writers to negotiate their claims more with readers compared to hard disciplines (Fujimura-Wilson, 2020; Hyland, 1998b; Vázquez & Giner, 2008).

This study had some limitations. First, the analysis solely focused on the introduction and the use of hedging in upper-intermediate and advanced textbooks used in academic writing classes at Japanese universities. Further research is required to investigate the use of hedging by analyzing textbooks at different levels of English language proficiency as well as sample paragraphs and essays across disciplines. Second, this study did not examine how students could be taught about hedging in relation to their level of proficiency. More research should be conducted to investigate learner awareness of hedging and focus areas for teachers, thereby facilitating the development of more detailed methodological approaches. Finally, studies are required to investigate differences in the use of hedges between the English and Japanese languages, especially to help clarify the issue for Japanese learners of English. Overall, non-native English writers will be more likely to use hedging appropriately if teachers pay more attention to the use of hedging and examples are introduced more frequently in the classroom.

Acknowledgements

This study was rewritten based on an earlier paper published by Fujimura-Wilson (2021) in *The JACET International Convention Proceedings: The JACET 60th Commemorative International Convention (Online, 2021)*. Additional data were analyzed in this article. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the three anonymous referees who provided encouraging comments and also the JACET Selected Papers Committee for accepting to publish this paper.

This work is supported by JSPS KAKENHI grant number JP19K00761.

Notes

1. Boosters such as *it is clear that*, *of course*, and *indeed* are used to highlight important points and attract readers (Nakatani, 2020).
2. Metadiscourse is used to describe a writer's stance. For example, a writer's opinions and ideas can be described using *I think*, *I believe*, *I would like to say*, and *in my opinion*, while unexpected or negative results can be described using *unfortunately*, interesting points can be described using *interestingly* and *remarkably*, pointing out can be described using *in particular*, generalization can be described using *in general*, and similarities and alternatives can be described using *similarly* and *alternatively* (Nakatani, 2020, p. 32).

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Use of L1 in L2 Collaborative Writing: Does It Make Any Difference to the Product or Process?

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Abstract

A growing body of research has shown that students' L1 performs various functions that facilitate L2 collaborative writing, and these findings lead to an assumption that adequate employment of L1 helps students produce better-quality texts. This study aims to test this assumption and find any relationship between L1 use and text quality. It also investigates the impact of L1 use on the process of collaborative writing. University EFL students in Japan wrote a narrative text in pairs. Their interactions were audio-recorded and transcribed, and turns containing any utterance in L1 (Japanese) were identified. Their compositions were assessed for fluency, accuracy, complexity, content, and organization. The quantitative analysis found no significant relationships between the proportion of L1 turns and the ratings of compositions. However, qualitative examinations of interactions revealed notable differences in the writing process between frequent users and infrequent users of L1. The former tended to suspend formulating to revise their plans or engage in long language-related episodes. The latter tended to complete the formulating stage quickly and spend ample time on review. Pedagogical implications are discussed regarding the benefits and drawbacks of allowing EFL students to use their shared L1 for L2 collaborative writing.

Keywords: L2 writing, collaborative writing, L1 use, language-related episodes

Collaborative writing, or “the co-authoring of a text by two or more writers” (Storch, 2013, p. 2), is an attractive option for the second language (L2) teachers who seek to incorporate focus on form into meaning-focused communicative tasks. Based on the interactional approach to L2 acquisition, researchers argue that collaborative writing provides students with opportunities to discuss or negotiate L2 form. Through the discussion or negotiation, students can attend to the language they produce and receive corrective feedback from their peers, which will help them notice the gap between the target language and their interlanguage (Adams, 2003; Storch, 2013; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). For sociocultural theorists, collaborative writing promotes L2 development through interactive problem-solving. When students tackle problems in vocabulary or grammar together, their existing L2 knowledge is shared, or new knowledge is co-constructed. The knowledge thus gained is internalized into their system (Anton & Dicamilla, 1999; Donato, 1994; Swain, 2010).

In typical EFL contexts, students have a common first language (L1) that mediates their communication outside the classroom. For EFL teachers, it is ordinary to find students switch to their L1 while working on tasks, and dealing with this situation tactfully poses a pedagogical challenge. As communicative approaches to L2 teaching gained popularity, researchers and practitioners came to endorse the exclusive use of L2 in classrooms as the best way to maximize the amount of input and output. In recent years, however, some researchers have adopted a more favorable position on the use of L1 for L2 tasks. They view L1 as a device for directing students’ attention to form (Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000) as well as a medium for collaborative problem-solving and scaffolding (Alegria de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Anton & Dicamilla, 1999; Storch, 2013). Thus, from the interactionist or sociocultural perspective, EFL students’ common L1 is a valuable resource that helps them make the best use of the opportunities that collaborative writing offers them.

Literature Review

An increasing body of research has evidenced a variety of functions that L1 performs in L2 collaborative writing, including clarifying task requirements, generating ideas, resolving linguistic problems, and managing collaboration (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015; Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). Many of these studies investigated the relative importance of these functions by measuring the frequency with which they were performed in L1, and the result often varied across tasks. For example, in Storch and Aldosari's (2010) study, L1 was used most frequently for task management in a jigsaw task but for generating ideas and talking about vocabulary in a composition task. In Azkarai and García Mayo's (2015) study, the most common function was phatics (i.e., use of expressions for sociability, such as "okay" or "right") for both dictogloss and text editing tasks, but the second most common function was off-task talk for the dictogloss task while grammar talk for the text editing task.

These findings revealing the versatility of L1 in collaborative writing may lead to an assumption that adequate amounts of L1 use during task work enable students to produce high-quality L2 texts. However, few published studies have tested this assumption. One of them is Swain and Lapkin's (2000) study with French immersion students in Canada. The participants completed two pair writing tasks, jigsaw and dictogloss, based on the same story. The two tasks did not differ significantly in the amount of L1 use: L1 (English) was used in 29% of turns in the jigsaw task and 21% of turns in the dictogloss task. For both tasks, the percentage of L1 turns was larger for pairs whose texts were rated lower and smaller for pairs whose texts were rated higher, and these differences appeared more strongly for the jigsaw task. When the percentage of L1 turns was correlated with the text ratings for content and language, a significant negative correlation was found for the jigsaw task. The results suggested that students who write less successfully rely more heavily on L1, but the amount of L1 they need to employ varies across task types.

The same topic has been researched in L2 individual writing. Some studies focused on L1 use at the pre-writing stage, typically engaging students in a brainstorming or note-making activity in L1 or L2 and comparing the texts they subsequently composed. These studies have produced mixed results: Some found an advantage for L1 users in limited areas of text quality (Lally, 2000) while others found no significant differences (Akyel, 1994). One individual writing study investigated the impact of L1 use at the composing stage. Woodall (2002) explored how students' language switching from L2 to L1 while composing relates to the quality of the text they produce. The study found a significant correlation between the duration of L1 use and text quality, but the direction of the relationship varied depending on students' L1. The relationship was positive for students whose L1 was cognate with the L2 but negative for students whose L1 was not cognate with the L2.

To summarize, the bulk of research investigating the roles of L1 in L2 collaborative writing has been expanding, and the studies have identified the most common functions of L1 in various types of tasks. On the other hand, the amount of literature attempting to disentangle the relationship between L1 use and the quality of the written product is limited. Some studies on individual writing shed some light on this topic, but they derived data from pre-writing activities or think-aloud protocols, which likely narrowed the range of L1 functions to be analyzed. Another issue that has been out of the scope of previous studies is the relationship between L1 use and the process of collaborative writing. If L1 performs essential functions for collaborative writing, such as generating ideas and discussing form, how much L1 students employ may affect how often and how long they engage in these activities at which points in the writing process.

With the aim of addressing these gaps in the literature, the present study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between the amount of L1 use during L2 collaborative writing and the quality of the text produced?

2. How does the writing process of the students who use L1 frequently differ from the writing process of the students who use L1 infrequently?

Method

Data Collection

The participants were fifty first-year students in two EFL classes at a competitive private university in Tokyo. They all spoke Japanese as their first language. The students belonged to the same department but majored in various subjects, including literature, education, and math. When the data were collected, they were enrolled in an EFL course required for all students in the department. They had been assigned to the two high-intermediate classes based on their placement test results, which were equivalent to TOEIC 565 to 690. The two-semester EFL course aimed to develop oral and written communication skills, and the classes met once a week for 90 minutes. The lessons were taught according to a task-based syllabus, and by the time the data were collected, students had completed different types of oral tasks in pairs or small groups. The teacher was a native speaker of Japanese with near-native fluency in English. She generally used English for classroom instructions but switched to Japanese temporarily when she judged it necessary. She instructed students to use English exclusively for oral tasks but allowed them to use Japanese for other activities, including vocabulary and grammar exercises.

The data were collected in the seventh week of the first semester, during the regular lessons of the two classes, using a picture story jigsaw task. This type of task can engage students in active interaction and meaning negotiation (Foster, 1998; Nakahama et al., 2001; Pica et al., 1993) and be easily modified into a writing task. For these reasons, it has been used in many collaborative writing studies (e.g., Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2000, 2001). At the beginning of the class, the teacher explained the purpose and procedure of the data collection and asked students to sign a consent form. After that, she paired students

randomly and gave each pair a set of two picture cards. Each card contained four pictures depicting different scenes of the same story (Appendix A). Students then spent 10 minutes putting the pictures in the correct order by orally describing them to each other. For this task, the two classes were both instructed to use English exclusively. When 10 minutes had passed, the teacher told students to stop and show their picture cards to their partners. Pairs then spent 15 minutes writing down the story they had worked out. For this posttask, one class (12 pairs) was instructed to use English exclusively, but the other (13 pairs) was allowed to use Japanese as needed. Each pair's interaction during the posttask was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed according to the Jeffersonian system (Appendix B). Each pair's handwritten composition was collected and converted to a Microsoft Word document. No changes were made to the language use, spelling, or punctuation in the original text. The number of words in each composition was counted, and the text was segmented into T-units based on Hunt's (1966) definition: "exactly one main clause plus whatever subordinate clauses happen to be attached to or embedded within it" (p. 737).

Data Analysis

Amount of L1 Use

To measure the amount of L1 used in the pair interactions, all utterances in Japanese were identified in the transcripts, and turns containing any Japanese utterance were coded as *L1 turns*. This coding system did not account for the length of turns or the amount of Japanese contained in individual turns. Thus, L1 turns included short turns entirely in Japanese, long turns entirely in English except for a single Japanese word, and long turns exclusively in Japanese. Loan words originating from English (e.g., "OK", "nice") were not counted as Japanese utterances because it was difficult to judge whether students used them as English words or Japanese words. When all L1 turns had been identified, the proportion of L1 turns to total turns was calculated for each pair.

Analysis of the Compositions

The compositions produced by the 25 pairs were assessed for fluency, accuracy, syntactic complexity, and lexical complexity. Fluency was measured by the number of words written. Accuracy was evaluated by two measurements: the proportion of error-free T-units to total T-units and the number of errors per word. L2 researchers consider the former a suitable measure for intermediate and advanced learners who can handle subordination (Norris & Ortega, 2009). One drawback of this measurement is that it does not account for the differences in the number of errors in the same T-unit. The second measure, the number of errors per word, was adopted to make up for this shortcoming because it can deal with errors that appear unevenly in the same text (Polio, 1997). Errors in lexis, morphology, syntax, and discourse were defined separately. To test reliability, the researcher and a colleague independently applied the definitions to all compositions and achieved an agreement rate of 97%. Syntactic complexity was assessed by three measures that tapped into different dimensions of the construct, following Norris and Ortega's (2009) suggestion. Mean length of T-unit was used to measure overall complexity, mean number of clauses per T-unit was used to measure complexity by subordination, and mean length of clause was employed to measure complexity at the subclausal level. Lexical complexity was measured by type-token ratio.

The compositions were also evaluated qualitatively in terms of task fulfillment, idea development, and cohesion. The three areas were selected based on the objectives of the lesson in which the task was implemented. For each aspect, a four-point analytical scale was developed (Appendix C). The researcher's two colleagues, both experienced in teaching college EFL writing in Japan, independently scored the compositions using the rubrics. To assess inter-rater reliability, the correlation between the two raters' scores was measured by Kendall's rank-order correlation coefficient, with the alpha level set at .05. A significant positive relationship was found for all three scales: task fulfillment ($\tau = .59, p = .003$), idea development ($\tau = .45, p = .026$) and cohesion ($\tau = .52, p = .009$). The two raters' scores were

averaged, and the means were used in subsequent analyses.

Analysis of the Writing Process

Zimmermann's (2000) model of L2 writing was adopted as a framework for examining students' writing process. Zimmermann developed this model based on individual and collaborative L2 writing data, making it applicable to the present study. The model consists of three major processes: planning, formulating, and reviewing. *Planning* may occur at the global level dealing with the whole text or at the local level involving individual sentences. *Formulating*, which forms the central component of this model, consists of three subprocesses: formulating, writing, and repairing. The subprocess *formulating* refers to the act of orally translating one's idea into words and is further divided into minor subprocesses such as making a tentative formulation and evaluating, accepting, rejecting, or modifying a tentative formulation. The subprocess *writing* refers to the mechanical act of inscribing, and *repairing* refers to reading and reformulating what has been written. The final major process, *reviewing*, involves reading and evaluating the complete text. Zimmermann acknowledges that these processes and subprocesses are "overlapping and recursive" (p. 84). Writers typically engage in the three main processes—planning, formulating, and reviewing—in this order. However, they may regress to planning while formulating or regress to formulating while reviewing. The central formulating process is not one straight line: It consists of recurrent cycles of local planning and the three subprocesses (i.e., formulating, writing, and repairing). Writers repeat this cycle numerous times as they add new sentences to their text until they complete it and move on to the final reviewing stage.

As the first step of the analysis, the three main processes in Zimmermann's model (planning, formulating, and reviewing) were identified in the transcripts. The task cycle in the present study had been designed so that students would complete global-level planning during the jigsaw task and concentrate on formulating and reviewing during the posttask. Thus, students were supposed to have already figured out the story's general plot and main

characters when the posttask began. However, the data showed that some pairs returned to global planning while formulating, to confirm or revise their original plans. To address these instances, the analysis covered all three major processes, including planning. On the other hand, the subprocesses under formulating (formulating, writing, and repairing) were not identified in the transcripts. In the present study, these subprocesses often occurred simultaneously as one student vocalized a tentative form while the other wrote it down, making it difficult to distinguish them in the transcripts. In addition, even when they occurred separately, the writing subprocess may not appear in the transcript because students often scribed silently. When the three main processes had been identified in the transcripts, the audio recordings were checked to verify when they started in the 15-minute interaction and how long they lasted. (See Appendix D for the definitions and examples of the three major processes.)

The next step consisted of coding the transcripts for *episodes*, in which a pair discussed a topic that was not directly related to the process or subprocess they were engaged in. Zimmermann's model includes a subprocess called *L2 problem-solving*, which is unique to L2 writing. It has no fixed place in the model, but it typically occurred during the formulating process in Zimmermann's data. Because Zimmermann did not offer any specific definitions of L2 problem-solving, the notion of language-related episodes (LREs) was employed to operationalize the term. Based on Swain and Lapkin (1998) and Williams (1999), *LREs* were defined as interactional sequences in which students question or correct their use of an L2 item or discuss an L2 item devoid of any previous use of that item. *L2 items* consisted of particular forms or issues in L2 lexis, morphology, syntax, or discourse. These definitions were applied to the transcripts to identify LREs. The researcher and a colleague independently coded 11% of the interactional data to check the reliability of the coding, and they agreed on 72% of the cases. The researcher resolved the disagreements through discussion with the colleague and adjusted the definitions accordingly.

In addition to LREs, task management and off-task talk episodes were identified in the transcripts. These episodes were not in the scope of Zimmermann's study, but they were included in many previous studies on L2 collaborative writing (e.g., McDonough et al., 2016; Storch, 2005). Following these previous studies, *task management* episodes were defined as sequences in which students read task instructions, clarify task requirements, discuss work procedures, or monitor time. *Off-task* episodes were defined as sequences in which students discuss a topic unrelated to the task. After the three types of episodes were identified in the transcripts, their timings and durations were determined in the audio data. (See Appendix D for the definitions and examples of the three types of episodes.)

Results

The proportion of L1 turns varied widely across pairs, from .01 to .78. The mean for the 25 pairs was .28 ($SD = 0.24$). Pairs that were allowed to use Japanese tended to use it more frequently than pairs that were instructed to use English exclusively: The mean proportion of L1 turns was .43 ($SD = 0.23$) for the former ($n = 13$) but .13 ($SD = 0.14$) for the latter ($n = 12$). To investigate the first research question, the proportion of L1 turns was correlated with the measurements for fluency, accuracy, and complexity and the ratings for task fulfillment, idea development, and cohesion. Because preliminary testing revealed that the assumption of normal distribution was breached in some data, a series of non-parametric bivariate tests (Kendall's tau) were carried out. The alpha level was set at .05. As shown in Table 1, these tests did not find any significant relationships between the proportion of L1 turns and text quality.

Table 1*Correlations Between the Proportion of L1 Turns and Text Quality Measures*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	τ	<i>p</i>
Proportion of L1 turns	0.28	0.24		
Number of words	82.04	11.44	-.07	.607
Errors per word	0.10	0.06	.15	.304
Proportion of error-free T-units	0.45	0.23	-.15	.314
Length of clause	6.51	0.70	-.11	.441
Length of T-unit	8.27	0.94	-.10	.498
Clauses per T-unit	1.28	0.13	-.03	.833
Type-token ratio	0.58	0.05	.05	.726
Task fulfillment	3.72	0.56	-.07	.668
Idea development	3.68	0.38	-.02	.917
Cohesion	3.66	0.53	.00	.979

Note. *N* = 25

The second research question explored differences in the writing process between pairs that used L1 frequently and pairs that used L1 infrequently. Focusing on selected pairs and qualitatively analyzing their interactions was a practical approach to this investigation. Thus, the interactions of the three pairs that used Japanese most frequently (High L1 pairs) were compared with those of the three pairs that used Japanese least frequently (Low L1 pairs). The High L1 pairs (High 1, High 2, and High 3) all belonged to the class that was allowed to use Japanese, and the proportions of L1 turns were .64, .70, and .78, respectively. The Low L1 pairs (Low 1, Low 2, and Low 3) all belonged to the class that was instructed to speak English exclusively, and the proportions of L1 turns were .01, .01, and .03, respectively.

