ISSN 2436-2204

多言語教育実践ジャーナル

Vol.2

MARCH 2022

JOURNAL OF MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

FLER

立教大学 外国語教育研究センター
RIKKYO UNIVERSITY
Center for Foreign Language Education and Research

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【Teaching Practice Report】

Toward a Blueprint for Online Reading Classes: Reflections on Flipping the Classroom, Collaboration, and Fluency

Alex Blumenstock

Abstract

The challenges of teaching online Reading classes to Japanese university students were met with a consideration of how to best maximize the online context. To this end, a flipped classroom seemed to be a natural fit, as homework allowed students to complete learning at their own pace outside of the classroom which could be assessed to ensure concepts were correctly understood. Synchronous class time was then used to apply knowledge and skills collaboratively in small groups. Establishing and maintaining a participatory classroom culture maximized the success of such activities. In addition, although the online context presented challenges related to improving reading fluency, in-class timed reading, extensive reading logs, and book reports were moderately successful despite issues related to accountability. Furthermore, the wealth of communication and instructional tools available to facilitate online learning needed to be pared down and carefully considered in order to maintain a focus on learning language rather than learning technology.

Keywords: online classes, flipped learning, collaborative learning, reading

Introduction

Rikkyo University in Tokyo requires all freshmen to take a Reading course in the spring semester (followed by a closely related Writing course in the fall semester). Each semester is fourteen weeks, with classes meeting once per week and class sizes capped at 25 students. The goals of the Reading course are to improve reading fluency and comprehension, improve vocabulary knowledge, and develop strategic reading skills (such as previewing, skimming, scanning, inferring, and recognizing organization patterns). In addition, students are required to write summaries and short responses of reading texts (Reading and Writing Committee, 2020).

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Reading courses were conducted online for the spring 2021 semester. I taught two such classes, one with students whose TOEIC scores ranged between 280 and 479 and the other with students whose TOEIC scores ranged between 480 and 699. Furthermore, course goals were supported in my classes by Rikkyo's in-house Reading textbook, *Reading the Future* (Garside, et al., 2019), as well as a commercial textbook, *Select Readings: Pre-Intermediate* (Lee & Gunderson, 2011b) for the lower-proficiency group and *Select Readings: Intermediate* (Lee & Gunderson, 2011a) for the higher- proficiency group.

Online classes pose difficulties that face-to-face classes do not, such as connectivity issues, learning how to use various communication and instructional tools, and the lack of physicality, which can make students more hesitant to communicate. Given the unique challenges of teaching online reading classes, I cast my lessons into a principled blueprint I hoped would motivate student engagement and achievement of course objectives while minimizing the challenges of the online context for both student and instructor.

Discussion

Maximizing the Online Context and Flipping the Classroom

Learning and using a variety of communication and instructional tools can be difficult for students. Thus, as much as possible, I minimized the need to switch between different applications. Zoom was the sole real-time communication tool, and email was the sole asynchronous communication tool. I used Blackboard as the learning management system (LMS) for distributing course materials, including posting homework assignments which students completed in Google Forms. Meanwhile, Google Drive acted as the repository of regular student assignment submissions, with each student given their own folder. However, as of this writing, there exist other, even more unified, LMSs (such as Google Classroom) that can further reduce the number of tools students need to use. In general, I have found that the number of required communication and instructional tools should be minimized as much as possible; students enrolled in language courses may view requirements to use technology as a barrier rather than an aid to language studies, so it is important to consider the best ways to use such tools.

In addition, students can become fatigued from sitting in front of their screens for long periods, which could negatively influence engagement or even health. I mitigated these negative effects by shortening class times, as university guidelines permitted assigning additional homework in lieu of using all the allotted time. As a result, a flipped classroom was a natural fit. As described by Bergmann (2012), the flipped classroom "allows the direct instruction to be asynchronous" so that "the pace of the class is appropriate for each student" (p. 62). The classroom then becomes a place in which to practice the skills and concepts that students learned outside of the classroom.