Table 2 displays the amount of time (in seconds) each pair spent on planning, formulating, reviewing, and the three types of episodes. As it shows, all pairs spent the biggest chunk of time formulating, which constitutes the core of Zimmermann's model. The High L1 pairs allocated 47 to 66% of their time to this process. Although the Low L1 pairs allocated slightly less, they still spent 34 to 51% of their time formulating. The two groups were distinct in the other two processes: planning and reviewing. The High L1 pairs spent 12 to 19% of their time planning while the Low L1 pairs spent less than 10%. The Low L1 pairs spent 15 to 20% of their time (over 2 minutes) reviewing the texts they had composed while

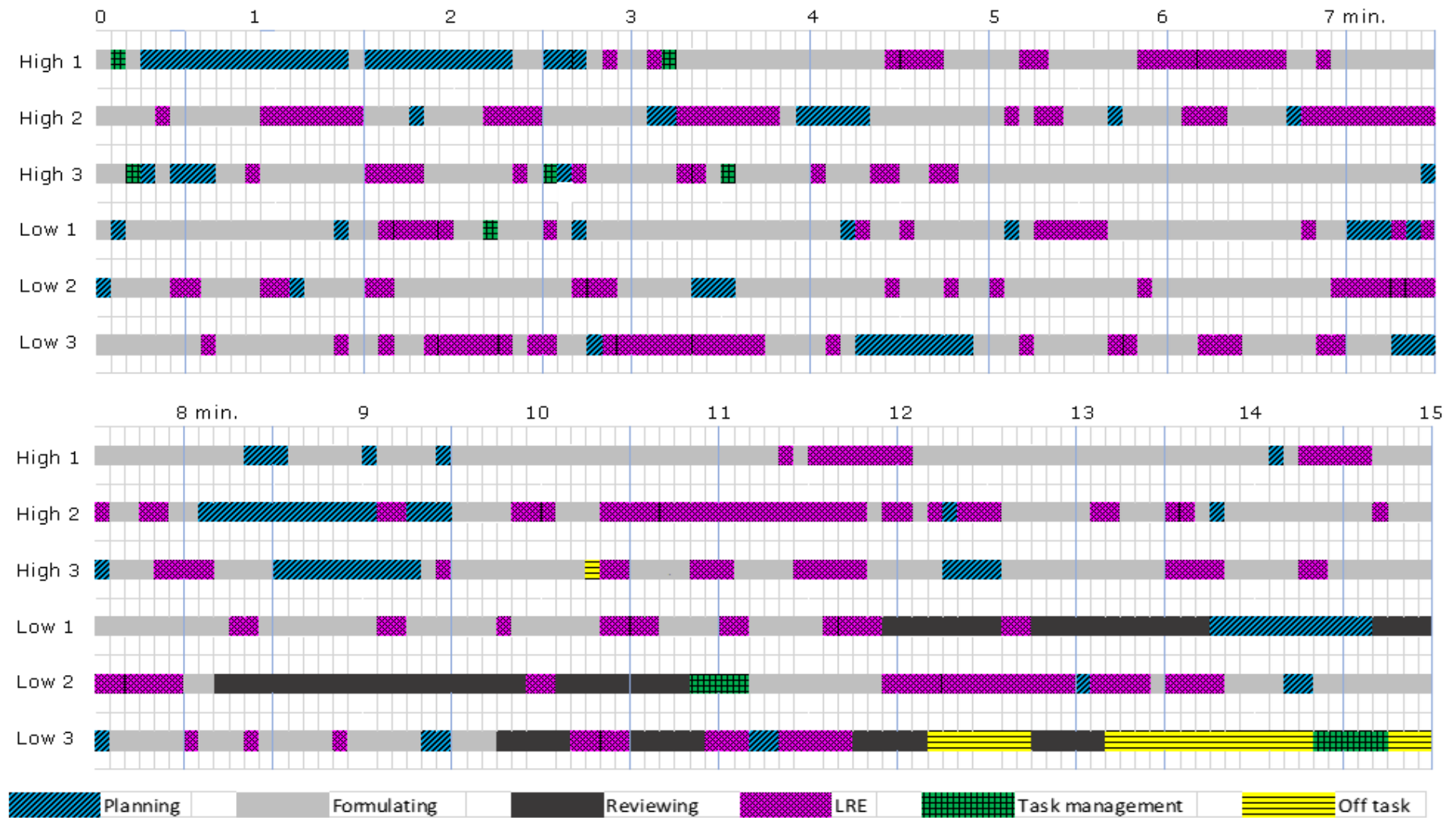
the High L1 pairs spent no time. For the three types of episodes, no clear pattern was detected: The time spent varied within the High L1 and Low L1 groups, but not between them.

Table 2
Amounts of Time Spent on Processes and Episodes

		Processes			Episodes		
		Planning	Formulating	Reviewing	LREs	Task management	Off-task
High L1	1	168 (18.7%)	571 (63.4%)	0	153 (17.0%)	8 (0.9%)	0
	2	131 (14.6%)	419 (46.6%)	0	350 (38.9%)	0	0
	3	111 (12.3%)	597 (66.3%)	0	173 (19.2%)	13 (1.4%)	6 (0.7%)
Low L1	1	87 (9.7%)	455 (50.6%)	180 (20.0%)	174 (19.3%)	4 (0.4%)	0
	2	36 (4.0%)	435 (48.3%)	161 (17.9%)	249 (27.7%)	19 (2.1%)	0
	3	86 (9.6%)	309 (34.3%)	136 (15.1%)	221 (24.6%)	24 (2.7%)	124 (13.8%)

Note. The amount of time was measured in seconds. The percentages represent the proportions to the total time on task, 15 minutes (900 seconds).

Based on the results, a timeline was created for each pair in order to map the three main processes (planning, formulating, and reviewing) and the three types of episodes (LREs, time management, and off-task) in the 15-minute collaborative writing (Figure 1). Not merely did the timelines highlight the differences between the High L1 and Low L1 pairs reported above, they disclosed other interesting findings related to the differences. As for planning, the timeline for High 1 showed that these students allocated 2.5 minutes at the beginning of the task to global-level planning. As for reviewing, Low 2 and Low 3 finished formulating and moved on to review earlier than the others, at the 8-minute mark and the 10-minute mark, respectively. After the review, these pairs had spare time: Low 2 used it for formulating and LREs, but Low 3 used it for off-task talk. Regarding LREs, the timelines made it clear that High L1 pairs' LREs tended to be more continuous than Low L1 pairs' LREs.

Figure 1*Timelines for the High L1 and Low L1 Pairs*

Discussion

The analysis for the first research question found no significant correlations between the proportion of L1 turns in a pair's interaction and the ratings of their joint composition. This result indicates that the amount of L1 students employ in the process of collaborative writing has little impact on their product. This result is not surprising given the mixed findings of previous studies on L2 collaborative writing (Swain & Lapkin, 2000) and L2 individual writing (Akyel, 1994; Lally, 2000; Woodall, 2002). As in these studies, the result suggests that the relationship between L1 use and text quality interacts with other variables, including students' proficiency and task type. Further investigation involving these variables is needed to disentangle the complex relationships.

The findings for the second research question were twofold. For one, the analysis showed that the pairs that used L1 most frequently and the pairs that used L1 least frequently both spent the largest part of their time formulating. As shown in Excerpt 1, formulating in the data typically proceeded as one student orally generated a part of a sentence while the other repeated it or repaired it.

Excerpt 1

Low 1

Formulating

Y: he: =

J: = remembered,

Y: -bered (1.0) he: th

J: throwing away

Y: throw away =

J: = the ticket

Y: the ticket lottery ticket in garbage (.) can

(4.0)

J: (?)

Y: a: (10.0) he:

(7.0)

J: ticket

Y: the ticket i::n garbage can.

J: garbage garbage can. throw away (.) in?

Y: okay? ((chuckle)) throw away ticket lottery ticket

Repairing sometimes developed into an LRE, as in Excerpts 2 and 3.

Excerpt 2

Low 3

Formulating

S: Diego =

Y: = Diego,

S: remember

Y: remembered that

S: that (.) he:: he:: throw (.) [the]

Y: [the:]

S: lottery =

Y: = the lottery ticket. =

S: = the lottery ticket.

(3.0)

Y: e Die- Diego, (1.0) Di::ego, (.) remembered, (1.0) -bered, that, (2.0) ((writing)) he,

S: thro:w

Y: throw

LRE (4 seconds)

S: threw throw throw

Y: threw threw,

S: threw =

Y: = the lottery ticket.

S: yes.

Excerpt 3

High 2

Formulating

K: = m he he he went to he went to the (2.0) went to: the
(1.0) ((K writes))

M: garbage dump

K: garbage (2.0) dump to (2.0) to look for [the ticket]

M: [un] to look for

(5.0)

LRE (17 seconds)

K: ticket *ni shita houga iinokana* {should we say “ticket”?}M: it *toka demo iinjane* {“it” will work}

K: *for* (1.0) it?

M: *ja ja* [ticket *demo iika*] {then “ticket” will also work}K: [it *docchi demo iiyo*] *mou ikkai* {whichever is okay. (“ticket”) one more time}

These excerpts show that both High and Low L1 pairs interacted almost entirely in English while formulating. The High L1 pair in Excerpt 3 switched to Japanese only after the LRE was initiated. These findings suggest that permitting L1 use for L2 collaborative writing does not necessarily lead to overuse. Particularly, when the task is implemented as part of a task cycle that primarily focuses on communicating in L2, students likely mediate their

communication in L2 while formulating and switch to L1 only when the need arises. This result is in line with the aforementioned studies on L1 use in collaborative writing, which consistently showed that students use L1 sparingly even when given access to it (Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015; Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). The result also indicates that the process of formulating does not require much L1. Previous studies on the roles of L1 found the language to be most functional for discussing content, negotiating language, managing the task, and building rapport (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015; Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). The present study suggests that students intuitively know what they can do and cannot do in L2 and, when permitted, switch between the two languages flexibly according to their needs.

More importantly, the analysis revealed that the High L1 pairs' and Low L1 pairs' writing processes diverged when they engaged in activities other than formulating. The timelines showed that both High L1 and Low L1 pairs frequently suspended formulating to engage in planning or LREs. However, High L1 pairs spent more time on individual instances, and these long detours likely slowed down their formulating process and prevented them from saving time for review. In fact, one High L1 pair (High 3) did not finish writing their story in time, and the other two did so just barely.

Planning by High L1 pairs sometimes focused on global issues that related to the entire narrative. Zimmermann's (2000) model places global planning at the outset of the writing process, yet it allows for a backward move from formulating to global planning. In planning globally, High L1 pairs confirmed the plot they had worked out in the jigsaw task, sometimes modifying or developing it to make it more logical or elaborate. These were conducted almost entirely in Japanese, as seen in High 1's long sequence at the beginning of their timeline (Excerpt 4). Thus, the access to Japanese offered High L1 pairs the means to reflect on and adjust the plans they had generated in English, which might have motivated them to suspend formulating and return to global planning.

Excerpt 4

High 1

Planning (127 seconds)

- S: *saisho* (.) *saishoga*: (2.0) *atashiwa E E ni C ni* (2.0) *de: sono atoni*: (5.0) *korekana* (6.0) *nanka toriaezu* [*kore ikou*] {First, my first is E. E and C and, after that, this. For now, let's go for this.}
- K: [*a teka*] *a teka: nan* (2.0) *iya nantsu:kane kore* {No, what can I say, this}
- S: *kore saisho?* {Is this the first?}
- (1.0)
- K: *kore saishoja nainja nai? ano*: (1.0) *D ga saisho janai D shaisho de*: {This is not the first. D is the first. D is the first, and}
- S: *un*
- K: (?) *kou yonde* {Goes like this}
- S: *un*
- K: *ano naitte iunoga atte hoshii kedo demo* (2.0) *a: demo yappari korede* {I want to have (a picture that shows) "not there," but, but on a second thought, (let's go for) this.}
- S: *un*
- K: *dokoni yattakke mitaina fu:ni omotte kore yatte omoidashite*: {(He) thinks like, where did I put it, and (he) does this and remembers}
- S: *aa aa*
- K: *de nainatte omotte* {and thinks (it's) not there}
- S: *un*
- K: *de kiitemite* {and asks}
- S: *un*
- K: *de garbage truck ittakara* {and the garbage truck went, so}
- S: *un* (3.0) *a! souiukoto* [*itemite: nakute: de:*] {that's how it goes. (he) goes there, (the ticket is) not there, and}
- K: [*itemite: nakute: (.) de:*]
- S: *setsumei* {explain}
- K: *setsumei* [*shite:*] {(he) explains, and}
- S: [*shite:*]
- K: *un. mitsukete* [*kurete:*] {(another person) finds (it)}
- S: [*mitsukete kurete:*] *okane* {money}
- K: *okane mitaina* {money}
- S: *aa yatto wakatta*. {I finally understand.}
- K: *konna kanjide iinjanai?* {Isn't it something like this?}
- S: *ma korede ikka. hai. tekotowa: saishoga?* {This is good. Yes. Then, the first is?}
- K: *saishoga* [*D de*] {The first is D, and}
- S: [*D ka*] *D* (.) *F?* =
- K: = *F de*
- S: *F-u:*
- K: *A* (.)
- S: *A?*
- K: *e*
- S: *A:: de de ikunoka. E?* {A. Then, then (he) goes. E?}
- (2.0)
- K: *E dane E C dane E C*
- S: *E C de*
- K: *H.*

S: H E (1.0) *de?* {and?}
K: B
S: B [G?]
K: [G]
S: oh (2.0) *yoshi* {Good.}

A similar explanation can be offered regarding LREs. As shown in Table 2, the total time spent on LREs did not considerably differ between High L1 and Low L1 pairs. However, High L1 pairs generated fewer LREs than Low L1 pairs: The average number of LREs was 16.67 for the former while 19.00 for the latter. This means that High L1 pairs tended to engage in individual episodes longer. For example, High 2 produced one of the longest LREs in the data, which lasted 71 seconds (Excerpt 5). Throughout this episode, Japanese mediated the students' discussion and collaboration. The Japanese utterances performed a variety of functions, including clarifying problems, proposing solutions, examining ideas, and making joint decisions, all of which are essential to discussing or negotiating form. Japanese also helped the students articulate and share their explicit knowledge of English. For example, K mentioned two Japanese translations, “*tanomu*” and “*tazuneru*,” which correspond to different meanings of the verb “ask” (“to request” and “to inquire”). Following this, the two students discussed collocational patterns associated with the different meanings of “ask.” A little later, K used the Japanese grammatical term “*futeishi*” (infinitive) to distinguish the “to” in their composition from the preposition “to” in the sentence they were formulating. The students most probably had obtained the information about “ask” and “to” in Japanese, and it would have been a challenge if they had had to verbalize it solely in English. Interestingly, the initial question that triggered this LRE was whether to insert “people” after the verb “ask.” The exchanges about “ask” and “to” emerged incidentally in the course of the discussion. The discussion of the initial question activated the students' knowledge of relevant grammatical features, which set off further discussions related to these features.

Excerpt 5

High 2

K: asked to search his lottery (.) ticket?

LRE (71 seconds)

M: people *toka ireta houga ii?* {Should we put something like “people”?}K: ask (.) for for *dakke nandakke* {Is it “for”? What is it?}M: *ga nanka bunpotekinano attane* {There was something related to grammar.}K: *un*M: *mou wasure chatta* = {I already forgot.}K: = *tanomuto tazuneruwa chigatta mou wasure chatta* ((laugh)) {“To request” and “to inquire” are different. I forgot.}

M: ask

K: *zenbu ask de sumasechau* {I’ll use “ask” for everything.} (2.0) ask forM: ask *nani nani janai?* [*sokon tokoni* (.) *aiteno namaewo kakunja naino?*] {Isn’t it “ask someone”? Shouldn’t we write the person’s name there?}K: [a: ask (.)] ask for (.) people *tokaja nakattake* for *toka* (?) shhh {Isn’t it “ask for people”? (?) “for”?}

(1.0)

M: ask, *hitono namae*, to *janakattakke* {Isn’t it “ask, a person’s name, to”?}K: *e:to soshitara kore* (.) *kore soujanee?* {Then, isn’t this it?} ((found an example in their composition)) (2.0) *tazuneruto* (.) *tanomuga chigatta kigasuru chigawanakattakke* {I think “to inquire” and “to request” are different. Aren’t they different?} asked a woman where the garbage wasM: to asked to (.) to *irukke* {Do we need “to”?}K: hhhh *kono to wa futeishino to dakara* (1.0) *iya?* ask for *datta ki surundakedo* {This “to” is the infinitive “to,” so ... no I think “ask for.”}M: *tashika nani naniwo kuda* (.) *iya shi* (.) *kudasai tekina imidatta* ask for {I think “ask for” means something like “give me something.”}K: *a sokka* {You’re right.}M: *soudatta kigasuru* {I think so.}

K: asked (1.0) people.

This LRE, as well as many others produced by High L1 pairs, provides evidence for L1’s versatility as a metalanguage, or “language that is used to talk about language” (Berry, 2005, p. 17), in collaborative contexts. L1 helps students verbalize their explicit knowledge of L2 and share it with their peers. It also facilitates in-depth discussion of L2 forms by equipping students with the necessary linguistic resources. With the help of L1, students can apply their explicit knowledge to their discussion and thereby resolve their L2 problems interactively. Finally, the discussion of the target feature may activate students’ memory of related features and promote further language-related discussion. Through performing these functions, L1 helps prolong LREs, thereby sustaining students’ attention to the target forms.

This is presumably why High L1 pairs' LREs tended to last longer than Low L1 pairs' LREs.

In contrast, the Low L1 pairs' writing processes were more linear, with fewer lengthy interruptions. These pairs focused on recollecting the story they had worked out during the jigsaw task and putting it down on the paper, and this helped them go through formulating quickly and save enough time for review. Although the longer time on review did not make their compositions better than High L1 pairs', it did provide them with opportunities to check their works for any problems. As a result, Low 1 returned to global planning and discussed an alternative plot. Low 2 returned to formulating to rewrite a part of their text and engaged in fairly long LREs in that process. Low 3 finished formulating in 10 minutes and spent about 3 minutes reviewing; however, they still had time to spare and filled it with off-task talk in English. These results suggest that restricting L1 use in collaborative writing may help students concentrate on formulating and complete the task in a given time. The flip side is that students may avoid dealing with complicated issues that they cannot smoothly discuss in L2, therefore losing their chances to learn. Restricting access to L1 may also make it difficult for students to stay productive: They may run out of things to do and engage in off-task talk to kill their time.

As discussed above, Low L1 pairs' formulating often triggered LREs, which left them with greater LRE counts than High L1 pairs. However, most of their LREs addressed simple morphological issues and were resolved quickly without much interaction. The LRE in Excerpt 2 is a typical example. It consisted of five turns, all very short, and lasted only 4 seconds. Students focused on the verb "throw" and successfully worked out the correct form "threw." However, they did not arrive at the solution through explicit discussion or negotiation using metalanguage: All they did was vocalize the forms "throw" and "threw" repeatedly. In a study using dictogloss tasks, Fortune and Thorp (2001) found their university ESL students resolve 70% of their LREs through such vocalization. The researchers speculate that when vocalizing, students may be tapping into their implicit knowledge to choose the

form that sounds right, or they may be employing their explicit knowledge without articulating it. Whichever is the case, problem-solving through vocalization is less beneficial for learning. Seen from the interactionist perspective, resolution through vocalization makes LREs shorter, thus reducing the duration of the time for which students focus on the target form. In fact, Fortune's (2005) follow-up study revealed that LREs containing metalanguage are more likely to resume after being suspended than LREs containing no metalanguage. Seen from the sociocultural perspective, vocalization deprives students of the opportunity for collective scaffolding. Students may apply their explicit knowledge to the problem at hand, but the knowledge cannot be transferred to their partners unless they articulate it.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to find any relationship between the amount of L1 employed during L2 collaborative writing and the quality of the text produced. It also explored any differences in the writing process between students who use L1 frequently and those who use L1 infrequently while composing. Interactional and written data were derived from 50 university EFL students in Japan who composed a narrative text in pairs. The quantitative analysis of the data showed that the proportion of L1 turns in the interaction did not significantly correlate with the text measurements for fluency, accuracy, and complexity or the ratings in three areas related to content and organization. However, the qualitative analysis of the transcribed interactions based on Zimmermann's (2000) model of L2 writing showed notable differences between the three pairs that used L1 most frequently (High L1) and the three pairs that used L1 least frequently (Low L1). The High L1 pairs' writing processes featured long intermissions in which students suspended formulating and engaged in planning or LREs. Their replanning sometimes addressed issues related to the entire story, and their LREs often involved explicit discussions of L2 forms using metalanguage. These long detours slowed down their formulating process and left them with no time for review. The Low L1

pairs' writing processes were more linear, with fewer and shorter interruptions. They concentrated on formulating, completed the process faster than the High L1 pairs, and saved ample time for review. They generated more LREs than the High L1 pairs but resolved most of them quickly without using metalanguage.

The study provides pedagogical implications regarding L1 use in L2 collaborative writing. Co-authoring a text provides students with a variety of learning opportunities, and the study verified that some of these opportunities can be enhanced when students interact in L1 while they compose. Thus, whether teachers should permit students to use L1 depends on which opportunities they wish to enhance with the particular collaborative writing task. If they seek to engage students in in-depth discussions of L2 forms and thereby sustain students' attention to the forms, or if they seek to have students articulate their explicit knowledge and scaffold each other's learning, they should allow them to use L1 in the formulating and reviewing processes. Making L1 available might be an option in the planning process for teachers who prioritize having students develop detailed plans before starting to write. However, when teachers implement collaborative writing as a more goal-oriented activity that emphasizes completion under a time limit or as an opportunity for communicating and negotiating meaning in L2, they should minimize the amount of L1 students employ. These implications echo what Yoshida and Yanase (2003) suggest regarding when to encourage or discourage L1 use in EFL classes at Japanese primary and secondary schools.

The study is limited in several respects, and future research will benefit from addressing these limitations. Most importantly, the data for the study was drawn from one group of students using one type of task that required them to produce a relatively short narrative in 15 minutes. The topic needs to be explored further with students of different proficiency levels and tasks requiring other types of texts. The time on task may have been too short for some pairs, especially those that used L1 frequently, to incorporate their discussions into their compositions. Taking this into account, time on task needs to be carefully adjusted. In

addition, although the participants had completed several oral tasks before the data collection, it was virtually the first time for them to engage in collaborative writing. If they had been given opportunities to practice, they would have become more capable of creating one text together, and the amounts and purposes of their L1 use might have changed. Longitudinal studies incorporating multiple task administrations are likely to shed new light on this research topic. At least one study has found a significant relationship between the focus of students' talk while writing and the rating of their collaborative composition (McDonough et al., 2016). Overcoming the limitations of the present study may lead to uncovering the roles that students' L1 plays in that relationship.

Notes

This work was funded by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (19K13300).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Jigsaw Picture Cards

A Look at Picture 1 and read the beginning of Diego's story. After this, the story is made up of eight pictures. Student A has four pictures (a, b, c, d), and Student B has the other four pictures (e, f, g, h). Describe your pictures to your partner and figure out the story.

Your final goal is to find the right order of the eight pictures. Picture 1 → ____ → ____ → ____ → ____ → ____ → ____ → ____

This is the beginning of the story (Picture 1):

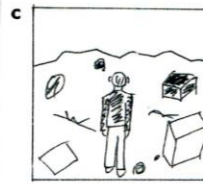
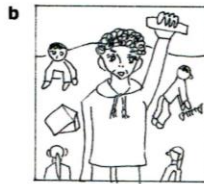
In the morning, Diego was reading a newspaper and found that he won one million dollars in lottery.



Picture 1



garbage truck



garbage dump



lottery ticket

B Look at Picture 1 and read the beginning of Diego's story. After this, the story is made up of eight pictures. Student A has four pictures (a, b, c, d), and Student B has the other four pictures (e, f, g, h). Describe your pictures to your partner and figure out the story.

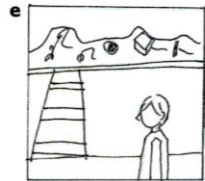
Your final goal is to find the right order of the eight pictures. Picture 1 → ____ → ____ → ____ → ____ → ____ → ____ → ____

This is the beginning of the story (Picture 1):

In the morning, Diego was reading a newspaper and found that he won one million dollars in lottery.



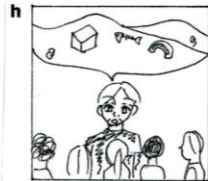
Picture 1



garbage dump



garbage can



Appendix B: Transcription System

?	Rising intonation
.	Falling intonation
,	Non-final intonation
!	Animated tone
(?)	Incomprehensible word
(stay)	Problematic hearing (the transcriber is uncertain about the word)
[]	Overlapping utterance
=	Linked or continuing utterance
st-	Cutoff
sta:y	Stretching of the sound or syllable
sta::y	Longer stretch of the sound or syllable
(.)	Short pause
(2.0)	Timed pause (in seconds)
<u>stay</u>	Increased volume
stay	Lowered volume
hh	Outbreath
((laughter))	Comment by the transcriber
<i>saisho</i>	Japanese utterance
{first}	English translation of Japanese utterance

Appendix C: Analytical Scales for Text Assessment

	Task accomplishment	Idea development	Cohesion
4	The writing brings together all pictures into a coherent story.	The story is very well developed. Detail is provided in most scenes.	Cohesive devices (e.g., transition markers, pronouns, repetition of key vocabulary) are used effectively to connect ideas.
3	The writing brings together all pictures into a story. The story is generally coherent, but it omits important elements of some pictures.	The story is fairly well developed. Detail is provided in some scenes.	Cohesive devices are used effectively, but connection of ideas is occasionally unclear.
2	The writing omits one picture entirely, and/or the story is not sufficiently coherent.	The story is not sufficiently developed. Detail is provided only occasionally.	Cohesive devices are not sufficiently used, and connection of ideas is sometimes unclear.
1	The writing omits two or more pictures entirely, and/or it does not tell a coherent story.	The story seriously lacks development. Little or no detail is provided.	Cohesive devices are hardly ever used, and connection of ideas is often unclear.

Appendix D: Definitions and Examples of Processes and Episodes

		Definition	Example
Process	Planning	Discussing the content of the entire narrative (global planning) or the next scene (local planning)	W: he is isn't Diego? N: no? uh who. [so] W: [who] who who N: I think just Diego. W: [Diego] N: [because] W: oh N: so if this is not Diego who is thi:s. W: ((laugh)) okay.
	Formulating	Recurrent cycles of: - formulating (orally translating an idea into words and evaluating it), - writing (the mechanical act of writing), and - repairing (reading and reformulating)	Y: he asks J: he asked Y: his mother, J: his mother, (6.0) where's garbage, Y: <i>aa</i> J: a::nd sh (13.0) mother (7.0) garbage ((writing)) Y: yeah garbage uh
	Reviewing	Final process of reading and evaluating the entire text	Y: but but, is there:: a mistake? S: really Y: a:: is there a mistake? S: mistake? Y: is there (.) <i>aru?</i> {Is there any?} S: a: okay Y: okay ((laugh))
Episodes	Language-related episodes (LREs)	Sequences in which students question or correct their use of an L2 item or discuss an L2 item devoid of any previous use of that item	A: his lottery lottery, (2.0) is nothing. (3.0) <i>a!</i> was <i>ka</i> K: <i>a!</i> <i>so:ka</i> {that's right} A: <i>so:da kore aredayo</i> {right, this is, you know} K: <i>ja:</i> looked <i>ka</i> = {then (this is) "looked"} A: = looked looked. <i>zenbu kakokei nanda kore</i> {all of these are past tense}
	Task management	Sequences in which students read task instructions, clarify task requirements, discuss work procedures, or monitor time	N: time is so:: left (5.0) uh W: so let's try to more longer? (5.0) N: okay? W: okay.
	Off-task talk	Sequences in which students discuss a topic unrelated to the task	S: will you go to the baseball game? Y: uh I want to go to but I don't have ticket. S: oh

Note. The definitions of the three processes are based on Zimmermann (2000). The definition of LREs is based on Swain and Lapkin (1998) and Williams (1999).

Accountability in Program Evaluation: How This Aspect Is Crucial in Evaluations and Organizational Levels

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Abstract

Accountability is critical to quality assurance and the effective implementation of innovations. However, there is a paucity of research on accountability utilization, conceptualization, and evidence collection. In turn, this has prompted scholars to call for the reconsideration of accountability and the methods/strategies conducive to it as an observable phenomenon. This idea has gained momentum given the rapid migration from traditional to virtual classrooms, mostly when policies overlook contextual variables affecting the implementation of innovations—such as CALL-related or other initiatives. This paper sought to address the methodological and conceptual gaps regarding stakeholders and accountability representativeness in the literature. To achieve this aim, this study first built on the available literature to survey the nature of accountability and the socially reactive and dialectical processes producing evidence. Then, an argument was crafted to assess the strength of the rationales in the literature and suggest courses of action that consider social and contextual constraints when implementing technology-related initiatives. The argument revealed that accountability comprises a social product derived from evaluand participants' reactive and reflective engagement with their context; however, those elements are overlooked. On this basis, it is recommended that evaluand members observe environmental factors when assessing initiative implementation and success rate.

Keywords: evaluation, accountability, stakeholders, empowerment, argument-based approach to evaluation

The last JACET Conference held in August 2021 had innovation and a reflection on teaching practices as one of its foci; one of the symposiums referred to how critical it is to rethink the objectives sought by English language education and even referred to how English language education should cover areas of Applied Linguistics. Along similar lines, this paper theoretically reflects on the concept of accountability and its influence over programs evaluation and, by extension, over any attempts to improve teaching praxis.

I depart from Gruba et al.'s (2016) assumption that curricular innovation is akin to evaluation in that there is an argument to make—either adding something that is missing or modifying a component that has not worked correctly through a set of logical assertions that give shape to an idea that, concisely, "holds water."

First, this paper explores accountability in program evaluation to address gaps which are critical to improving praxis, allowing smoother access to crucial information, and, therefore, to the implementation of changes. Additionally, this paper refers to the argument-based approach to evaluation (Gruba et al., 2016) as the proposed tool to address all the theoretical gaps regarding accountability. Due to the novelty of the argument-based approach to evaluation, the last part of this manuscript is devoted to a brief definition, discussing its relevance, and the presentation and appraisal of the argument found in the literature on accountability and stakeholders.

Accountability in Program Evaluation: Contextualizing the Issue

Program evaluation is a systematic attempt to gather information to make judgments or decisions and inform interested parties—stakeholders—about the operation, results, or

constraints of an educational program to suggest improvements or ponder what has been done against a priori established criteria (Norris, 2006, 2016; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992; Owen, 2007). This idea of asking questions to organizations based on evidence for standards alignment or deviation constitutes accountability (Bovens, 2005), and it is a central concept in evaluation due to its utilization scope (see Norris, 2016; Lumino & Gambardella, 2020; Picciotto, 2013).

However, the literature has conceptualized accountability from two perspectives: an external audit angle and an organizational relationship-based approach. The first perspective, for instance, is what Norris (2016) identifies as the *per se* nature of evaluative endeavors in the most recent state-of-the-art review of program evaluation. He claims that any evaluative process is akin to assessing how compliant a site is with regard to regulations and parameters; this activity then acts as a catalyzer for compliance-focused improvement suggestions, which, in turn, reflects the conventional motivations to evaluate (Watanabe et al., 2009) and focuses on the rationale that programs ought to demonstrate their value before society to ensure continuity (Benjamin, 2008; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Nkwake, 2015; Norris, 2009, 2016; Patton, 2010; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992; Zannirato, 2014).

The second perspective refers to compliance-enforcement and quality-assurance producing responsibility relationships that emerge within organizations to satisfy overarching-level-imposed regulations (Benjamin, 2008; Frink et al., 2008; Norris, 2016; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998). The latter social dynamics-based angle assumes that educational programs are ecologies in which different organizational levels—macro, meso, and micro—socially interact to translate guidelines into actions (Aizawa & Rose, 2019; Gruba et al., 2016; Kali et al., 2011). Such a process reflects what Rea-Dickins and Germaine's (1992) and other scholars' work (Lynch, 1996; Owen, 2007) claim to be critical: considering what is effective for the site based on its unique characteristics. This rationale turns any evaluation findings into a reflection of the ecology of the evaluand, and therefore, into what needs to be

potentially corrected. At this stage is when the exploration of internal social dynamics becomes valuable; social dynamics play a role in catalyzing improvement and are crucial to evaluative processes (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Lynch, 1996; Norris, 2006, 2016; Owen, 2007; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). However, the need to prove value before society becomes problematic because accountability may be weaponized. An example of this phenomenon is washback in the form of curricula that serve test results to keep policymakers and society appeased (see Koretz, 2008; Koretz & Hamilton, 2006; Smith & Holloway, 2020; Sultana, 2018) as opposed to focusing on evaluand, and therefore, praxis improvement (see Norris, 2016).

Although recently scholars have discussed and questioned the legitimacy of the utilization and scope of accountability as an effective quality measure (Colarusso & Giancola, 2020; Lumino & Gambardella, 2020; Norris, 2016; Picciotto, 2013), the intra-evaluand dynamics leading to observable accountability at intra-stratum or inter-strata level have received little attention. The bulk of the discussion has centered on documented classroom-bound policy compliance-motivated dynamics (see Adamson & Weaver, 1998; Leaton Gray, 2013; Preskill & Boyle, 2008; Smith & Holloway, 2020) and on how guidelines—if anything—constitute constraints or sources of interpretation (Aizawa & Rose, 2019). This situation has been the case even though stakeholder-access materials acknowledge both the existence of a potential inter-strata influence (Bryson et al., 2011) and a need for a revision/reflection on the methodology employed to access participants (Bryson et al., 2011; Bryson & Patton, 2015; Kivits & Sawang, 2021).

Furthermore, the literature constantly repeats keywords redirecting the discussion to social dynamics: participation, involvement, ownership, professional growth, and nurturing are frequent terms in the literature (Gruba et al., 2016; Kiely, 2006; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Norris, 2016; Owen, 2007). Despite most research on program evaluation and evaluation

focuses on effectively working with stakeholders to reach the evaluative objectives, social dynamics have been sacrificed and there has been a skewness towards categorization. Also, there has been an emphasis on linking evaluator onus to access to individuals and, therefore, to results and representativeness (Ackermann & Eden, 2011, 2020; Bryson et al., 2011; Kivits & Sawang, 2021; Linfield & Posavac, 2018). Although methodologically positive because they reinforce the role of evaluators as neutral individuals, the trend mentioned above seems to ignore some practical aspects inherent to organizations, such as grouping and the involvement or refocus of attention upon evaluative endeavors (Azzam, 2010). If involvement varies when evaluating a project and results in shifting stakeholder importance, then the same may well occur during regular operation. This factor might affect visible accountability before an actual evaluation takes place.

Similarly, role percolation—individuals wearing multiple hats—and potential multi-, intra-, and inter-strata retroactive feeds have not been explored explicitly in the evaluation and program evaluation literature. To date, endeavors have been experimental in that they seek to demonstrate the feasibility of this perspective from a limited scope that does not cater to multiple roles at once (see Gruba et al., 2016). This lack of explicit surveyance seems surprising, to say the least when organizational levels and their influence across organizations are documented in the literature. An example is the case of governmental pressure on educators (see Leaton Gray, 2013; Smith & Holloway, 2020), which is acknowledged but not explored from the standpoint of what it generates cross-sectionally.

Then, the question is how multi- or inter-strata relationships emerge and how they affect visible/observable accountability; if government policies affect teachers' practice—a gross example of multi-strata influence—then it is fathomable to consider the same may happen within any evaluand among the participants. Why at a specific level and not everywhere? Alternatively, why would it only happen at a specific level if so is the case?

Along a similar line of thought but focusing on the operational evaluation of technological implementations, Gruba et al. (2016) proposed a method whose application can be extended to solve the problems presented by this paper. These authors argue that in order to evaluate the effectiveness of technology implementations, it is necessary to consider two aspects: the structure of the site and the participants—evaluand and stakeholders. They also propose a reformulation or tailoring of Kane's (2006) argument-based approach to validity based on the literature's call for its use as an analytical tool; arguments operate under assumptions requiring robust evidence (LeBaron Wallace, 2011) while extrapolation inferences are logically justified from the standpoint of the intended use rather than from the meaning they might have by themselves (Chapelle, 2012).

Furthermore, and building upon the flexibility of the argument-based approach, I argue that we may well include an extra ingredient when construing stakeholders. Stakeholders may well have multiple roles—wear multiple hats—that can percolate. Although percolation has been acknowledged in the literature as a possibility (Bryson et al., 2011), the literature on evaluation itself argues that we need to choose participants for the sake of a successful evaluative project (Bryson et al., 2011; Kivits & Sawang, 2021), thus rendering percolation a secondary issue that is, somehow, relegated by the pursued objectives.

The idea of selection is pervasive in the literature (Ackermann & Eden, 2011, 2020; Bryson et al., 2011; Kivits & Sawang, 2021), and scholars themselves acknowledge that selection, although not ideal, is necessary to gain access to meaningful data or individuals due to contextual values (Bryson et al., 2011; Bryson & Patton, 2015; Stack et al., 2018). Additionally, other academics argue that we should focus on finding better or worse answers to organizational issues instead of ideal responses due to the argumental nature of problem-solving phenomena within organizations (Ackermann & Eden, 2020).

Furthermore, although anecdotally, percolation of roles is often found at the tertiary

level; there, coordinators may well be teachers and might also take part in a policy-making committee. Role percolation should be addressed because of the information leverage it implies. Even though an individual with coordination capabilities may act as a teacher, their knowledge and access to information differ from those of a teacher with no other duties, thus making their performance unequal to that of individuals whose access is limited. Believing that people can consciously decide what pieces of information to use is naive.

The situation mentioned above has posited two potential conundrums. First, there is the question of representative accountability findings: whether they truly represent all participants and whether all those involved in the program could share their views. This limitation arises from the inherently selective nature of current stakeholder access methods employed and the onus placed on the evaluator—or the individual acting as such. Secondly, there are the phenomena that produce observed accountability. Again, in this case, the internal operational dynamics of the evaluand may have been relegated to the crafting of participant lists. With this gap identified, this paper now refers to the relationship between accountability and attitude within settings to then explore organizational factors.

Accountability and Attitude Within Programs: The Answer to the Social Nature of Accountability

Norris (2016) provides an excellent overview of the state of the art in program evaluation and specifies accountability as one of the driving factors due to its quantifiable nature. Accountability is easy to conceptualize tangibly and transform into an artifact—be it numbers or descriptors—upon which a discussion can arise. No discussion is unilateral, however. The first step for anybody to listen is identifying with or having a reaction based on the argument at hand (see Hall et al., 2015, for a summary of the several reactions accountability generates in individuals).

With this in mind, it is pertinent to discuss and analyze what drives people to listen or join a discussion when accountability arises in evaluands. Owen (2007) argues that evaluative processes are an extrapolation of individual appraisals; the critical difference is the scale. Evaluations focus on group performance, while appraisals cater to individuals. Therefore, to understand, we should center on the individuals who partake in the group and the internal social dynamics that arise and produce observable accountability. The focus is what individuals feel compelled to do, not the existing rules by themselves (Hall et al., 2015). This fact may imply that social dynamics may not be transparent or seem misleading without any careful analysis (Lillejord & Børte, 2020).

Moreover, attitude is inherent to stakeholders, thus centering the discussion on how participants are accessed. The literature documents this topic very well, with the concepts of empowerment and participation receiving attention (Kiely, 2006; Gruba et al., 2016). In particular the literature to date constantly stresses the critical role of stakeholders for the success of any evaluative endeavor, highlighting the idea of access. In turn, Bryson et al. (2011) review a myriad of tools to access stakeholders; these authors acknowledge that such techniques have limitations and that their validity—as in how representative of reality stakeholder analysis techniques are—goes beyond the scope of what an evaluator should do: produce results that are meaningful for those who are interested. A similar standpoint is that of Bryson and Patton (2015), who argue that the criteria of inclusion of an individual is based on how critical the information they might possess is. Therefore, although methodologically sensible, if we claim evaluations are participation-focused processes, researchers should reflect on whether current stakeholder identification methods lead to generalizable/representative results.

Filtering or categorizing poses per se a contradiction to the original motivations of evaluations. Likewise, assuming that filtering or exclusion might be collateral damage of the

evaluative endeavor poses an extra layer of issues that may invalidate the evaluative effort due to poor involvement (see Kiely, 2006; Leaton Gray, 2013, for discussions on how involvement fosters improvement). As a result, selection constitutes a limitation circumscribed to the evaluator's onus but mainly triggered by methodological reasons. For instance, Ackermann and Eden (2011) propose a power/interest grid—their work from 1998 (Eden & Ackermann, 1998) is quoted by Bryson et al. (2011), but their 2011 (Ackermann & Eden, 2011) work is chiefly the same. Ackermann and Eden (2011) further expand and refer to stakeholder dynamics—which could be extrapolated to Norris's (2016) idea of "relationships"—from a standpoint that privileges power and interest. Individuals may or not be interested regardless of their power; therefore, any attitudinal change might be influenced by those factors or, vice versa, any decision may well be affected by how involved or how much decision-making power someone may have. Ackermann and Eden's (2011) toolkit is comprehensive in that it engulfs key concepts that can be further expanded. Interest, for example, can be further expanded into attitudinal aspects, such as antagonism or favorability towards a specific idea (see Bryson et al., 2011; Patton, 2018).