Following the flipped classroom model, each lesson's homework provided an introduction of and practice with skills and concepts later practiced in-class via collaborative activities. Each lesson's homework had two components: (1) a reading text accompanied by comprehension questions and (2) an explanation of a reading skill accompanied by comprehension questions about the skill itself and a practice activity. Although flipped classrooms are typically accomplished with video recordings, this is not always the case; in this course, Google Forms were used to guide students through relevant textbook activities. Furthermore, I prepared these Forms to give feedback on student answers; if students answered a question incorrectly, they received an explanation of the correct answer and/or were notified of where to find relevant information that could have helped them answer correctly. For example, after reading information about the skill of skimming, students were asked to answer a true/false question: "When skimming, you should read everything slowly and carefully." If students answered the question incorrectly, they would receive this feedback: "When skimming, you should NOT read everything. You want to QUICKLY learn basic information about the reading, such as the main ideas. Read the title, the first paragraph, the first sentences of some paragraphs, and the last paragraph." Likewise, if a student answered a comprehension question about the reading text incorrectly, they received feedback that instructed them to review specific lines in the text to locate the answer. This kind of assessment-centered feedback encourages students to reevaluate their misunderstandings of course materials. In sum, this homework provided students with foundational knowledge that could be acquired at their own pace and applied later in class, without requiring a substantial amount of class time to introduce a reading text or reading skill.

Encouraging Participation and Collaborative Learning

Online communication can feel impersonal when one cannot see who is speaking or who is listening, so it is important to avoid this situation in a communicative classroom. In addition, Japanese people, especially Japanese learners of English, have often been regarded as shy or unwilling to speak (Doyon, 2000; Osterman, 2014). When cameras are off, students might be even more hesitant to communicate than usual. Furthermore, students are more likely to remain motivated if they start with motivation than they are if they do not begin with it (Ushioda 2013). Because of these factors, it was important to establish a classroom culture which supported communication from the first lesson; one key focus was setting the expectation that students turn on their cameras when in small groups. This was accomplished in the first lesson by having students turn on their cameras in small groups (in some cases, with some coaxing from me), introduce themselves to a few classmates, and discuss their general reading experiences using guided discussion questions. In addition, at the end of class, they again entered small groups with their cameras on and confirmed their understanding of the contents of the first lesson together, including where to find homework and what to do for homework.

In order to maintain clear expectations of a participatory, collaborative classroom culture, each lesson began with a brief reminder for students to be prepared to turn on their cameras and microphones and have their textbooks ready. As Hrastinski (2009) argues, "If we want to enhance online learning, we need to enhance online learner participation" (p. 78). In addition, every lesson had a consistent structure that made it easier for students to focus on the content of lessons rather than the structure of lessons. First, I provided a very brief review of the reading skill from their homework to ensure that students understood the skill they were about to practice, and this review also provided enough information that students could complete the practice activity even if they had neglected to do the homework. Then students completed a collaborative practice activity to apply the reading skill in small groups. Given the burdens of taking online classes in a foreign language, it is important to maximize the outcomes of students' cognitive processing when practicing and mastering L2 skills. Flipping the classroom can achieve this by giving students opportunities to apply, rather than learn, skills in class. For example, students completed homework which introduced them to and gave them practice paraphrasing. In class, each group was given a short paragraph to paraphrase. After a few minutes, each group was responsible for presenting their paraphrase to the rest of the class. Rather than working to understand the skill and how to apply it during class time, they were able to focus largely on the application of the skill.

In the next stage of the lesson, students collaborated to improve their understanding of the reading text they had answered comprehension questions about for homework. First, students connected the topic to their prior knowledge using general discussion questions. For example, in one lesson, students had completed a reading text about a man who predicts that technology will allow him to live forever (Lee & Gunderson, 2011b, p. 73-74). Using a textbook activity, students first connected their experiences to the topic by discussing things they do to be healthy (p. 72). After that, they used a collaborative comprehension activity that stimulated critical thinking about the reading; they agreed or disagreed with the man's predictions about the future and then discussed their own opinions about the future (p. 76). In most cases, textbook activities fulfilled these criteria of helping students to connect to the topic and promoting critical analysis of the text, but I occasionally made substitutions when the textbook's activities did not meet these criteria.