Although focused on implementing and normalizing blended learning approaches, other perspectives that analyze participants' attitudes suggest breaking down the site into several analytical layers (see Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012; Gruba et al., 2016; Jones, 2007). This breakdown process operates under the assumption that any innovation affects the entire system upon which it is implemented. According to this approach, each layer exhibits exclusive attitudinal constraints. Even though the multi-layered conceptualization of organizations belongs to organizational theory (see House et al., 1995; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Mitchell et al., 1997), it allows understanding feelings, attitudes, reactions, and motivations from a standpoint that enriches contextualization—an essential concept in seminal research (Norris, 2016; Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1992) which is assumed obvious when designing evaluations.

Although the multi-layered approach might seem atomizing, it focuses on what each layer might require or reject from other layers to reach goals smoothly (accountability) and operate effectively; this conceptualization explains factors otherwise attributable to office politics or the sociopolitical context of evaluands (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005).

Further evidence supporting the relevance of closer scrutiny comes from the literature exclusively focusing on attitudinal factors. Attitude has been found to affect performance and, therefore, accountability results (Dubnick, 2003; Hall et al., 2015; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999); similarly—as a subset—power, interaction dynamics, and personal beliefs have been found to exert influence on performance (see Kezar, 2013; Leaton Gray, 2013; Zannirato, 2014). Specifically, Leaton Gray (2013) claimed to have found that decision-making by key members—superior levels—directly influenced or restricted less empowered stakeholders' scope of action. Additionally, negative emotional responses, such as blatant rejection (see Van der Meer & Edelenbos, 2006; Zannirato, 2014), as well as sabotage due to personal agendas (Bryson et al., 2011; Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014), and systematic social behavior—culture—have also appeared as behavioral factors (Adamson & Weaver, 1998; Preskill & Boyle, 2008).

Therefore, it is clear that the evaluator should consider all these emotional aspects to foresee possible drawbacks; these limitations stand as an invitation to carefully categorize stakeholders beyond the traditional models suggested and employed in evaluative praxis (Bryson et al., 2011; Kivits & Sawang, 2021; Lynch, 1996; Owen, 2007; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992) which are reviewed in the next section.

Identifying Stakeholders: From Traditional Methods to a Comprehensive Approach

Ignoring past trends, which have undoubtedly contributed to evaluation scholarship, does not do justice to the profession; rather than focusing on what these approaches lack,

scrutiny and reflection are needed to develop the discipline.

To date, the most cited method is the Ackermann and Eden's (2011) model, whose older version (Eden & Ackermann, 1998) was quoted by Bryson et al. (2011) in their seminal methodology paper. Bryson et al.'s (2011) recommendation of Ackermann and Eden's (2011) power/interest grid is to date, probably, the most scalable and responsive tool available to categorize participants in light of operational constraints; this is despite the fact several scholars, including Bryson et al. (2011) themselves, acknowledge the need to innovate and find alternative methods (see Kivits & Sawang, 2021, for a similar assertion).

Ackermann and Eden's (2011) model situates stakeholders according to their significance within the ecology of the evaluand and allows a discrete understanding of attitudinal factors. The authors identify *players*, *context-setters*, *subjects*, and *crowd*. *Players* are highly interested and influential, *subjects* are interested but lack power, *crowd* members lack power and interest, while *context* setters have power but lack interest. The method, however, does not account for organizational-level membership. This drawback makes specific constraints remain obscure despite their critical role in the design, implementation, and normalization of educational innovations (Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012; Gruba et al., 2016; Jones, 2007), whose improvement focus (see Gruba et al., 2016, for an extensive discussion on this analogy) makes them akin to evaluative endeavors.

Therefore, paying attention to the invisible mechanics of policymaking and policy enforcement may shed some light on how each layer's limitations and motivations affect the entire site. In particular, the literature has described such limitations from an operational and cascading influence standpoint, as layers engage in retroactive and cross-sectional feedback cycles (see Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012; Gruba et al., 2016; House et al., 1995).

The literature constantly refers to identifying key stakeholders to ensure a smooth evaluative endeavor; likewise, it is accepted that stakeholders are subsets within a

group—hence the need to categorize. Similarly, the literature acknowledges the entire process as being subject to discussion, inherently judgmental (Bryson & Patton, 2015), and inherently biased (Kivits & Sawang, 2021). Similarly, the concept of role percolation—several individuals performing several roles—is accounted for in the literature as a factor affecting stakeholder categorization (see Bryson et al., 2011); this, however, does not go beyond a simple acknowledgment. What is more, explicit evidence of the impact of social dynamics, which is akin to multi-layer retroactive feeds, has also been described in the literature dealing with educational and general evaluation accountability (see Hall et al., 2015, for a summary on issues on educational settings and Kali et al., 2011, for an example of how pedagogical praxis requires that the three layers cooperate)

To date, it remains unclear why percolation of roles has not been explored despite its essential role in effectively addressing the concept of "accessing relevant stakeholders" while catering to the highly contextualized and rich nature of evaluands (Bryson et al., 2011; Bryson & Patton, 2015; Lynch, 1996; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Norris, 2009, 2016; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). Now, I will refer to the three-layer approach to organization to shed more light on why percolation is a factor deserving attention.

The Three Levels From Management: Breaking Down Sites

The literature acknowledges the existence of three organizational levels: macro, meso, and micro. First, we will discuss the macro level and then proceed with the meso and the micro level.

Macro-Level. Fenton-Smith and Gurney (2016) outline the macro-level to be in charge of “sector-wide policies” (p. 74). This means its scope of action comprises an overarching entity that regulates and establishes parameters to be followed. The influence of accountability at this level can have two interpretations; first, it can be understood as the catalyst for the existence of this level, as policy crafting constitutes benchmarking and

because already existing policy frameworks may control the scope of future policies (see Fenton-Smith & Gurney, 2016; Van der Meer & Edelenbos, 2006). Secondly, the macro level can be conceptualized as the primary factor motivating further organizational relationships within educational settings. This rationale arises from the fact that collaboration and task allotment are critical in achieving compliance with established benchmarks (see Benjamin, 2008, for a discussion). This conceptualization means that policy frames objectives which indirectly influence any subsequent reactions or decision-making processes by individuals that ought to abide by such regulations. Often, abidance is sought via approval.

Regarding this latter idea, the literature provides a series of examples demonstrating how policy acts as a source of pressure that—positively or negatively—controls and frames decision-making (Gruba et al., 2016; López et al., 2015; Virtanen & Uusikylä, 2004). Therefore, it would not be strange to think that any evaluative efforts sponsored by this layer seek to either legitimize or establish new rules.

Legitimization constitutes another way to reach normalization via the establishment or acknowledgment of practices. This approach has been indirectly mentioned in the literature (Borrás & Højlund, 2015; Norris, 2016; Radej, 2011). However, while Norris (2016) argues that one of the goals of evaluative endeavors is reaching societal approval or parameterization—normalization—of practices, other scholars argue there might be a more sinister top-down and interest-driven legitimization process that serves the venue or layer pushing for it. An example of problematic motivations is washback in curricular articulation when high-stake testing is the center of the curriculum (see Wall, 2012; Green, 2020; Sultana, 2018, for an extensive literature review of seminal and relevant research on washback. Another issue is the way sites tend to align themselves to address governmental understanding of curricula/quality (see Drago & Paredes, 2011; see also Mizala & Torche, 2012), which is a result of a compliance-focused domino effect (see Linn, 2008). Other notorious examples are

policy updates seeking to cater to society's heightened sensitivity to tertiary education quality—another example of washback (see Espinoza & González, 2013). However, not all is negative, as the inclusion of new literacies that respond to updated semiotic resources in the classroom may be a catalyst for policy change (Burnett et al., 2014; Lotherington & Jenson, 2011); similarly, contextual changes, such as the 2019 pandemic, have impacted policy due to the forced transition from live to online instruction in some cases.

Meso-Level. This level operationalizes macro-level guidelines. It was first described in management theory (Frink et al., 2008; House et al., 1995) as a reaction to the stabilization of individuals—micro level—and the system in which they are—the macro level. In the case of program evaluation and evaluative endeavors, Gruba et al. (2016) define the meso level as featuring negotiation and administration tasks conducive to policy or guideline operationalization; this makes their definition similar to that of management theory scholars in that the meso level acts as a buffer between the top and the lowest level. Additionally, this layer seeks to generate prestige and benefits for the organization; it aims at demonstrating fully compliant operations before society (see Rosinger et al., 2016). However, as Kezar, (2013) notes, the social dynamics within the level impact stakeholders' capacity to perform due to the status-quo—tenure culture, for example (see Ott & Cisneros, 2015)—and what is acceptable in the established environment. These factors take prominence when we construe management positions within educational settings as tokens of accountability relationships; they exist because there is a need in the organization to justify behavior before authority.

However, as Wagner (1993/2013) notes, such relationships do not exist in a void; they require a dialogical dynamic to be fruitful: those checked need to see the need to be checked, and those checking need to see the need for checks. This interpretation is supported by Bovens (2005) who adds that managers and managed individuals constantly engage in feedback loops to address challenges and ponder decisions. A simple example of this loop would be the

tailoring of curricula to follow regulations and cater to stakeholders' needs alike (see Barnes et al., 2000; Kenna & Russell, 2015; Pinto, 2016).

Therefore, understanding why specific actions have been taken, why certain stakeholders are doing something—be it in the case of technology implementations or any other practices—and whose agency was involved play a pivotal role in understanding this level's motivations. One option to enquire about criteria could be a needs analysis (Long, 2005); this tool, although classic, helps understand what specific educational needs administrators intended to address; however, it may not do justice to the whole subset of social dynamics in the evaluand, and, therefore, to participation. Participation and direct involvement by stakeholders promote ownership (McNeil et al., 2005) and, as Kiely (2006) asserts, the larger the levels of ownership, the greater the tendency “to nurture: to understand, to innovate, to evaluate, and to justify” (p. 601). Therefore, we see how a virtuous cooperation cycle based on the acceptance of issues may emerge (Nkwake, 2015; Salmon, 2015). However, it is also necessary to explore what happens with practitioners in isolation. The next section refers to the micro-level.

Micro-Level. This level is characterized by actions inside the classroom and impact on learning outcomes (Gruba et al., 2016; Hannah & Lester, 2009). It features engagement in developmental experiences triggered by educators' immediate activities in response to meso-level plans of action (Hannah & Lester, 2009). One example would be the documented case of the Chilean voucher policy; in that situation, schools selected students sitting for the standardized ministerial exams in an attempt to minimize backlash and match macro/meso-level expectations (see Mizala & Torche, 2012). Another example is what Cárdenas-Claros and Oyanedel (2016) found when exploring technology implementation in an EFL program in Chile; in their study, they discovered that teachers' personal attitudes and beliefs affected macro/meso-level policy enforcement. This provides some evidence that not

only top-down influence is possible but also the opposite to some extent, as the variability of outcomes in educational settings has, somehow, made policies more tolerant of deviations from set standards (see Leibowitz et al., 2015; Wamala & Ssembatya, 2015). Undoubtedly, variability arises as a response to the limits imposed by micro/meso-level guidelines because educators interpret and regurgitate them according to their experience, beliefs, level of benchmark abundance (Linn, 2008) or based on their understanding of leadership and decision making (Ingersoll et al., 2018). However, when these motivation subsets combine, the ultimate result is variability and highly context-dependent characteristics that make educational settings unique, thus resonating with the traditional conceptualization of evaluands (see Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Lynch, 1996; Norris, 2009, 2016; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992; Owen, 2007), access to relevant stakeholders (Bryson et al., 2011; Bryson & Patton, 2015; Kivits & Sawang, 2021), and the currency of buzzwords like ownership and participation (Kiely, 2006; McNeil et al., 2005).

The last section of this paper focuses on a brief explanation of the argument-based approach to evaluation devised by Gruba et al. (2016). Since this approach responds to a renewal in the methodological approaches used in applied linguistics, it is necessary to explain why apart from responding to calls for innovation, it can contribute to clarifying the issue of accountability in educational settings.

The Argument-Based Approach to Evaluation, the Craft and the Appraisal of the Argument

The argument-based approach developed by Kane (2006) has been actively used in testing due to its primary validity-focused perspective. However, as Gruba et al. (2016) argue, evaluations are arguments, or dialectical relationships, that rely on robustness to succeed. Evaluators need to consider rebuttals to their argument to ensure it is valid from an inferential standpoint. Furthermore, LeBaron Wallace (2011) discusses how arguments are mere yet excellent analytical tools that may not be necessarily confined to testing; something that

Chapelle (2012) and Chapelle et al. (2010) also do when elaborating on Kane's (2006) original proposal. The question is why it is employed when testing is involved and not when other branches of applied linguistics are at play. Evaluative endeavors are nothing but an argument; there is a target domain, collected data, and an assessment of such evidence to measure the plausibility/feasibility of the interpretations of observed accountability. Gruba et al.'s (2016) proposal is nothing but an extrapolation of the concept of validity (see Chapelle, 2012; Chapelle et al., 2010, for a discussion on how validity operates), and it is not something new in applied linguistics. For example, Cubilo (2014) stresses that evidence sheds light on result interpretations when extrapolating high-stake principles to classroom-focused assessment practices in validity arguments.

The following section describes Gruba et al.'s (2016) argument proposal in a top-down fashion:

1. *Target domain*: the context of the evaluation or innovation to implement
 - i. *Domain definition inference*: linking the context to the required data that would represent it ideally. The data needs to represent the context to be effective.
2. *Data collection*: assertions about the data that need to be collected to evaluate the status quo or make improvement suggestions.
 - i. *Evaluation inference*: linking the collected data to the findings identified.
3. *Findings*: assertions pinpointing what can be suggested after the data analysis about the evaluation or the improvement suggestion.
 - i. *Explanation inference*: linking the findings to a rationale that explains them.
4. *Rationale*: assertions defining how the findings—evaluative ones—can be explained.
 - i. *Utilization inference*: linking the rationale with the improvement or the effective implementation of the innovation proposed.

5. *Program improvement*: assertions detailing how findings can be used to improve the status quo or implement the innovation.
 - i. *Ramification inference*: linking the improvement of the program to situations outside the scope of the context of the evaluand.
6. *Broader implications*: assertions describing potential broader implications (p.40)

The Craft of the Argument. The argument found in the literature took key concepts: participation, access to relevant/representative information via stakeholders, and improvement based on the findings. The first two factors (participation and access to relevant/representative information via stakeholders) support the *domain definition inference*, and the *target domain stage* in that stakeholders offer context-rich information that allows exploring the issues present in the evaluand. The concept of improvement found in evaluation literature is akin to the result of the *data collection stage* as the *evaluation*, and the *explanation inferences* are directly connected to the contextually rich data representing—purportedly—the reality of the evaluand. Up to this stage, the argument refers to how participation is critical to ensuring long-term stability and acceptance of changes in an evaluand, thus stressing the importance of the context and how this aspect explains findings and needs in a dialogical fashion.

The *rationale* and the *program improvement* stages correspond to what the findings and their logical explanation can offer the evaluand; at this stage, any innovation might become logical, as findings highlight parts that fall short within the system; this is due to the fact the *utilization inference* corresponds to how the findings can be articulated to improve the praxis of the evaluand. In turn, the *ramification inference* implies contextual transferability—how similar evaluands can use other evaluands' experience to inform decision making, thus leading to the *broader implications stage*.

The Appraisal of the Argument. The argument found in the literature seems solid

immediately, however, as the discussion already demonstrated, the main weakness in the current model of evaluation and program evaluation is stakeholder access due to the biased nature of selection (Bryson et al., 2011); however, it is even more surprising that recent work still refers to this weakness (see Kivits and Sawang, 2021).

Nonetheless, while there seems to be enough research highlighting the importance of internal dynamics related to accountability (Benjamin, 2008; Dubnick, 2003; Frink et al., 2008; Hall et al., 2015; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999), stressing organizational layer-motivated constraints (Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012; Gruba et al., 2016; House et al., 1995; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Mitchell et al., 1997), and referring to the impact of participation and involvement (Kiely, 2006; Leaton Gray, 2013), there is little program evaluation-focused research demonstrating or refuting how such internal dynamics interact to produce the evidence needed to support the claims evaluative endeavors seek to sustain. What we do find are toolkits that recommend courses of action departing from theoretical ideals when designing evaluative or similar endeavors (see Gruba et al., 2016; Lynch, 1996; Linfield & Posavac, 2018; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992; Owen, 2007), a copious amount of research discussing the relevance and conceptualization of stakeholders (see Bryson et al., 2011; Bryson & Patton, 2015; Kivits & Sawang, 2021), and a vast description of the internal mechanics of organizations, which were extensively referred to in previous sections. Considering this, there is no reason to believe that educational settings are different from any other organization described in management literature; accountability pressures are similar, and humans tend to follow similar behavioral patterns. The mere acknowledgment of stakeholder-selection methods limitations weakens any evaluative argument, as there is no certainty as to whether the findings are genuinely representative of the evaluand or site.

Practical Implications for Teachers. Teachers and administrators alike can reflect on how their role affects the implementation or the evaluation—in the sense of measuring the

efficacy—of their praxis or the status quo in the evaluand. Given the myriad of factors at play, such as the level-specific issues discussed in this paper, teachers should reflect upon their praxis critically and make sure participation is real—from a perspective that bias is minimal and that all the limitations identified in the literature are addressed as best as possible.

Stakeholders are critical to the program's stability, and while the literature and current praxis are not coherent in that they call for contextualization while hindering it via selection, it is better than not taking any action. However, since the primary goal of any evaluative endeavor is to collect information that improves educational practice; therefore, further practical research is needed to assess the feasibility and practicality of the theoretical claims herein exposed.

Conclusion

This paper theoretically explored the concept of accountability in language program evaluation with a focus on the social aspects that have been overlooked in program evaluation research and practice. Then, it crafted an argument in light of the literature and appraised it in a bid to suggest practical implications and give practitioners suggestions on how to tackle evaluations or innovations due to their similar nature. Likewise, this paper has discussed two accountability perspectives found in recent literature: a benchmark to give accounts for performance, and as the relationships emerging within organizations owing to the enforcement of auditability requirements (Norris, 2016). Based on this distinction, it has been possible to discuss the critical influence of affective and organizational factors in the ecology of programs and in the rationalization of accountability requirements. Particularly, the theoretical review of the literature has demonstrated the existence of an overlooked area of research within the realm of stakeholders and how effectively they can reflect as a group the accountability of the site wherein they belong. Although a contradiction in terms of stakeholder representativeness has

been theoretically demonstrated, further research is needed to empirically assess the veracity of these claims and cater for other potential issues that might be contextually relevant.

Acknowledgements

I would like that the reviewers for their patience and feedback. Their feedback and input were valuable and important to polish this manuscript and take on this challenge.

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Combining In-Class and Out-of-Class Practices in a Hybrid Class: Action Research of the Presentation Support System for Developing English Presentation Skills

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Abstract

To thrive in this quickly globalizing digital era, the importance of expressing oneself in English is becoming more and more necessary. Both professionals and academics must be able to express their ideas quickly, clearly, and confidently to their colleagues. Well-polished presentation skills are more important than ever before. To meet this challenge, we designed and built the Presentation Support System and then adapted it to graduate learning in 2019. The purpose of this study is to describe the learning system, hypothesize how we think it enhances the presentation skills of graduate students, and report the results of the experiment using the system. We also highlight areas for future research.