Having been introduced to reading skills at a pace of one per week during lessons two through twelve, students completed homework to review reading skills before lesson thirteen, the penultimate

lesson. Using the results of this homework to target feedback, I then provided a brief review of all the skills before students participated in a collaborative review activity where they applied the skills to complete a practice final exam. Afterward, I was able to use this assessment to provide feedback on areas for improvement before the end of class. Before lesson fourteen, the final lesson, students again completed homework to review reading skills. Then, in the final lesson, I used the results of the homework to provide a final brief review before students individually completed a final exam that required using all the reading skills. The frequent and instantaneous assessment provided by this system, as well as peer collaboration and teacher feedback, ensured that students had a clear understanding of the reading skills before their final assessment.

Overall, these strategies of flipping learning and encouraging participation resulted in a high level of student participation. While students were collaborating on completing their tasks (in their Zoom breakout rooms), I would check in on each group, and I rarely found students disengaged. My formal and informal course assessments support what other studies have found—that collaborative learning in online courses benefits learning outcomes (Fredericksen et al., 2000; Hiltz et al., 2000). Working together in groups with clear task-oriented goals meant that learners had many opportunities to apply skills, synthesize knowledge, and think critically. Furthermore, given the amount of synchronous collaboration, students had opportunities to develop learner communities. Despite the course's lack of physicality, I noticed that students often held one another socially accountable for their learning; they asked each other for help when needed and checked that everyone in their group had achieved the same level of understanding when completing a task.

Promoting Reading Fluency

Another aim of the course was to improve reading fluency. Timed reading was one activity used for this purpose. Having had many opportunities to understand the lesson's reading text, both individually before the lesson and collaboratively during the lesson, a timed reading exercise concluded each lesson. During this phase of the lesson, students were encouraged to re-read the text as quickly as possible to improve reading speed. Nation (2005) suggests that effective speed reading texts should have easy content but that repeated reading "can be used with material that has some difficulties for the reader" (p. 28). As the reading texts in our textbooks sometimes included difficult content, the before-class and during-class comprehension activities attempted to compensate for these difficulties. By the time students completed the timed reading activity, they had read the text at least twice for meaning. Nation (2005) also notes that a focus on meaning is important in fluency activities, and he suggests having students answer comprehension questions afterward to ensure this focus. However, as this exercise was implemented, the activities preceding the timed reading were meaning-focused, but there were no additional comprehension tests after the timed reading; this may be a weakness of this exercise's implementation. In addition, Nation (2005) further suggests noting reading times on a chart to track reading speed and develop goals of reading faster each time. In our course, times were tracked on a chart for each text, but each text was only timed once. Thus, after students inputted their reading time into a spreadsheet, a graph was automatically updated that showed their progression of reading speed across texts. A weakness of this approach was that students could not see a clear increase in reading speed for each text despite typically seeing a clear increase in reading speed across texts. Finally, I reviewed these charts regularly so that when students had very low reading speeds or were not improving their reading speeds, I had the opportunity to intervene.

Another fluency aspect of the course was extensive reading, which helps students improve their reading speed and "gain meaning-focused input," such as new vocabulary items from context (Nation, 2005, p. 31). It might also help students find enjoyment in learning English and improve their cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries and literature. The approach I took toward extensive reading was based on Day and Bamford's (2002) ten principles for teaching extensive reading. In sum, learners should choose from various easy and enjoyable reading materials and try to read as much as possible as quickly as possible. Day and Bamford also note that it is important to orient students to the concept of extensive reading by showing students how to access appropriately-leveled reading materials, encouraging them to choose materials they are interested in, and emphasizing that they read quickly without using a dictionary, even if they achieve less than 100% understanding. Thus, in the first lesson, I explained the concepts of extensive reading, instructed students to complete an online test to determine which level of graded reader they should choose, and guided students through the process of checking out appropriate books from the University's online e-book library.

These extensive reading concepts were then reiterated throughout the semester through regular check-ins on extensive reading progress. To ensure that students were on track with extensive reading goals and to encourage accountability, students were required to track their approximate word count in a reading log and write very short (a minimum of 60 words for the lower-proficiency group and 80 words for the higher-proficiency group) weekly entries about their extensive reading experiences. When students lacked entries, I initiated an email exchange to ensure they understood what to do and where to find reading materials. In some cases, students found their chosen books to be too difficult, and I encouraged them to seek easier graded readers. In other cases, students were uncertain whether they should continue reading a book that they found unenjoyable, and I assured them that they should discontinue reading it and find another book—one that was enjoyable. These journal entries were intended to be easy writing assignments that encouraged both reading and reflecting on the experience of reading. However, journal entries did not guarantee that students did the required reading; it was possible to write entries after merely skimming or reading a summary elsewhere. In addition, in course evaluations, some students commented that they did not enjoy writing these journal entries, thus putting accountability at odds with enjoyability and undermining the purpose of extensive reading. It might be possible to better balance the benefits of the reading journal with the work it requires by reducing the required length of each entry.

Another method of ensuring accountability was also employed in the form of regular written book reports in which students summarized their extensive reading experiences and gave opinions about what they had read. After completing each book report, students had small group discussions in class to share their opinions about the books they had read and make recommendations to each other based on their experiences. Book reports alone might be enough to extrinsically motivate students to complete extensive reading, and additionally, book reports and subsequent in-class discussions may also help students perceive extensive reading "as its own reward" (Day & Bamford, 2002, p. 138) because they can fully complete an experience of reading a book before writing about it, rather than being concerned with pressures of writing weekly journal entries.

Ensuring that students complete extensive reading assignments is always a challenge. Without a way to accurately track whether students completed the required amount of reading, it is impossible to know for certain whether students actually completed the reading. In a face-to-face course, students could be monitored during a designated period of in-class extensive reading, but such

monitoring would be difficult online. Despite issues with accountability, extensive reading is a valuable activity for students, so instructors should strive to minimize any barriers which prevent students from doing it.

Conclusion

Overall, I believe this lesson style to be conducive to achieving the intended goals of the course. Based on my experience evaluating their homework and in-class interactions, students were engaged in the course. In terms of the reading skills and texts, the time they spent preparing for class clearly complemented the time they spent working together in class. Outside of class, assessments provided automatic feedback to help students reevaluate most misunderstandings at their own pace. In addition, I was able to use the wealth of assessment data to judge when and how to make effective interventions.

Although my online Reading course was based on principled approaches, there remains room for improvement. One downside of this style is that students needed to be somewhat autonomous with goal setting, homework task completion, and time management. There were instances of students who failed to complete preparation tasks or who failed to adequately manage their time when completing long-term extensive reading tasks. In addition, although I integrated as many accountability checks as I could reasonably conceive of without overburdening students, accountability remained an issue in some cases, such as with extensive reading. However, many of these difficulties are not unique to online contexts.

In terms of the online context specifically, if I were to teach this course again in a similar way, I would make a few alterations. First, as educational technology continues to improve, I would attempt to reduce the number of communication tools, instructional tools, and LMSs used, with the intention of reducing students' burden of learning how to use these tools instead of learning the language itself. For instance, I would replace Blackboard and Google Drive with Google Classroom, as it largely combines the features of these two tools into a single LMS. Second, in terms of promoting reading speed, it might be worth having students read the same texts multiple times across longer spans of time, such as in a subsequent class. This would have the additional benefit of allowing better progress tracking for intervention purposes. In terms of extensive reading, I would attempt to improve accountability methods to make them both more reliable and less cumbersome for students; given the online context, one especially suitable option would be to use an LMS designed specifically for extensive reading, such as XReading. Finally, I would attempt to foster a greater sense of community and metacognitive reflection by providing students with more time for open-ended discussion questions about their overall course progress and goals during small group warm-up or closing discussions.