Keywords: presentation, web support system, evaluation, peer learning

Expressing oneself in English is an unavoidable reality in a globalized digital era. To address this, we designed and built the Presentation Support System, then adapted it to

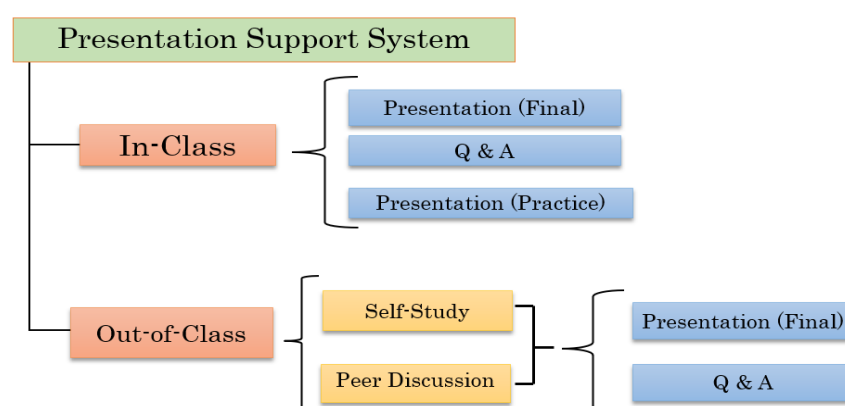
graduate learning in 2019. This study will explain the learning system and report some tentative results obtained from the first semester of a postgraduate class in 2021.

Description of the Presentation Support System

The system was first conceived in 2017. It is composed of two subsystems: In-class Learning and Outside of Class Learning. These two subsystems were designed to create an integrated learning system that supports hybrid learning both in and out of the classroom (Figure 1). To improve presentation skills, self-study, or voluntary practice outside of regular class time is essential. The system aims to encourage students to practice by themselves and combine the in-class learning with out-of-class practice effectively. So far, the In-class Learning subsystem was built and then piloted in a graduate course. The Outside of Class Learning subsystem is currently under construction. This study will describe the already constructed In-class Learning part of the system, focusing on its three evaluation systems.

Figure 1

Outline of Presentation Support System



Outline of In-class Learning mode

The In-class Learning mode is mainly used in class. There are three activities: Presentation (Practice), Q & A, and Presentation (Final). These three activities are designed to

support the class through recording presentations and allowing other students and instructors to provide feedback to the presenter.

Presentation (Practice) is used to rehearse the presentation and to engage in self-evaluation. It helps the presenter to get used to the technology and to self-reflect on their own performance. As the presenter gives a presentation, the presentation system creates a recording. Whenever the student needs any corrections, a teacher or peer can stop the presentation to offer advice to the presenter. Thus Presentation (Practice) allows interruption and repetition when they are necessary. The advice is also recorded and helps the presenter to improve their performance after class. Once the student is ready, they then move on to Presentation (Final Version).

In the Q & A activity, the class and instructors interact with the presenter, offering feedback or asking questions, as would happen in a professional seminar or academic conference. Q & A is also composed of the same four parts as in Presentation (Final Version). To be a good questioner, students need to concentrate on the presentation. Careful observation of other students' performance is beneficial for the enhancement of their presentation skills.

Presentation (Final Version) consists of four parts: video recording, online evaluation, post-presentation evaluation and evaluation comments. During this activity, students give a presentation as if it were at an actual conference or seminar. They give a talk along with a PowerPoint presentation. Their presentation is recorded so that the speaker can review their performance later along with feedback from the audience.

Feedback devices

Feedback is an important component of the In-class Learning mode, and it is integrated throughout the presentation system. This allows the presenter to receive useful critiques to help them gain confidence with public speaking, to improve their presentation techniques, and to develop their own presentation style.

Various previous research deals with the effects and impacts of feedback on presentation performance. At school, feedback is basically given by three types of evaluators: teacher, peers and the speaker themselves. Feedback varies according to its source, and this variety of perspectives allows for a wider range of improvement of presenter performance (De Grez et al., 2012; Patri, 2002; Dollisso & Koundinya, 2011; van Ginkel et al., 2017a; van Ginkel et al., 2017b). The effects and the differences which derive from these different sources of feedback are still in an investigational stage. However, since a presentation can have various audience members who would judge the presentation based on their own individual criteria, diversity in feedback is important for presentation practice. Thus, our system includes the above mentioned three feedback sources.

Feedback from peers is especially helpful, so In-class Learning mode is particularly useful for the collection of feedback from other students. Peer feedback can be a tool to help develop presentation skills especially among higher education students (Day et al., 2021). It is important, since by evaluating other students' performance, the presenter and observer learn both good and poor points regarding their presentation. Sometimes students follow the good example indicated by their peers and avoid poor performance. If they can judge the performance of their peers suitably, that means they can judge their own presentation well.

Peer feedback can promote learners' active participation and meaningful engagement (Gikandi & Morrow, 2016). On the process of producing feedback reviews, students engage in multiple acts of evaluative judgement, which stimulates their various abilities. Thus, Nicol et al. (2013) argues that the capacity to produce quality feedback is a fundamental graduate skill (2013). Effective feedback plays a crucial part in the system, and an issue we have been researching (Sugimura, 2019, 2020, 2021). In this system, feedback is a significant component of the In-class Learning mode, and it is integrated throughout the presentation system. The Presentation (Final Version) utilizes three types of evaluations: 1) Online Evaluation; 2) Post-Presentation Evaluation; and 3) Comment.

Procedure for Presentation (Final Version)

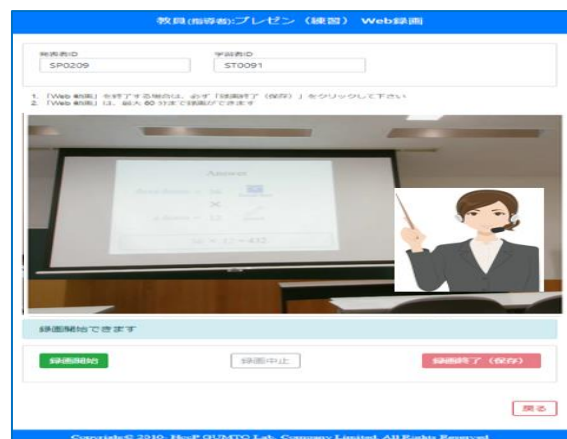
As mentioned above, the system has three activities. Among them, we are concentrating on Presentation (Final) here. This activity consists of the following four parts:

- Video Recording
- Online Evaluation
- Post-Presentation Evaluation
- Evaluation Comments

In Presentation (Final), students give a presentation as if it were at an actual conference or seminar. They give a talk along with a PowerPoint presentation. Their presentation is recorded as is shown in Figure 2, so that the speaker can review their performance later along with feedback provided by their peers and instructor.

Figure 2

Video Recording Using the System



Online Evaluation is done concurrently while the class watches the presentation. It is designed to be done quickly: evaluators have only two choices per item. Audience members click on the corresponding evaluation item in the Evaluation Item Table (Figure 3) while the presentation occurs. The blue buttons (○) means the performance is satisfactory, while the red buttons (×) indicates that improvement is needed. Teacher registers the evaluation category

first, and then selects all the needed evaluation items from each evaluation category. In our case, we registered the three evaluation categories of Voice, Posture, and Slides. Each category has two or three evaluation items, and students are expected to choose either good, which is shown in blue or poor, which is in red, whenever they think it appropriate while watching the presentation. The guideline for the assessment is based on Stevens & Levi's rubric evaluation method (2013).

Figure 3

Online Evaluation Table

Voice
Posture
Slides

Figure 4

Post-Presentation Evaluation Table

The Post-Presentation Evaluation is done after the presentation (Figure 4). It allows the teacher and other students to provide a more thorough evaluation of the entire presentation. Like the Online Evaluation, teachers can select items for evaluation based on the goals of the lesson and can even input their own evaluation items. However, unlike the Online Evaluation, the Post-Presentation is a rubric with an adjustable evaluation range (default is set to 5).

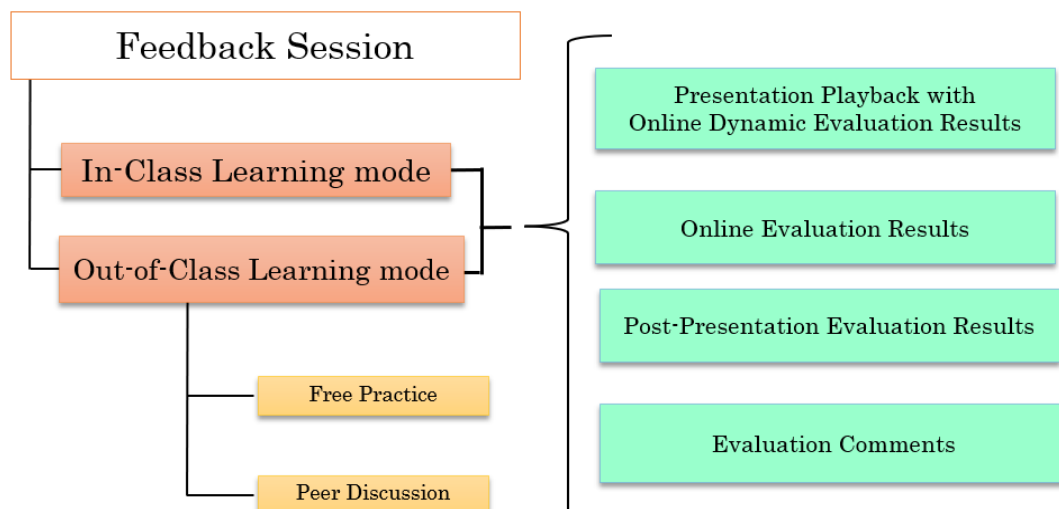
Of course, evaluators will have opinions and ideas that cannot be expressed within the confines of the Online Evaluation and Post-Presentation Evaluation. Therefore, there is a third evaluation mode which allows free commenting.

Feedback Session

After a presentation, feedback is given to the student. In the In-class Learning mode, four types of evaluation results can be utilized (Figure 5). Individual practice is important to enhance presentation skills. Once a class period is finished, the results from the evaluation systems support students' outside of class self-practice. Each student can go at their own pace and analyze their own video and practice by themselves based on the results.

Figure 5

Outline of Feedback Session



The feedback from the instructors and other students helps the student engage in self-reflection to better understand their specific strengths and areas for improvement. With these evaluation results, students learn regularly and continuously. They continue free practice and peer discussion with other students using the Out-of-Class Learning mode. Thus, the system helps students combine In-Class and Out-of-Class Practices.

Presentation Playback with Online Dynamic Evaluation Results

In the feedback session, Online Evaluation plays an important role. Figure 6 shows what the results of an Online Evaluation might look like. As the video is played, the evaluation results are shown simultaneously. When a certain percentage of the audience choose the same evaluation category, which are voice, posture and slides in this study, the square under the category name will be lit. The blue light means the performance in that category is good, while red indicates the performance needs improvement. We call this color change the “color palette.” The percentage of the color palette can be set by teachers based on the number of audience members and how often the light would be lit. The color palette allows the speaker to see the feedback in relation to the timing of the presentation, thereby helping them to pinpoint issues they might need to work on.

The lights in the color palette also work as an indicator when students play back the video. The red light enables students to find which part of recording contains problems in their presentation. Thanks to the light, they can avoid watching the video inefficiently. Without any markers, it could be time-consuming to watch the video searching for their weaknesses. Thus, the lights of the color palette help speakers not only in providing the evaluation results but also in making video playback less time-consuming.

Figure 6*Color Palette***Online Evaluation Results**

The number of times each evaluation item is chosen is calculated automatically and shown in the summary table (Figure 7). The figures written in blue mean that the performance in that evaluation item is satisfactory while red ones indicate the area needs improvement.

Figure 7*Online Evaluation Summary Table*

Web動画評価(プレゼン)結果の表示(数値外字表示)

演習番号: LEO014 発表者ID: SP0225

項目	評価項目	満足・0.0		満足・5.0		計	
		人数	人数	人数	人数	人数	人数
音声	声の大きさ	6	4	3	2	9	6
	声の調子	6	4	3	1	7	5
	発音・イントネーション	3	2	5	2	8	4
	計	15	10	10	5	24	15
姿勢	視線の方向	5	5	5	2	6	3
	姿勢	2	2	2	1	4	3
	計	3	3	7	3	10	6
スライド	スライドの構成	6	5	2	1	8	4
	スライドの表示	5	3	3	2	8	5
	計	11	8	5	3	16	9
計		29	19	21	11	50	29

印刷

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The black shows the total number. Since the color palette shows the results only in categories, this table gives more detailed feedback. Concrete figures help students to grasp both the strong points and areas needing improvement for their performance. Speakers can understand where they are strong and where they need to improve.

Post-Presentation Evaluation Results

Post-Presentation Evaluation allows the evaluators to provide more nuanced feedback than the simple two-choice responses given by the Online Evaluation. Figure 8 shows the results of the Post-Presentation Evaluation. The table indicates the number of evaluators who chose each response from poor to strong, and the average score the presentation received for each evaluation item.

Figure 8

Post-Presentation Evaluation Summary Table



This type of evaluation is a well-established form of feedback and has been used for a long time, even before computer-based evaluation was introduced. However, being connected

to a computer system, all the evaluation results are collected and calculated in one spot, and the scores including averages are shown digitally.

Comment

Rubric-based evaluations are quick and are also useful for aggregating feedback into a quantitative format. This makes class management easier for the instructor and puts less burden on evaluators. However, it also has drawbacks as presenters could lose the opportunity for more nuanced and individualized feedback.

So, in addition to the above-mentioned evaluations there is an open comment evaluation mode as well. By writing comments in their own words, evaluators can better express both positive feedback and areas for improvement. The benefits of this are twofold.

First, for the students as evaluators, it forces them to think deeply about what they think makes a strong presentation. Throughout the school term, students must consider again and again what they personally believe makes a strong presentation. By critiquing others, the evaluators can then internalize the guidelines for a strong presentation that the instructor has presented didactically. In short, through active engagement with the “rules” for a good presentation, they can take knowledge obtained through passive learning and turn it into a practical skill of self-critique which will help them when they present.

For the student who is presenting, the comments section helps them better understand the minds of their audience. This allows the presenter to step outside of their own thinking and see their presentation from multiple other points of view. As a presenter, this helps them better assess themselves more realistically in that they are able to calibrate their own self-assessment to the assessments that others make. This supports not just the development of their skills as a presenter but helps them build confidence that their audience is not judging them harshly or unfairly but is instead interested in hearing what they have to say.

Thus, using four forms of evaluation, feedback sessions help presenters connect in-class activities to out-of-class activities. We used data from these evaluations as the basis of our research project.

Results from Experiment

We conducted an experiment using the Presentation Support System. The aim of the experiment was to analyze the evaluation results by comparing Online Evaluations and Post-Presentation Evaluations. We expected that through the comparison, the characteristics of these evaluations will be revealed. By understanding the differences or similarities, we can utilize them better to give more effective feedback to students.

Outline of Experiment

The system was used in a graduate course at a Japanese university in the first semester of 2021. The course objective was to enhance their academic and professional presentation skills in English. This included the ability to make slides in English, give a short presentation, and to handle a Question & Answer session after the presentation. While there was some didactic material presented regarding tips for giving effective presentations, reviews of pronunciation and intonation, and strategies for dealing with audience questions, the bulk of the class focused on practicing presentation skills.

In this course, students were provided a script and slides for a prepared presentation based on the topic in each class, such as “Numbers and Units” and “Various Graphs.” This helped them to practice how to paraphrase a full speech into highlights for the slides later, while practicing with the prepared script helped them develop their basic presentation skills and pronunciation.

The students were all Japanese with varying degrees of skill in English communication. The number of students was 33, and they were divided into two groups. In each group, they

were separated in a former half and a latter half, and when the former half gave presentations, the latter half played a role of evaluator. Even the students in the former half evaluated their peer when they were not the presenter along with the instructor. Therefore, we conducted presentation session for four times, two times in each group, and all the students had a chance to give a presentation in front of their group members.

In this study, we focused on one of these presentation sessions. The details of the experiment are as follows:

- Period: First semester in 2021
- Participants: First year students in an MS course (computer science major)
- Number of participants: 17 (including an instructor)
- Number of speakers: Eight

Results of the Post-Presentation Evaluation

First, the results of Post-Presentation Evaluation will be examined. In the experiment, 17 students gave presentations. The table shows the mean scores for all items for each speaker. The five evaluation items were: 1) Item 1 (clarity); 2) Item 2 (understandability); 3) Item 3 (posture); 4) Item 4 (slides); and 5) Item 5 (overall impression). All were rated on a scale of 1 to 5. Grade 1 means poor and Grade 5, excellent. The value of Cronbach's alpha for Table 1 was $\alpha = .946$, which suggests that the reliability is excellent.

As Table 1 shows, among the 14 speakers, Speaker 2 had the lowest mean of 2.61, while Speakers 4 and 7 had the highest with 4.20. In this study, these three characteristic speakers will be focused on, in addition to Speaker 3, who is an example of an average speaker in this session, with an average of 3.41.

Table 1*Results of Post-Presentation Evaluation*

Speaker no.	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	<i>Average</i>
1	2.7	3.0	3.6	3.8	3.2	3.28
2	2.1	2.5	2.9	3.1	2.5	<u>2.61</u>
3	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.4	<u>3.41</u>
4	4.6	4.1	3.9	4.0	4.4	<u>4.20</u>
5	4.0	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.7	3.85
6	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.56
7	4.4	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.2	<u>4.20</u>
8	4.2	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.7	3.82
<i>Average</i>	3.59	3.49	3.71	3.73	3.57	—
<i>SD</i>	0.833	0.551	0.311	0.298	0.555	—

According to Table 1, Speaker 2 was rated poor in all five items, which is reflected directly in his average. Item 1 (clarity) was the lowest among the results, but the other items also showed similarly low values. This made it difficult to decide in which area Speaker 2 should start working to improve his performance. Table 1 didn't indicate any strengths in his presentation, either.

Contrary to Speaker 2, both Speaker 4 and 7 received a high evaluation. Their averages are the same, the values in each item were similar and almost all of them were 4.0 and over. Judging from the results of the Post-Presentation Evaluation, their performance seems to have no specific improvements.

The average presenter Speaker 3 didn't show any distinct features in the results. As far as the table shows, his presentation was neither good nor bad. For teachers, a presenter like Speaker 3 is difficult to instruct, since the weaknesses and strengths in his performance are ambiguous.

Thus, the Post-Presentation Evaluation provides the overall tendencies of each speaker, but depending on the speaker, it is not enough to indicate specific areas which need improvements, or to give detailed information about the speaker.

Results of the Online Evaluation

Next, we will focus on the results of Online Evaluation. While Post-Presentation Evaluation targets the whole presentation after it is given, Online Evaluation is done simultaneously with the presentation. Whenever the audience member finds the performance is good, they click the blue button of the corresponding item, and when the performance is poor, they click the red button. Here the blue buttons mean good, and red, poor. In contrast to the Post-Presentation Evaluation, which is evaluated only once after the presentation is finished, Online Evaluation is done continuously during the whole presentation. Because of the differences of evaluation method, the evaluation items in Online Evaluation are not necessarily same as those in Post-Presentation Evaluation, though they have some relevance to each other. In this experiment, six evaluation items were set: 1) Item 1 (volume of voice); 2) Item 2 (speaking speed); 3) Item 3 (pronunciation and intonation); 4) Item 4 (eye contact); 5) Item 5 (posture); and 6) Item 6 (slides).

Table 2 and Table 3 show the averages for the number of clicks for each item for all eight speakers. Table 2 contains the results of blue clicks and Table 3, red clicks. Both tables indicate that they share the same tendencies as the Post-Presentation Evaluation. Basically, Speakers 4 and 7 received more blue clicks (positive evaluations) and less red clicks (negative evaluations) compared to other speakers. However, though Speaker 4 and 7 shared the same average (4.20) in the Post-Presentation Evaluation, Speaker 4 received more positive feedback in total (30.8) than Speaker 7 (26.4), which was same as Speaker 5. Closely examined, Speaker 4 was considerably strong in Item 1 (volume of voice), which resulted in the largest value in total. Speakers 4 and 5 received high ratings in Items 1, 2, and 4.

However, their results show that they have areas they need to improve, or items whose scores are not necessarily high. Compared with them, the total value of blue clicks was not so large as Speaker 2, while Speaker 7 was highly evaluated in almost all the items and received few negative evaluations. In his case, there is no prominent item, but overall, the results are well-balanced.

In contrast, Speaker 2 was the lowest, just as in the Post-Presentation Evaluation. In the Online Evaluation, he had negative evaluations for most items. He received distinctively large value of red clicks (20.8), with the least number of blue clicks (14.0). His results indicate his performance was poor in Items 1 (volume of voice) and 4 (eye contact); especially Item 1, the volume of voice, was significantly weak. In fact, in his presentation, his voice was considerably low, and his eyes followed the script and didn't make enough eye contact with his audience. In this way, his evaluation results closely reflect his actual performance.

Table 2

Sum of Blue Clicks in Online Evaluation

Speaker no	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	Item6	Total
1	.2.3	3.5	1.6	1.4	2.0	4.0	14.8
2	0.1	3.6	4.0	1.0	1.5	3.8	14.0
3	3.8	3.3	1.8	2.5	3.5	3.3	18.0
4	11.4	6.8	3.9	2.5	2.0	4.3	30.8
5	8.0	4.0	1.3	5.9	3.5	3.8	26.4
6	3.1	2.6	1.5	2.0	2.1	3.4	14.8
7	7.0	3.5	5.5	4.1	2.9	3.4	26.4
8	7.0	3.3	2.6	2.8	3.8	4.6	24.0
<i>Average</i>	5.3	3.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	3.8	21.1
<i>SD</i>	3.4	1.2	1.4	1.5	0.8	0.4	6.1

Table 3*Sum of Red Clicks in Online Evaluation*

Speaker no.	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	Item6	Total
1	4.6	2.1	1.4	2.1	0.5	0.4	11.1
2	11.4	1.0	0.8	4.1	2.1	1.4	20.8
3	1.8	0.9	2.9	1.8	1.8	0.8	9.8
4	0.0	0.1	1.5	1.1	1.1	0.5	4.4
5	0.4	0.0	1.9	0.5	0.3	0.9	3.9
6	0.8	1.4	2.0	2.0	0.4	0.6	7.1
7	0.3	0.5	0.1	1.4	0.8	0.8	3.8
8	0.0	1.5	3.1	0.8	0.1	0.8	6.3
<i>Average</i>	2.4	0.9	1.7	1.7	0.9	0.8	8.4
<i>SD</i>	3.7	0.7	0.9	1.1	0.7	0.3	5.3

However, closely examined, it is indicated that Speaker 2 had relatively high evaluations in Item 3 (pronunciation and intonation). This suggests that if only he could improve the volume of his voice (i.e., Item 1), his presentation would be much better. With this improvement, clarity and understandability in Post-Presentation Evaluation are also expected to be greatly improved.

Regarding the average Speaker 3, again he did not show any distinct features in positive feedback. However, in Table 3, the total of his negative feedbacks amounted to 9.8, a relatively high value, which means his performance needs some improvements.

Online Evaluation Results with time scale

Since the Online Evaluation is done concurrently with the presentation, this evaluation method provides the results in chronological order. The transition of evaluation will be examined here. The vertical axis in the figures shows the actual number of clicks and the horizontal axis shows the time scale in 30-second increments. Blue bars represent positive feedback and red bars, negative.

Speaker 2

Speaker 2 is indicated as the weakest speaker among all eight, both in Post-Presentation Evaluation and Online Evaluation. He was especially weak in Item 1 (volume of voice).

Figure 9 shows his chronological evaluation results for Item 1. A blue bar represents good while red bars, poor. As the graph shows, the volume of his voice was low throughout the presentation. He received as many as 27 red clicks during the first 30 seconds. Positive evaluation in this item was given only once at the beginning and that was all. The graph of Item 4 (eye contact) shows a similar tendency.

However, the graph of item 3 (pronunciation and intonation) suggests Speaker 2 is better in this area than in other evaluation items (Figure 10). In most time ranges, the number of clicks is not necessarily big, and the blue bars are recorded throughout the presentation. During the first 30 seconds, he received the maximum positive feedback of 17 times. It is important that each speaker can recognize certain strengths in their performance, otherwise, they would lose their motivation.

Figure 9

Speaker 2's Chronological Evaluation Results of Item 1 (Volume of Voice)

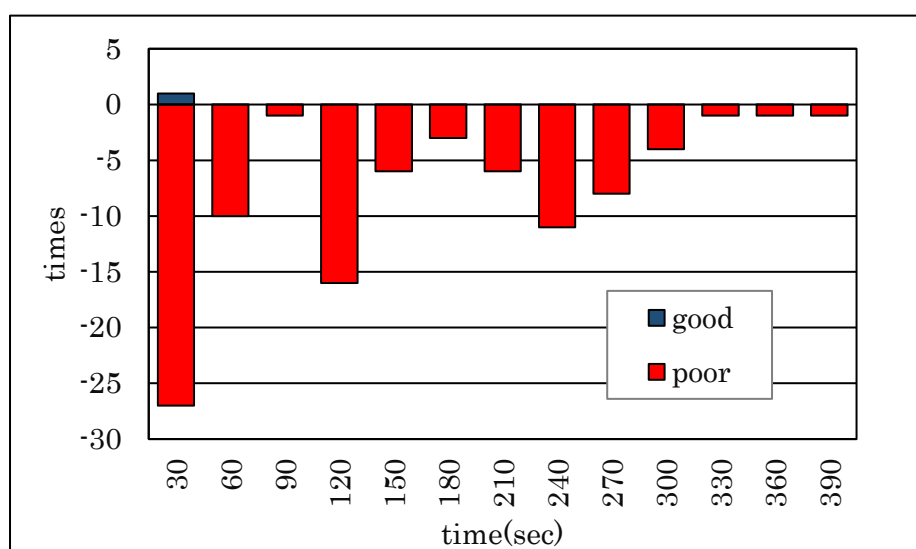
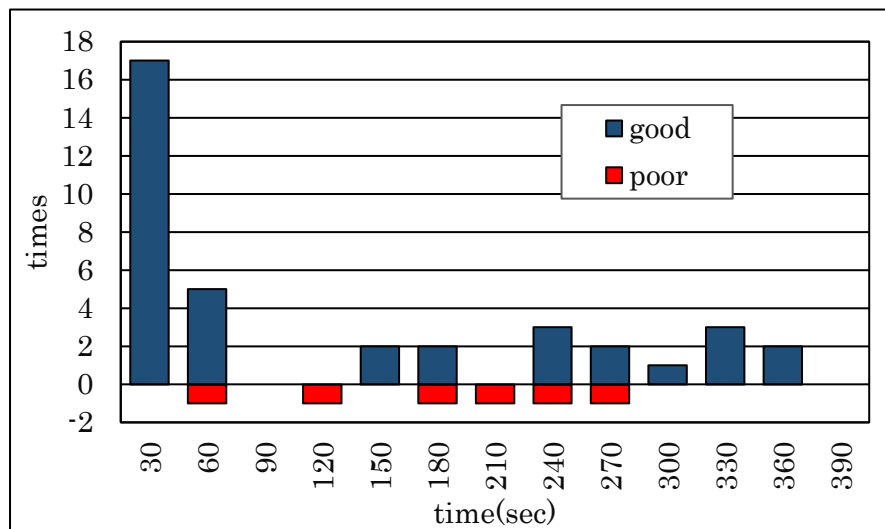


Figure 10*Speaker 2's Chronological Evaluation Results of Item 3 (Pronunciation and Intonation)*

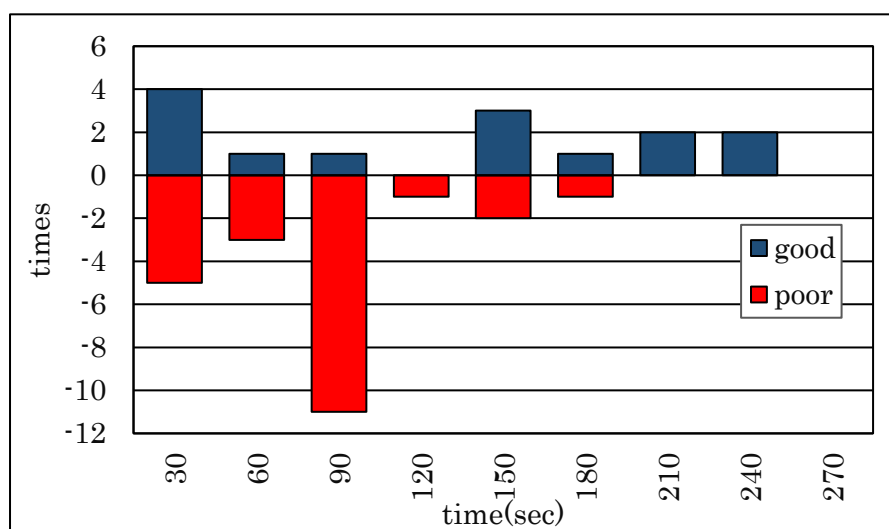
In both the negative feedback in Item 1 and positive feedback in Item 3, the peak appears during the first 30 seconds. It is highly possible that the first impression of the presentation affected the evaluation of whole presentation. Opening is a crucial part in presentations to grab the attention of their audience. Online Evaluation results of Speaker 2 suggest timing should be considered during presentations. With a careful and impressive opening, his presentation might be much improved.

Speaker 3

As an average presenter, Speaker 3 had no specific areas to improve in the results of Post-Presentation Evaluation. In his Online Evaluation, he showed similar tendencies, but in Item 3 (pronunciation and intonation), he received more negative feedback compared with other areas. According to Figure 11, he got 11 red clicks during the 60 to 90 second time period. Toward the end of his presentation, negative feedback was not recorded, still Speaker 3 needs to improve this area, especially in the former half of his presentation.

Figure 11

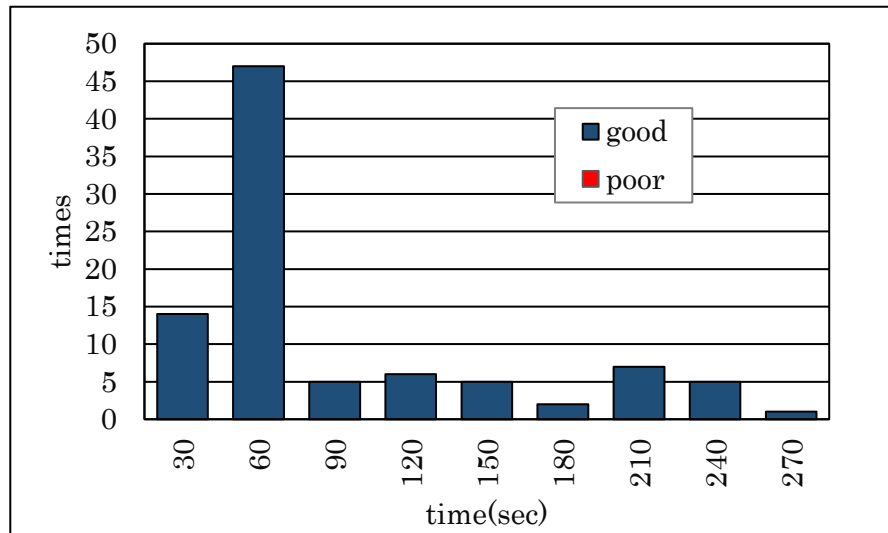
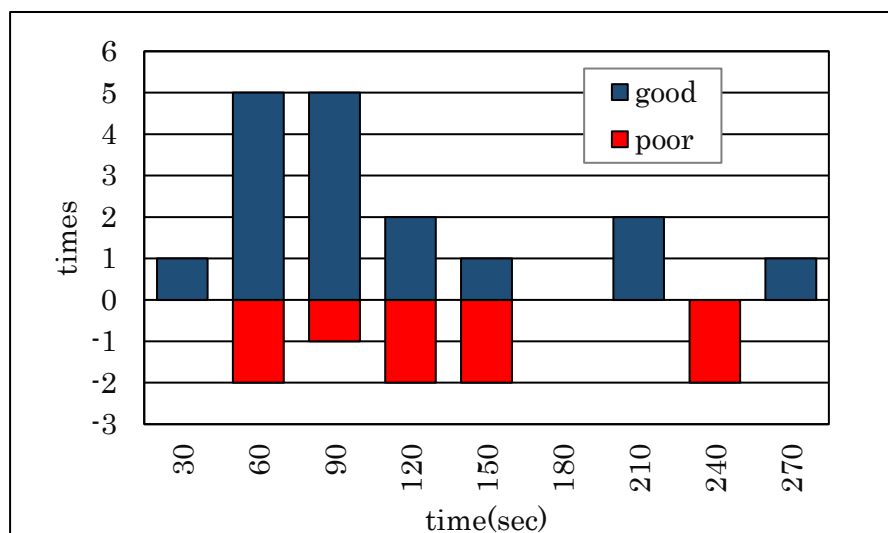
Speaker 3's Chronological Evaluation Results of Item 3 (Pronunciation and Intonation)



Speaker 4

Speaker 4 received the highest value in positive feedbacks among eight speakers with 30.8 (average 21.1). He was incomparably strongest in Item 1, volume of voice (11.4). As Figure 12 shows, he received no negative feedback at all throughout his presentation in this item. The peak appears during 60 to 90 seconds, which is close to the opening.

However, in other areas such as Item 3 (pronunciation and intonation) and Item 5 (posture), his values are not necessarily large. Figure 13 indicates he received negative evaluation frequently. It is true that his negative values are not so large, but to make a better presentation, Speaker 4 must practice in this area.

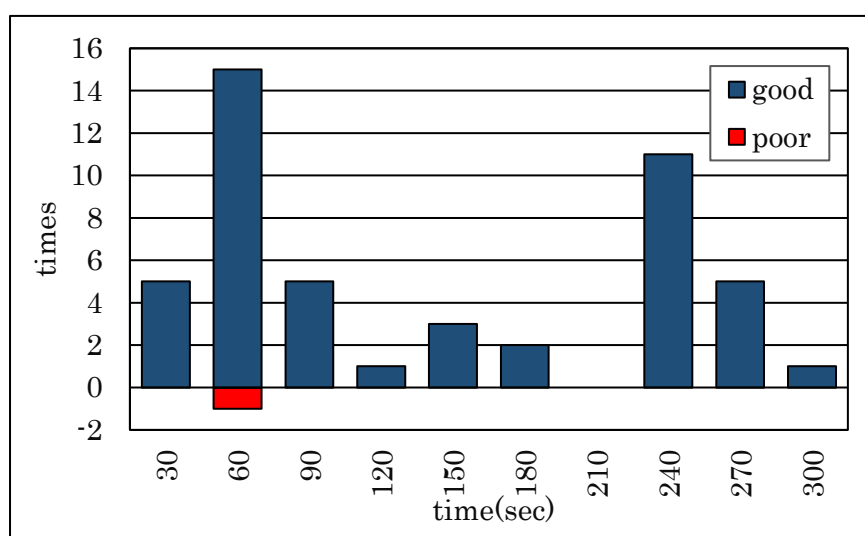
Figure 12*Speaker 4's Chronological Evaluation Results of Item 4 (Volume of Voice)***Figure 13***Speaker 4's Chronological Evaluation Results of Item 5 (Posture)****Speaker 7***

Speaker 7 is an all-round presenter, and both his Post-Presentation Evaluation and Online Evaluation showed no specific areas for improvement. If we take a close look at the evaluation results with time scale, however, it reveals a certain tendency in his presentation.

Figure 14 shows the results of Speaker 7 in Item 3 (pronunciation and intonation). According to Table 2 and 3, he had no problem in this area. Figure 14 also proves his performance was good enough to receive only one negative feedback rating during the whole presentation. However, though he gained many blue clicks at the beginning and toward the end of presentation, the positive feedback drops in the middle part. Figure 14 suggests his presentation became less active or interesting. In order to improve his presentation, the middle part would be the area to consider.

Figure 14

Speaker 7's Chronological Evaluation Results of Item 3 (Pronunciation and Intonation)



Thus, taking time into consideration, results from Online Evaluation offer another perspective on feedback and instruction. It was also indicated that the peak of evaluation frequency tends to appear at the beginning of a presentation. This means the opening part of a presentation has a major impact on the audience and sometimes that affects the whole impression of the presentation. The Online Evaluation helps presenters and teachers understand the influence of timing in a presentation.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, the comparison of the evaluation results between the Post-Presentation Evaluations and the Online Evaluations shows similar tendencies. These two evaluation methods both aim to indicate which evaluation items are good or poor. As their purpose is the same, the similarity suggests their validity.

However, their focal points are different. The purpose of the Post-Presentation Evaluation is a holistic evaluation of the presentation. Even if there were some bad points, the overall impression is good, so the speaker could get a high evaluation. It is also possible that peers rate the speaker positively to show support and encouragement. This kind of consideration has the risk of giving excessively higher evaluations among peers (Fujiwara et al., 2007).

Rubric-based evaluation such as Post-Presentation Evaluation is often done after class, so that evaluators can take time (Dollisso & Koundinya 2011; Cotter & Hinkelman, 2019). However, if plenty of time is allowed for peer evaluation, it could cause a reciprocal effect mentioned above, or the impression could change over time.

In contrast, the Online Evaluation is done concurrently and continuously with the presentation. Yamashita & Nakajima developed a “response analyzer” and introduced the device into undergraduate learning. As they insist, the simultaneous evaluation with a presentation is done intuitively and unnecessary consideration tends to be reduced (2010).

In addition, in the Online Evaluation, as the audience are expected to evaluate throughout the presentation, even an excellent presentation can receive helpful, detailed feedback. By watching a video playback with the color palette lighting, speakers can learn in which category and where in their presentation they need to improve. By the same logic, a poor presenter like Speaker 2 can find their strength on close examination of the evaluation results.

The differences in these two evaluation methods, that is, Post-Presentation Evaluation and Online Evaluation, help speakers understand their performance and identify their strengths and weaknesses in their presentation. The variety of evaluation system provides diversified viewpoints to both instructors and students.

Taking the differences of each evaluation method into account, it is necessary to consider which evaluation items are appropriate to the method. For example, Online Evaluation has advantages in evaluating the presentation consistently from the beginning to the end. However, to make the maximize its potential benefits, additional research should attempt to determine how to assess presentations fairly, in terms of evaluation items such as volume of voice, pronunciation, and so on. In addition to the present evaluation items, we also need to consider other factors, namely, the script or the speakers' intention pertaining to which aspects they are focusing on to impress the audience. By understanding the relevance and characteristics of the evaluation methods in this software, instructors will be able to give more effective instruction. With further research, we plan to develop a teaching method which combines in-class and out-of-class practices smoothly.

To enhance presentation skills, it is important to practice not only in class but also out of class. However, that does not mean simple repetition is enough to lead to improvement. Without precise feedback in which area a speaker needs improvement, it is difficult to practice effectively. To meet these needs, evaluation methods such as we have discussed here are indispensable. Especially, multiple evaluation methods serve well to provide various types of feedback.

We introduced the Presentation Support System and some of the results from the first real-world use of the system. Because of COVID-19, the chance to use the system in face-to-face lessons was limited. Future research will involve investigation of the causal relationships between the various kinds of evaluation, the in-class and out-of-class variables, and the

learning outcomes of the students, so that we can develop an effective teaching method for presentations.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 17K02936. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive and motivational comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

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Selected Papers

Practitioner Report

Project-Based English Courses for University Students in an Online Setting

Yoko Maekawa

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Abstract

During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, university education worldwide shifted toward online learning. Online education imposed various limitations on the teaching of English courses, resulting in fewer opportunities for students to participate in class. To encourage students' participation, active learning, and interaction with their classmates, I planned and carried out project-based English courses for university students majoring in science and engineering, using the online platform Zoom. The project was designed to satisfy students' three psychological needs (according to self-determination theory): autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Although few students answered the pre- and post-questionnaire surveys, the results suggested that the class satisfied students' psychological needs and maintained their motivation to learn English. In the open-ended questions, students commented on the project's effectiveness in helping them acquire useful English skills. Since some students experienced difficulty completing projects, some points must be improved in future research. However, this practice may present a new approach to teaching English to university students.