Given the increase in the number of online classes due to COVID-19, as well as a general trend of technology increasingly being used in education, it is important to consider how to best design courses to maximize student learning outcomes without burdening students with the technology itself. Online classes will likely continue to play an important role in education, and by carefully considering how they are structured and how technology is implemented, I believe that they can effectively motivate students to learn for themselves and to learn collaboratively.

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Appendix 1: Overview of Online Reading Course Classroom Procedures

Lesson 1

- Establish Participatory Classroom Culture
- Small Groups: Discuss General Reading Experiences
- How to Use Online Instructional Tools
- How to Do Extensive Reading
- Small Groups: Confirm Understanding of Online Instructional Tools and Homework

Lessons 2-12

- Reminder to Maintain Participatory Classroom Culture
- Check-in about Classroom Matters (As Needed–Extensive Reading, etc.)
- Brief Homework Feedback: Reading Skills
- Brief Reading Skill Introduction
- Small Groups: Reading Skill Practice
- Wrap-up & Feedback
- Small Groups: Connect Prior Knowledge to the Reading Text
- Wrap-up & Feedback
- Small Groups: Analysis and Discussion of the Reading Text
- Wrap-up & Feedback
- Individual: Timed Reading of the Reading Text

Lesson 13

- Reminder to Maintain Participatory Classroom Culture
- Homework Feedback: Reading Skills
- Reading Skills Review
- Small Groups: Reading Skills Review
- Feedback

Lesson 14

- Homework Feedback: Reading Skills
- Final Exam

La traduction de textes de sciences humaines japonais en français dans le cadre du cours de rédaction française de niveau avancé

par Alexandre MANGIN

要　旨

筆者は、担当する授業「フランス語上級ライティング」の演習課題として日本の人文科学系作品の仏語訳を課している。本論の第一部は概観として、日本における翻訳（特に和訳）の歴史と現状、日本の大学での和訳の演習について述べる。和訳の政治的な側面に触れ、著者の感情の伝達については重要視されていないことに焦点を当てた。また、翻訳の具体的な規則性（情報の順番を守ることや文章の区切り方等）について触れる。第二部では、授業で用いる文章（著作物）の選定についてその重要性を述べている。専攻や将来の職業など、受講生にとって有益であるものを選ぶこと（文学部・社会学部・法学部・観光学部などの場合、人文学系のものを採用）により、学生の仏語文章の作成がその過程とともに改善される。著者の思想や感情に共感しながら翻訳することで、学生自身の言葉も仏語で表現できるようになるのである。様々な人文学系分野を専攻する学生共通の演習課題として、民俗学者である宮本常一の著作を仏語訳させるメリットは大きいが、方言の翻訳という独特な難点も含む。人文学系専攻学生共通の仏語ライティングの演習教材としては、日本の人文学系著作－特に民俗学のもの－が効果的であることを本論で論証している。

キーワード：フランス語教授法・上級ライティング・翻訳・人文科学・宮本常一

Le présent article a pour objet de présenter quelques réflexions qui nous sont venues à l'occasion de l'introduction dans notre cours de français écrit en classe de niveau avancé (フランス語上級ライティング) de l'exercice de traduction du japonais au français, pendant un an (2015-2016) à l'Université pour jeunes filles d'Ochanomizu et deux ans (2020-2022) à l'Université Rikkyô, auprès d'apprenants évidemment japonais, à un moment relativement tardif dans notre carrière. L'expérience a porté sur des classes de petit effectif (de deux à huit étudiant(e)s), de niveau élevé et très motivées, en dernière partie de séance. L'usage du dictionnaire électronique et papier était autorisé.

Ces réflexions ne sauraient prétendre être une étude de portée significative permettant d'avancer des propositions de réforme de quelque système éducatif que ce soit, pas plus qu'une étude de référence émanant d'un spécialiste de la traduction. Tout au plus nous permettons-nous, en tant que praticien « de terrain » du français langue étrangère (FLE) et chercheur en ethnologie comparée de poser quelques modestes questions et de proposer quelques pistes à la sagacité des confrères.

L'exercice de traduction ne représente en aucun cas l'essentiel de notre cours, celui-ci n'étant pas un cours de traduction *stricto sensu* mais un cours de rédaction. C'est une *activité* parmi d'autres dont la durée ne devait pas excéder un tiers de celle du cours, soit approximativement trente minutes sur quatre-vingt-dix ou cent minutes selon l'université. Cela étant posé, on comprendra aisément dans quelles limites cet exercice a pu se dérouler et ce qu'on pouvait raisonnablement en attendre.

Avant d'entrer plus avant dans le sujet, précisons les mots : lorsque l'on traduit d'une langue étrangère (langue source) dans sa langue maternelle (langue de destination), on parle de « version », et dans le cas inverse, de « thème ». Afin d'éviter toute ambiguïté ici, nous n'emploierons pas ces thèmes car il s'agit de FLE et la langue enseignée est notre langue maternelle : les thèmes et versions de l'enseignant seront donc des versions et thèmes pour l'étudiant. Nous nous en tiendrons à des

périphrases plus longues, mais univoques.

On peut dès à présent se poser les questions rhétoriques suivantes : quelle est la situation de départ ? Comment introduire la traduction ? Pourquoi traduire du japonais au français ? Quel est l'intérêt de proposer des textes de sciences humaines japonais ? Quels sont les problèmes qui se sont posés lors de la mise en place de cette activité ? En d'autres termes, quel est l'intérêt de cet exercice en classe de langue ?

Pour tenter de répondre à ces questions, nous présenterons dans un premier temps quelques réflexions générales sur la traduction en français en cours de rédaction française et dans un second temps, nous nous pencherons sur le cas particulier de la traduction de textes de sciences humaines japonais.

I Réflexions générales sur la traduction en français en cours de rédaction française

Il nous semble important de faire le point sur la situation au Japon à l'heure où nous écrivons ces lignes avant d'énoncer nos propres considérations et principes en matière de traduction.

A/ Le constat

La traduction japonaise de textes en langue étrangère s'inscrit dans une longue tradition et s'appuie sur des principes. Nous ne prétendons pas ici non plus révolutionner les études de didactique des langues, mais il nous semble important de faire le point.

1) la traduction du français au japonais très pratiquée dans le cadre de la didactique des langues

Il ne fait aucun doute que la traduction du français au japonais est un des exercices les plus utilisés dans les cours de français assurés par des professeurs japonais. Bien que l'introduction de méthodes nouvelles par les professeurs étrangers ait pu attirer des enseignants japonais (notamment la méthode immédiate dans le Kansai), il n'en demeure pas moins que la méthode traditionnelle d'enseignement des langues au Japon repose sur deux piliers : 1° l'enseignement de la grammaire avec des exercices écrits (compréhension écrite et vocabulaire : textes à trous, mots à remettre dans le bon ordre, sons à identifier ; discrimination lexicale et grammaticale : intrus ou verbe conjugué correctement à trouver parmi une petite liste) le plus souvent sous forme de questionnaires à choix multiples et 2° la traduction de textes français, préexistants (extraits de textes littéraires ou d'articles de journaux) ou écrits spécialement pour le manuel. L'exercice de traduction est pratiqué depuis des siècles, avec la transcription de textes chinois de la langue originale, le chinois classique, vers le ***kambun*** 漢文[1]. Ensuite et/ou parallèlement, les traductions se sont faites vers le japonais classique (***bungo*** 文語), puis vers le japonais vernaculaire (***kôgo*** 口語 ou ***gendaigo*** 現代語)[2]. Après le chinois, ce sont au XVI^{ème} siècle l'espagnol, puis le portugais, ensuite le néerlandais au XVII^{ème} siècle, enfin à partir du Bakumatsu (1854-1867) puis de Meiji (1868), toutes les autres langues, à commencer par les langues européennes (au premier rang desquelles l'allemand, le français, l'anglais et le russe) qui ont