Keywords: Online teaching, Project-based instruction, English learning motivation

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a great impact on education worldwide. In 2020, classes suddenly shifted toward an online setting (United

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020), of which teachers had little pedagogical knowledge or technological experience (Rapanta et al., 2020). Accessible platforms and interactive communication are crucial to the success of online courses (Bao, 2020; Chen et al., 2020), while online anxiety may negatively influence students' learning (Bolliger & Halupa, 2012; Stiller & Koster, 2016).

In a prior study, I conducted a survey on students' expectations regarding the online courses (Maekawa, 2021). The results revealed that students were anxious because they had no idea what to expect, were afraid of having no peer help, worried about possible technical problems (e.g., network instability) and the possibility of missing important information due to their weak Internet connection. During the spring semester of 2020, I tried to conduct interactive instruction using the online teleconferencing platform Zoom while considering students' emotional well-being. To reduce students' anxiety during class activities, students' communication with the instructor was limited to Zoom's chat and response features. The results of the prior questionnaire survey and class evaluation showed that students reacted positively to the intervention, as they found it easy to participate, experienced no peer pressure, and felt comfortable asking questions (Maekawa, 2021). Although the prior class intervention seemed successful and effective, there were limited interactions between students and few activities to express their opinions in English.

To increase opportunities for peer communication and cultivate students' research and cognitive skills during the ongoing online learning environment, I decided to conduct a project-based class using Zoom. The purpose of this article is to present the practice of project-based courses using Zoom as well as students' responses toward it. Students' reactions may reveal the advantages and disadvantages of project-based online courses.

Literature Review

Online Courses

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated teachers' stress not only because of the urgent need to shift to online learning but due to related health concerns and the blurring of the barrier between work and home (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Although online learning presents various advantages for learners who are unable to attend courses or engage in self-regulated learning (Abe et al., 2019; Bao, 2020; Moore et al., 2011), they may also have a negative impact on students' course persistence and grades (Xu & Jaggars, 2013). The lack of social interaction is the main limitation of online courses; therefore, it is crucial to promote collaboration and interactive communication (Deusen-Scholl, 2015; Erben et al., 2009).

Project-based Course

Project-based learning has proven to be effective for teaching content and language simultaneously, while encouraging students to take active roles in learning through collaboration (Shin, 2018; Troyan, 2016). Projects include group collaboration and research, as well as production of papers or presentations (e.g., Nishioka, 2016; Sampson, 2015; Shin, 2018; Troyan, 2016). Nishida and Yashima (2009) investigated motivational processes through musical projects in primary schools and found that students' perceived competence, autonomy, and willingness to communicate increased. In prior studies, I found that presentation activities helped students gain confidence and satisfied their psychological needs (Maekawa & Yashima, 2012a, 2012b). Prior studies have examined the effectiveness of active learning instructions, which include multi-modal interactions, collaborative working, and project-based assignments (Cheung, 2021; Yuliansyah & Ayu, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021), in online settings. Thus, it is important to provide students with active learning instructions and plenty of interaction opportunities, investigate their effects on students' motivation, and identify the problems that students face.

Course Design and Practice

I designed a project-based Zoom class to increase peer interaction and maintain students' motivation to learn English.

Theoretical Framework

When designing the project-based course, I used self-determination theory (SDT) as the theoretical framework for maintaining students' emotional well-being and motivation.

According to SDT, humans tend to regulate their behavior through communication or by interacting with their environment, and may develop self-determined motivation to participate in activities by satisfying three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Noels et al., 2019). SDT introduces three types of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation. Extrinsic motivation is categorized into four different types of regulations (external, introjected, identified, and integrated), according to learners' level of self-determination in the activity. I have used this theory because it is useful to check the effectiveness of classroom interventions and understand students' English learning motivation by assessing the satisfaction of their psychological needs and motivational changes.

Students were allowed to choose the project themes and work configurations (individually, in pairs, or in groups of three). By providing them with these choices, students' need for autonomy would be satisfied. Competence-related needs would be satisfied through weekly assignments and feedback that could lead students to complete the project. I also introduced a rubric for each assignment so that students could find ways to improve their content or English proficiency. Students' need for relatedness would be fulfilled by discussing the project with their teammates and communicating with the instructor.

Course Background

Students were classified into different levels according to their Visualizing English Language Competency test scores at the beginning and end of their first year. The second

result was used to divide second-year students into three levels: S (highest), A (middle), and B (lowest). In 2020, I taught one S-level group and one A-level group of second-year students. The S-level group had twenty-five students from the departments of Life Science and Applied Physics, who were high in academic level and diligent but also quiet and passive. The A-level group comprised thirty-six students from the departments of Applied Chemistry and Biotechnology and Mechanical Systems Engineering. In this group, there was significant variation in students' personalities: some were quite active, while others were shy. The A-level group was slightly more energetic than the S-level group. I decided to conduct projects from the fall semester for the following reasons: 1) I had included presentations and projects on the syllabi but had to abandon them during the spring semester due to the sudden shift to online learning. 2) I wanted to provide a more authentic learning environment for higher-level second-year students.

Projects

The target university uses the quarter system, so the fall semester was divided into two quarters. During the first fall quarter (Fall 1), the project goal was to make presentations, while that of the second fall quarter (Fall 2) was to complete research papers. Table 1 presents the schedule for each quarter. At the beginning of each quarter, students voted for the theme of the projects and read an article relevant to the selected theme. After Week 3, each class started with an introduction and lecture about the weekly assignment. Subsequently, students moved to a breakout room for discussion, and the class concluded with a summary session. During student discussions, students were allowed to use all of Zoom's functions. I moved between all breakout rooms to check how each discussion was progressing and to answer students' questions.

As noted above, I allowed students to choose some aspects of the program. First, I asked students to vote for the project themes at the beginning of each quarter. In Fall 1, both

groups chose COVID-19 as their theme, researched their topic, and gave a 2–3-minute-long presentation through Zoom at the end of the quarter. The topic examples included the main symptoms of COVID-19, ways to prevent infection, the effects of wearing masks, and the description of COVID-19. In Fall 2, S-level students voted for environmental issues as their main theme and wrote research papers about topics such as global warming, wildfires, deforestation, and air pollution. A-level students selected ideal future machines as their theme. The topic examples included time machines, moving walkways in campus, space elevators, and automatic cooking machines.

Table 1

Schedule of Project-based Courses in Each Quarter

	Fall 1	Fall 2
Week 1	Orientation & theme choice	Orientation & theme choice
Week 2	Reading comprehension	Reading comprehension
Week 3	Brainstorming	Brainstorming & research
Week 4	Research	Structure of research papers
Week 5	Presentation structure	Making paragraphs
Week 6	Transition words	References
Week 7	What is good speech	Clear, correct, and concise speech
Week 8	Presentation	Editing a draft

Table 2

Configuration of the Project Groups

	S-level	A-level
Individual	8	15
Pair	8 (4 pairs)	18 (9 pairs)
Triad	9 (3 groups)	3 (1 group)

Students were allowed to complete the project individually, in pairs, or in groups of three. Table 2 shows students' participation styles; around a third of students chose to work individually. Additionally, some students chose individual work because they had difficulty communicating with others, while others struggled during group work due to technical issues.

I also noticed that some groups in the breakout rooms interacted only through Chat, without using their microphones. Other groups participated in class from the same room on campus, engaging in face-to-face discussions. Conversely, others effectively utilized Zoom's features to establish a mutual understanding using visual aids.

Study

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of project-based courses and students' reactions toward them. The research questions were the following: "How did the project-based online English class affect on students' motivation in learning English?" (RQ1), "What are the benefits of project-based online English classes?" (RQ2), and "What are the disadvantages of project-based online English classes?" (RQ3).

Method

I assessed the motivational effects of the projects and students' reactions to them at the end of the spring and fall semesters, in August and February, respectively. The survey was conducted through Google Forms. I sent students a link to the questionnaire after informing them of its purpose and that participation was entirely voluntary and would not affect their grades.

Table 3

Number of Survey Respondents

	August	February	Both
S-level	7	8	3
A-level	5	8	3
Total	12	16	6

Due to the online setting, the number of participants was very small. Therefore, the results, especially the quantitative ones, were unreliable. However, I analyzed the data to examine the effectiveness of the class. Table 3 shows the number of participants in August and February. Although the number of participants increased slightly in February, only a few students answered both the August and February surveys. Five of those students chose to work in a group, while one student worked individually.

Materials

Both questionnaires in August and February assessed motivational regulations and satisfaction vis-à-vis their psychological needs with five-scale items. In February, I also included five items on students' reflections regarding the projects, as well as three open-ended questions. IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software was used to analyze the quantitative data, while MAXQDA2020 software was used to analyze the qualitative data.

Motivational Regulation. Hiromori (2006) developed a motivational regulation scale for Japanese English learners based on Noels' (2001) research. I used this instrument to examine the motivational effects of the educational intervention. To lighten students' emotional burden, I omitted some items. Of the 25 original items, only 20 were used. Items were categorized as follows: intrinsic motivation (four items), identified regulation (four items), introjected regulation (four items), external regulation (four items), and amotivation (four items).

Students' Perceived Satisfaction of Their Psychological Needs. I adopted Hiromori's (2006) scale for assessing the satisfaction of students' psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). To reduce students' burden, only three items from the original six in each category were used. Nevertheless, I included one reverse item for each category and attempted to maintain variations.

Reflections on the Projects. Students' acceptance of the projects was measured with five items developed for this study. The items were: "I enjoyed the project," "Instructions were difficult to understand," "The project assignment was difficult," "I could gain English knowledge," and "It had a high workload."

Open-ended Questions. In February, I asked three questions: 1) What did you learn through the project? 2) What improvements would you suggest for the project-based class? 3) Write your opinion about the Zoom classes.

Results

Satisfaction of Students' Psychological Needs

The Cronbach's alpha of competence was low ($\alpha = .28$, including students only answering in February and $\alpha = -.10$ only students answering both in August and February). Since both results suggested that the same item ("Sometimes, I feel that I am not good at English") be eliminated, it was removed.

The mean scores, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas of perceived psychological needs are presented in Table 4. Due to the small number of participants, it was inappropriate to calculate the statistical difference. Participants answering both surveys (in August and February) showed an increase in the satisfaction of their autonomy and relatedness needs, while their competence-related needs remained the same.

Table 4

Mean Scores, Standard Deviation, and Cronbach's Alphas of Students' Psychological Needs

	All participants				Participants answering both surveys (n = 6)				
	August (n = 12)		February (n = 16)		August		February		Difference (Feb-Aug)
	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	
Autonomy	3.44 (0.69)	.65	3.67 (0.66)	.86	3.61 (0.85)	.90	4.06 (0.49)	.74	0.44
Competence	2.92 (0.83)	.83	3.69 (0.85)	.86	3.83 (0.93)	.89	3.83 (0.92)	.85	0.00
Relatedness	3.58 (0.73)	.78	3.69 (0.77)	.76	2.89 (1.03)	.88	3.61 (1.04)	.81	0.72

Motivational Regulation

The Cronbach's alpha of external regulation exhibited a low score ($\alpha = -.43$) in February for students answering both surveys. After eliminating the item "Parents and teachers nag me to study English," the results improved in all cases; thus, said item was omitted. As shown in Table 5, among all regulations, amotivation showed the largest increase from August to February, while external regulation decreased slightly. The changes in other regulations were small.

Table 5

Mean Scores, Standard Deviation, Cronbach's Alphas of Motivational Regulation

	All Participants				Participants answering both surveys (n = 6)				
	August (n = 12)		February (n = 16)		August		February		Difference (Feb-Aug)
	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	M (SD)	α	
Intrinsic	3.63 (0.99)	.85	3.39 (0.88)	.90	3.75 (0.97)	.98	3.67 (0.96)	.93	-0.08
Identified	4.17 (0.89)	.92	3.95 (0.85)	.91	4.13 (0.92)	.94	4.17 (0.79)	.84	0.04
Introjected	4.06 (0.75)	.76	3.77 (0.70)	.79	3.79 (0.73)	.90	3.96 (0.53)	.76	0.17
External	3.83 (0.78)	.67	3.42 (0.60)	.56	3.78 (0.86)	.77	3.56 (0.58)	-.49	-0.22
Amotivation	1.73 (0.78)	.75	2.39 (0.63)	.54	1.79 (0.80)	.87	2.33 (0.79)	.64	0.54

Students' Reflections on the Project

The means and standard deviations of students' reflections on the project are summarized in Table 6. The item "It had a high workload" scored the highest, followed by "I enjoyed the project" and "The project was difficult."

Table 6

Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Students' Reflections on the Project (n = 12)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I enjoyed the project	3.47	1.01
Instructions were difficult to understand	2.35	0.79
The project was difficult	3.47	0.94
I improved my knowledge of English	3.29	0.99
It had a high workload	4.12	0.78

Regarding the answers to the open-ended questions, I coded each answer and counted the number of codes that appeared. Table 7 shows a summary of the coding. For question 2, there appeared some codes which were not related to the points to be improved such as "fun to work with classmates"; nevertheless, I kept those codes.

Table 7

Answer Codes for Open-ended Questions (n = 12)

Question 1) What did you learn through the project?	Question 2) What improvements would you suggest for the project-based class?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English presentation and writing skills (8) Effective knowledge and useful skills for my future career (2) The importance of seeing things from different perspectives (2) English skills in general (1) Knowledge of the project theme (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of templates (2) Extend discussion time with team members (3) Extend communication with the teacher (1) Reduce discussion time (1) Reduce difficulty and workload (2) Fun to work with classmates (3) Easy to ask questions to teacher from breakout rooms (1)

Note. The numbers between parentheses indicate the number of times the codes appeared.

Discussion

Regarding RQ1, even though the sample size was small, students reported an increase in the satisfaction of their need for autonomy and relatedness. Although there were few peer interactions, students had been able to interact with the teacher frequently in the previous semester. The increase in the satisfaction of relatedness indicates that the project met students' needs. However, five of the six students who answered both surveys chose to work in groups, so individual students' answers may vary. The increase in autonomy suggests that providing students with choices was effective. Students' satisfaction with competence did not change. However, since the class content became more difficult later, perhaps the project satisfied their competence-related needs as well. Although motivational regulation did not change significantly, there is a possibility that project-based courses could satisfy students' psychological needs and maintain their motivation to learn English.

Regarding RQ 2, students perceived the project as enjoyable and effective for English-language learning, which appeared in the codes of open-end questions asking for the points to be improved as well as the answers for students' reflections. Additionally, based on this study's findings, the benefits of this practice include providing students with opportunities to communicate their knowledge and improve their skills, allowing them to visualize the benefits of learning English for their future careers, and providing them with a broader cross-cultural perspective, even despite the restrictions inherent to online learning.

Regarding RQ 3, although students were able to understand the instructions, they reported that the workload was considerable and that the project was difficult to complete. This is because students already had many assignments in other classes. The blurring of the barrier between school and home (MacIntyre et al., 2020) may have also affected students. Students reported that the distance learning environment restricted their time to discuss tasks with their classmates and complete the project outside the class. The online setting also made

it difficult for them to casually ask questions to the teacher. This indicates that online curricula should account for students' learning environment, assignment schedule, and conditions to cooperate with others.

Conclusion

This study developed and implemented a project-based English class through Zoom and analyzed the benefits and problems of the practice. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected teachers and students' mental health, which may have contributed to students' evaluation of the project as too difficult. Thus, it was difficult to assess which students did not enjoy the class *per se*. This is the main limitation of this study. However, students assessed the projects positively in both the class evaluation and the survey. One student sent me a long email saying that she appreciated the class, was amazed to explore the possibilities of online learning, and had gained interest in learning English. It is also possible that some students reacted positively because I developed a good rapport with them during the spring semester, as I focused on considering students' emotional well-being and tried not to increase their emotional burden. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is beginning to subside, projects like the one presented in this study may help educators to be prepared for possible future crises. For future research, I would like to compare the effects of face-to-face and online project-based or active learning courses.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express thanks to anonymous reviewers for their useful comments and Editage (www.editage.com) for English language editing.

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Cognitive Linguistics for EFL Writers: A Study of Plurilingual Online Team-teaching Sessions

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Abstract

We collaborated to team-teach an English presentation skills class via Zoom plurilingually, introducing concepts from cognitive linguistics (e.g. frame semantics, prototype, and category membership) to move students to “re-conceptualize” their tools, words, and master their presentation skills. Students were overall confident in casual English conversation, yet tended to either write grammatically correct sentences in limited patterns, or try to raise readability scores by merely switching everyday vocabularies with archaic ones. Focusing on the “weight” of the verbs used in their writings, students were asked to explore the frame semantics afforded by verbs through translation options and bilingual discussions. Each participant prepared and presented creative new stories, challenging the next speaker to try out other possibilities to entertain the audience. Showing marked improvement launched by this broad-minded approach, students displayed clear understandings of scenes implied by the verb in focus (‘escape’) and created and filled in imaginative new frames to entertain their audience. They used powerful verbs and equally strong tropes to present multiple thematic roles, extending elementary frames and harnessing the encyclopedic nature of semantics.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, EFL, writing, plurilingual approach, stylistic analysis

Cognitive Approach and Plurilingual Setting

The aim of this paper is to report an experimental writing training taught by two

bilingual teachers using a cognitive approach in a plurilingual setting during Weeks 9 and 10 of an English presentation skills class in 2020. This framework furthers work done in L1 composition pedagogy (Markve, 2014) which focuses on rhetorically productive writing exercises afforded by focus on metaphor. The present work enabled learners to further explore their L1 and L2 knowledge with greater speed, compared to a conventional English-only class. The language and cognitive skills transfer easily across languages for bilingual users, and their learning experience is “more productive if it builds on what is already known” (Bialystok and Peets, 2010). Students’ outcome in L2 composition showed significant development in quality at the end of the two sessions.

Method

The two teachers of the sessions are both users of students’ L1 and L2: Teacher 1 is a native speaker of Japanese whose strongest L2 is English, and is less competent in two other European languages; Teacher 2 is a native speaker of English whose competent L2 includes Japanese and two European languages. Having studied in foreign settings, both experienced the developing stages of L2 writing. Our pedagogical beliefs view multiple language knowledge as inseparable within the user’s mind; thus a word in one of our languages is connected to meanings and imageries of our other known languages, bridged by the translation of the word.

The class in question was a group of 11 third year English majors in a Japanese university, recently home after six-month study abroad program to the English-speaking countries before the Pandemic. Their TOEIC scores at the time varied from 500 to 750+. They aimed to master effective presentation skills in English in the elective course called “Debate and Presentation b,” which consisted of 15×90min online sessions in the fall-winter of 2020. Along with attending live online classes, students submitted digital self-recordings and reports using university online systems. It was the 9th and 10th weeks that we had plurilingual team-teaching Zoom sessions to introduce cognitive linguistics notions to reexamine their tool, words.

By the 8th week, students were overall confident in casual English conversation among themselves and with Teacher 1. Regarding their writings for presentation, however, they tended to either stay within their comfort zone to write grammatically correct sentences in limited grammatical patterns, or try to raise readability scores by merely switching everyday vocabularies with archaic ones. Editing process rarely improved the quality of their first draft.

Students have been using vocabulary textbooks and online dictionaries to build their vocabulary knowledge. That experience seemed to shape their habit of replacing words with what they think of as "higher-level vocabulary" when they try to "improve" their writing. Students rarely considered restructuring the whole sentence, nor paid attention to the environment of the word, at the choice of words.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The subject teacher (Teacher 1) looked for a way to guide students to see words in a broader, richer scope than a typical "Vocab. list for EFL learners" which sorts words by difficulty level, frequency in use or in English ability tests. Such textbooks usually provide word-level translations and stand-alone example sentences with little contextual information, and do little to help linking knowledge of words. Our hypothesis was (1) by introducing the idea of cognitive linguistics, (2) and using learners' strong L1 and limited L2 in class discussion, students' choice of words will be liberated and therefore strengthen and enrich their L2 writing.

Procedure

Each 90 min. class was given either with preparation homework or with summary writing submission. It was a challenge in the online class to save enough time for individual student's composition while guaranteeing effective feedback and also the room to learn from peers. During the two experimental sessions, (1) some students just "thought about", while others "wrote and submit" their preparation homework, (2) then all attending students

presented their work orally during class, (3) and then all submitted their final version in written form as summary after the second session. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 conducted team-teaching sessions for two weeks, with several preparation meetings over the target learners' previous activities and aims of the course.

Preparation Homework

The preparation homework for the experimental sessions was given with a painting titled *Lady in Yellow Dress* (Kurzweil, 1899) and directions as follows: "Write a short passage about the person in the painting. What is she thinking?" Students were told to ignore the artist's information.

Session 1

The first session started by reading a sample passage on the painting written by a student in another class. This session aimed to introduce students to a linguistic focus on the heart of language and consider elements suggested or required by each verb they use. By showing an example of student writing and focusing on cognitive and practical aspects of verbs and action, we broaden their strategies for effective communication, simultaneously sharpen their vocabulary and "re-structure" their arguments.

After seeing a writing sample from another class, students were asked to find movement and action (both physical and conceptual) in its language. Importantly, this step was meant to open their minds to perceive more imaginatively, hence we were not concerned with distinguishing between grammatical forms. Responses included 'go, sit, celebrate' in various forms and were used to open a discussion on the weight each verb carried. The class discussed the semantic loads of verbs such as 'do, have, make' and evaluated their roles in representing a situation and in triggering readers' imaginations. Teacher 2 noted the ubiquity and broad applicability of these "light" verbs in an effort to encourage students to look inside verbs to see what roles they require or suggest, and look outside and vividly imagine scenes in which they might take place.

Using verbs' weights as a point of departure, we wanted students to understand how such

investigations and their subsequent uses in writing more creatively leads to a bigger mental dictionary. Further, the session positioned students to both think in and about English and think about language in general as ways to transform their communication skills.

Another frame introduced in the class was the cline between functional and imaginative verbs. Our objective was for them first to recognize this cline and then employ it, seeking more imaginative language to pique their audience's interest, inducing their own creativity while coming to understand that using different verbs can transform their writing. In the sample, they looked for verbs or action-oriented phrases, and imagined what each focuses on and what more they could point to.

Further, students reflected on how, from a user-based position, by entertaining language more broadly (cf. its relation to or representation of reality) and the action and roles of a sentence (cf. verbs' functions, weights, and implied arguments) more narrowly, they could connect better with their audience and enjoy wide-ranging benefits from exploring cognitive aspects of language.

Here is the example we showed the students, asking them to think about the content of its verbs or action words, and what information the words require or suggest. The example is representative of student writing in that verbs are for the most part fairly light.

A girl is sitting on the sofa looking kind of lonely and tired. The yellow dress worn is her favourite. She went to a party at the hotel with her boyfriend. It was the party to celebrate a friend of her boyfriend's birthday who comes from the very rich family. The party went for more than three hours and she was starting to get tired. The other reason she got tired was that she's not used to these posh parties. She escaped from the great hall and was resting on this couch. (Preparation homework by Student 1)

While discussing words students have identified, they are asked to elaborate what each one describes. After referring to several verbs of various weights, we highlight the verb 'be' – noting its support of progressive and passive verbs and that as a copula it 'is' everywhere, functioning like an equal sign. Referencing this omnipotent function and the mildly amusing use of 'is' move students to open their minds to word choice and lighten our approach. We touch also on its very useful but not particularly imaginative function in language with an aside about its semantically

explosive role in metaphor.

Leading into the crux of our investigation, we asked students to investigate verbs in terms of their information, the roles they suggest, and the frames they induce. Students look at the sample and were asked “Which verbs offer more information, roles, and frame potential?” – basic linguistic ideas which can be easily harnessed for classroom discussion. After some feedback, another playful question is posed: “Did any of them capture your attention?” The aim of this question was to introduce a potentially new turn of phrase and linking as conceptually opposite the intended answer.

At the end of the sample, Student 1 wrote “(the woman) escaped from the great hall...” providing our class with a wonderfully rich verb to explore. Assigning a similar task for enough students, ideally across two or more sections, should afford any practitioner ample data, using their own imagination to select the most useful word or phrase for their objective. Drumming up business and revving students’ minds, we compliment this word choice in complementing the painting before us. Students were asked to entertain what ‘escape’ does to their minds, what it triggers, and what its potential is. We move them to consider its back-story and what fascinating implications it has; remarking “what a great insight, now what further can we imagine from this?”

Keeping semantics in focus, students were asked to interpret the sample writing as a story, mapping out the paths that lead up to and away from their understanding of this scene, exploring who and what is she escaping, in what way is she escaping, and why?

Imaginatively exploring semantics strengthens students’ language abilities, and actively positing verbs’ networks are the gateway to growth. Students suggested that the woman could be escaping a person, a place, a thing, a mental or physical condition; they surmise “how about ‘how’” – in what manner and how long does this action last. To gain as much insight into the scene as possible, we also weigh the word’s lexical aspect: Are there temporal parts to it and is there a clear endpoint?

We also want students to use dictionaries as a way to frame words and definitions as members of a category; doing so helps position their word in a network of related ideas, opening them to the nuances of known and unknown words and their networks. Students were asked for

the first definition of ‘escape’ and a sample sentence (e.g. “The prisoner escaped from jail.”) and what roles (e.g. agent, patient, etc) are implied or required of it. They then did the same with the remaining definitions – comparing them and rationalizing their relationships to each other, taking notes on this to help them elaborate a scene.

Session 1 concluded with the following homework assignment: “Explore ‘escape’ – what’s “inside” this verb? How far can it take you? Write down synonyms, antonyms, & translations; make notes; and reflect on how they are located in your cognitive map and how you are answering these questions!” They were given one week to complete the assignment.

Session 2

The outline of session 2 was presented at the class outset as in the content column in Table 1. Session 2 started with a quick review of the previous week. Teachers invited students to explain key concepts for a student who had missed Session 1. Homework check turned out to be a lively idea sharing and discussion on the target word ‘escape’ as students competed with their discoveries of synonyms, antonyms, and translations. Talking about the similarities and subtle differences of words, the class generated a network of bilingual ideas about the target item.

Table 1

Outline of Session 2

<i>Time</i>	<i>Aim</i>	<i>Content</i>
20min	<i>Reflect their learning</i>	Quick review of Session 1
20	<i>Collect ideas</i>	Homework check: Sharing ideas and findings
30	<i>Connect ideas and expand network</i>	Discussion: “What we can do with synonyms, antonyms, and translations to open up our imaginations” – and <i>fill in</i> our argument structures!”
20	<i>Put knowledge into practice</i>	Students' oral presentation [their 2nd original story with the painting]

The quick review of the previous session included references to the unique status of ‘be’ – its static, speedy, and light qualities as well as its logic-defying and hence immensely potent

role in metaphor. Light verbs were profiled as reducing a scene, making scant reference to its rich potential. And heavy verbs, such as ‘escape’ were referred to and exemplified by a word from the same student writing sample of the previous lesson, viz. ‘celebrate’ with its suggested network of agent, object, emotion, reason, and other broader cultural implications.

Next, we drew on students’ homework to investigate what more we can learn about the “outside” elements of ‘escape’ through its synonyms, paraphrases, antonyms, and translations.

Synonyms & Paraphrases

Students produced the following ideas which we then organized as in Table 2:

Table 2

Synonyms and Paraphrases of the English Verb ‘Escape’

Elements	Examples
Active resistance	‘run away’, ‘breakout’, ‘departure’, ‘disappear’, ‘get free’
Quiet motion	‘leave’, ‘fade out’, ‘get away’, ‘sneak out’, ‘avoid’
Previously enclosed	‘release’
Abstract reason	"get out of a bad situation"
Mental	"forget about your usual life/problems"

Each of these points to a different aspect of the frame ‘escape’ – any of which could be referred to and used to elaborate some meaning of the argument “she escaped.” This shows students recognizing a network of meaning around the core definition. There are various subtle but crucial differences among synonyms. For example, ‘leave’ is like ‘escape’ in its movement away from the source domain, but nearly opposite, in that ‘leave’ suggests free movement with no resistance.

Antonyms

Synonyms are both familiar as part of everyday speech to help audiences understand our arguments by pointing to similar concepts or through imaginative metaphors. Antonyms, on the other hand, have great potential because they open up oppositions to contrast with our argument; however, in their negation, they also highlight aspects that may not appear so easily when only

seeking synonyms. Thus, antonyms provide a surprisingly helpful backdoor into expanding students' cognitive maps.

The list students came up with was surprisingly large as shown in Table 3:

Table 3

Antonyms Search of the English Verb 'Escape'

Core meaning	Imprison
Order of incidents	'catch'→'keep'→'imprison'→'escape'→'trace'→'find/discover'
Not+escape	'stay', 'continue'→ less judgment, neutral
	'remain', 'hang on', 'face'→encounter physical enemy→ emotional challenge
	'suffer', 'endure'→go through inaction's consequences
Escape as "going"	The opposite action will be 'come', 'walk', 'appear'

Translation

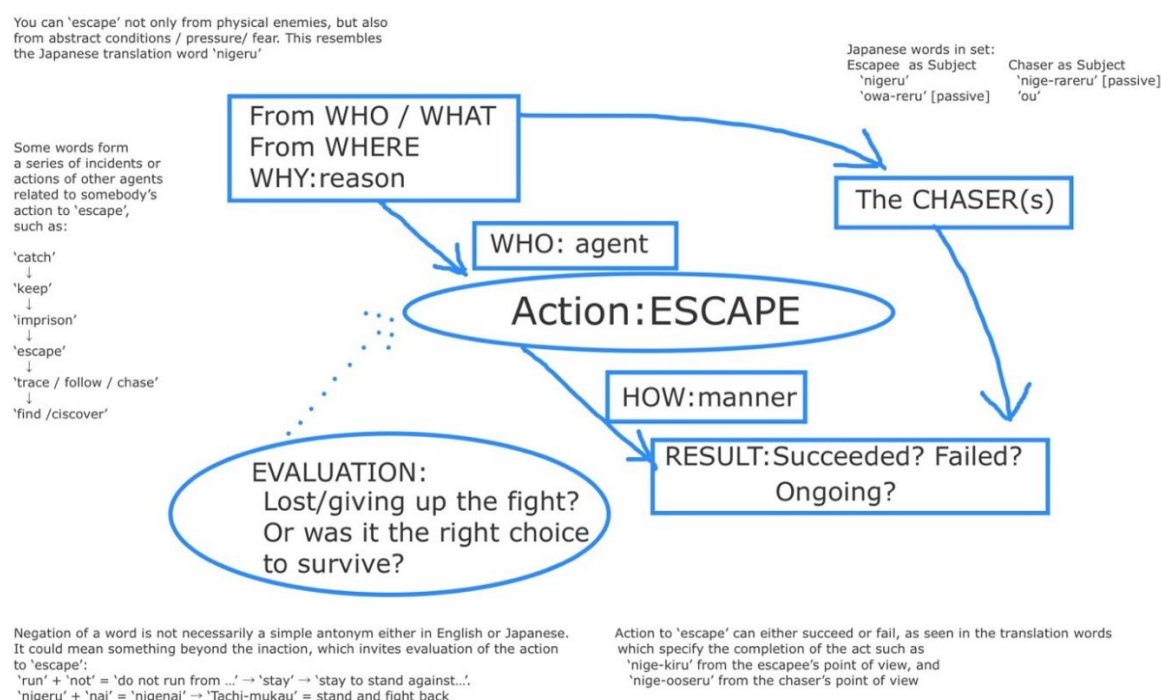
As to translations of the word 'escape', the class faced unexpectedly wide selections and the "translation equivalence" (Cook, 2010) issue on interpretation. Students' research results included from the basic '*nigeru*' to other ones with elements of direction, speed ('*dasso-suru*'), legal aspect ('*datsugoku-suru*'), completion of the act ('*nige-kiru*'), focus on freedom ('*jiyuu-ninaru*'), reasons ('*manugareru*'), association of a loan word '*esuke-pu*', etc. One student asked, while reflecting translations, whether the English verb 'chase' is antonym of 'escape.' It is not exactly the opposite notion in English, but Japanese '*nigeru*' and '*ou*' ('chase') form a combination of two sides, the one who escapes and the one who chases the escaped. Another discovery was that '*nige-nai*', the negation of '*nigeru*', is somewhat different from the simple inaction. There is evaluative aspect on the choice the agent made.

Each of these can be profiled as a prototype within a category which further opens up extensions (peripheral category members) to explore and to rationalize. We can imagine the prototypical escapee as rightfully in jail and then imagine other personal characteristics which may complicate our first assumptions. The above responses suggest students' awareness of the

tentative nature which a word's core meaning might have. They offer room to "re-imagine" the escapee's reasons for and manner of escape or physical/conceptual parameters from which the person is escaping or even whether the verb has its usual prototypical endpoint. Their bilingual search and open exchange collectively formed a cognitive map around 'escape' generated from countless bits of ideas they found in L1 and L2 as roughly shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

What Students Found In/Outside of the Word 'Escape' Through Bilingual Search and Open Exchange



Results and Findings

Students took notes during the lecture and discussion, yet they were not given extra time to write or type their new composition. Immediately after the discussion phase, Teacher 2 asked students to present their composition orally to the class. Teacher 1 invited the first student to present, and mainly Teacher 2 gave feedback as a representative listener after each presentation. Each student named the next speaker, thus students did not know when their turn would be.

Students' presentations show that they explored different aspects of the word 'escape', and fully made use of their discussion. Such a creative writing activity leads to cooperative critical thinking process without spoiling the entertainment value (Saito, 2015). Live oral composition in class functioned as a competitive storytelling. No similar plots were made. They tried to amuse audience, taking risk to try something new for them. Students were bold enough to design their second writing with both "light" speedy verbs and "rich" verbs. Following are transcripts of three students' oral compositions with analysis. Verbs in the story part are underlined:

Student 2

She is escaping from the police. You may wonder why she is escaping from the police. Look at her face. She is thinking,

“Many people are dancing now. But where are their bags? How stupid they are! So now I can steal their poaches, ...”

like that. And she stole their bags or money, and escaped from the party.

But someone noticed about it. So they called police, and then she is escaping from the police now. (Student 2 at the end of the second session)

Student 2 draws on the prototype: law breaker – law enforcer; and then, using several “heavier verbs” (‘wonder’, ‘steal’, ‘dancing’, ‘notice’) fills out the argument template with “thief, crime, situation, character flaw of victims”– which facilitates criminal’s action, object of crime (money), aftermath (vigilant bystander) – which leads to the ‘escape’ scenario. The student uses the classical story pattern of present-past-back to present.

Student 3

Right after Student 2, Student 3 was nominated to talk. This student gave a story in a style that he as the narrator occasionally tells his view to the audience:

I think she is escaping from the atmosphere of, like a formal dance party.

She is,... kind of novelty in France, and she is not in the mood, though her parents let her go to the party to look,... to get connection with boys. And there are many girls who are trying to get connection with boys. She’s just escaped from such atmosphere

secretly. You know, people don't care, because girls just think about she ran away and thought that their enemy [=rival] is gone, or something like this. And she just relaxed on the couch. Then she met a servant, how can I say, someone like a house cleaner by chance, and he likes painting, and asked her “Can I paint a picture of you?” Because if it’s like a portrait, I think she’s sitting on the couch and relaxed too much, so I thought someone just painted her picture. Maybe from this event, the girl in the yellow dress and the boy, I don’t know, like fall in love or something...

(Student 3 at the end of the second session)

The student shifts from the core meaning of “breaking the law (or being held hostage)” to “breaking social code” and therefore parents’ desire. The story opens up commentary from the other girls’ points of view, which shows the students’ awareness by harnessing the roles afforded by the frame. Her escape results in the “freedom” to just relax on a couch. Here the story meets another frame: unsanctioned relations with the “wrong side of the tracks.” A working-class boy, with renaissance talent and a girl from an upper crust family – this sort of liaison is often viewed askance, from both sides of the tracks. The action to “escape” first meant not taking part in established society. However, encountering an outsider and the provisional happy ending makes the evaluation shift on her “escape”.

Student 4: before and after the Sessions

One student’s writings showed a significant change before and after the sessions. The first version was a story of a character at the end of a tiring day. Verbs are light and simple, and do not hold much information. Whether it turns a fun reading largely depends on if the reader had a similar experience:

I guess the woman is hangry [sic?], so she wants to eat noodle, but she is also lazy, so she doesn't want to move on [the] sofa. She got back home from the party that was stepmother’s birthday. She doesn't like [the] yellow dress, but she ware [sic] it because the stepmother really like [sic] yellow.

(Student 4’s preparation homework)

It's a straightforward writing and is rather flat. The student's second work is intentionally shorter, with elaborate choice of words and structure which provides suspense and surprises for the audience. This student happened to be the last presenter of the day, so she avoided what other students had already tried out:

[*"My writing is quite short."*]

She is escaping from her servant. She is a princess. She is also running on a public street. Suddenly, someone takes her hand, and said to her, "Trust me."

[*"That's it."*]

(Student 4 at the end of the second session)

Showing marked improvement, the student creates a powerful frame, suggesting multiple thematic roles with a powerful verb and an equally strong trope ('take one's hand') initiated by an anonymous 'someone.' The student clearly understands the "hostage" scenario for escape and extends the meaning to include the super-exclusive world of royalty. Hence, we can only imagine how the princess understands her 'escape'. The scene becomes more real in that the scene is on a 'public' street, perhaps beyond royal grounds, and the princess is acting just as we commoners would in such a case: running. The brevity of the story and the immediacy of its core action is amplified by 'suddenly' and, ironically, the "lightness" of the pronoun 'someone' which draws us in all the more. The audience was captured first by this character's action (taking the princess' hand) and then by the all-powerful request: "trust me" – one of the most delicate conditions we can willingly acquiesce to, whose meaning is undefinable and whose ramifications are unimaginable. The student opened a plethora of scenarios with a mere four sentences and seems to be very aware of the potency of delving into a verb's web of meaning.

Discussion

Our work started from the recognition that students' writing tended not to venture beyond several sentence patterns and that they attempted to improve their readability scores by simply replacing vocabulary with seemingly more erudite synonyms. Although limited to two sessions and eleven students, we found that after guiding students to reconsider the implied ideas, relations, and scenes of "heavy" verbs, their writing improved. By

investigating verbs in general and ‘escape’ in particular, students’ writing exhibited fuller pictures of the imagined scene by filling out the prototypical roles and using heavier verbs (Student 2), creatively moving outside the prototypical range of ‘escape’ (Student 3), and radically re-writing their work (Student 4), deftly playing on the implied frame of two powerful ideas (‘trust’ and ‘take one’s hand’) and juxtaposing those grammatically and culturally argument-laden trajectories with the nearly vacuous ‘someone.’ – piquing our interest many times over, within four sentences. While students immediately employed their cognitive awareness into practice, teachers recognized the usefulness of stylistics in evaluating their creative writing (Burke, et al. 2012).

Conclusion

We found that concerted, creative attention to the semantics and pragmatics of verbs within a cognitive framework can open students to re-imagining their writing. Focusing at the lexical level may seem antithetical to composing, but demonstrating the wealth of meaning implied by the frame semantics afforded by verbs in particular helps to explore potential ideas throughout writing. Within L1 Writing Studies, linguistics has been largely marginalized since the 1980s. With the present renewed focus on cognitive linguistics, there is a move from “information transfer” (a la dictionary semantics) to “understanding by juxtaposing” (e.g. with a word’s competing category members) in teaching language production – a move which recognizes all writers as knowledge-makers, who don’t “merely pass along information, paying attention to the seemingly superficial aspects (of writing) but rather necessarily play an epistemic role by their acts” (Markve, 2014). Further work might similarly focus on the creative aspects of meaning within other parts of speech to improve writing or reading.

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Submission Guidelines

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Manuscripts for the JACET International Convention Selected Papers (JACET Selected Papers) will only be accepted by online submission. Please read the following guidelines carefully.

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Submission Form Open: September 17, 2021

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