1 Langue inventée au Japon, s'écrivant essentiellement comme le chinois classique, mais avec de petits caractères (***kaeriten*** 返り点 ou ***kunten*** 訓点) faisant office de numéros servant à lire les groupes de mots dans l'ordre du japonais (***kundoku*** 訓読), et avec une prononciation « à la japonaise »

2 Longtemps, et parfois même encore de nos jours, les textes chinois classiques sont traduits ou plutôt transcrits d'une manière qui n'a rien de naturel en japonais contemporain, avec des expressions qui n'existent quasiment plus que dans les traductions de textes chinois, comme par exemple « sujet + ***iwaku*** 曰く » (en début de phrase) pour traduire le « dit » chinois. En un mot : les textes chinois anciens sont aujourd'hui transcrits dans un « pseudo-***kambun*** » (avec ***kundoku***) avant d'être ensuite traduits en japonais vernaculaire, d'où ces livres avec triples textes.

été enseignées à plus ou moins grande échelle dans des buts politiques, afin de conserver au Japon sa position particulière de pays moderne non occidental[3]. L'apprentissage visait à comprendre (les textes de) l'autre pour en tirer ce qui pouvait être profitable au pays[4], en particulier les connaissances technologiques et la présentation des idéologies et systèmes de valeurs régissant les rapports de force entre Etats, en aucun cas à permettre d'établir entre l'apprenant et les « natifs » une relation humaine faite d'émotions, de partage et d'empathie, d'expression de soi etc. Après 1945 et la prévalence écrasante, presque monopolistique de l'anglais au détriment des langues asiatiques ou du russe, langues de voisins plus ou moins proches du Japon, les motivations d'apprentissage se sont diversifiées – langue de travail à l'international, langue destinée à un examen d'entrée ou un concours, outils d'un cursus d'enseignant-chercheur (le plus souvent littérature francophone ou grammaire française), bonus prestigieux d'un cursus éducatif, verni culturel, passe-temps plus ou moins sérieux – ainsi que les approches pédagogiques, mais la « norme » d'enseignement est restée la même.

Pour ce qui est de la traduction du japonais au français, à part de courtes phrases en cours de grammaire de première année par des enseignants japonais[5], elle est laissée à la discrétion des enseignants « natifs ».

2) les « tendances » observées dans le rapport à la traduction de textes étrangers en japonais

Au départ, la traduction est du mot à mot remis dans l'ordre du japonais. Dès lors, va se poser le problème du glissement de sens des mots chinois (aujourd'hui des mots de n'importe quelle langue) ayant donné un mot japonais repris pour le traduire. Prenons un exemple simple : *raisu* ライス pour l'anglais *rice*, ne désigne plus le riz de façon générale, mais seulement le riz cuit sur assiette[6]. Ce problème se pose pour toutes les langues ayant suivi des apports de mots étrangers dont le sens a glissé, et dont le français offre de nombreux exemples[7], mais il est particulièrement accentué en langue japonaise[8]. Afin d'éviter les contresens, les retraductions de textes anciens vont voir heureusement s'éloigner la tendance de la reprise telle quelle du mot par son équivalent japonais au profit du mot japonais ayant la même signification.

Le japonais est avec l'anglais, le chinois, le français[9], l'espagnol, l'arabe, l'allemand mais aussi le catalan, l'une des langues dans lesquelles quantitativement on traduit le plus[10]. C'est aussi pour cela qu'il est impossible de parler de la traduction japonaise comme un tout indivisible et qu'il faut se

3 Ce que Claude Lévi-Strauss a très bien résumé dans les textes repris dans l'ouvrage *L'autre face de la lune : Ecrits sur le Japon*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2011.

4 Ce qu'a très bien montré notamment Jean-Luc Azra (*Enseigner l'écrit au Japon*, Kyôto, Alma langues, 2019, chapitre 1).

5 Le manuel de la méthode immédiate, *Moi, je… Grammaire*, de Bruno Vannieuwenhuyse, (Kyôto, Alma Langues, éd. revue et corrigée 2018) comprend des exercices de traduction du français au japonais mais surtout du japonais au français. Les seconds sont les plus nombreux et reprennent les éléments de la leçon alors que les premiers sont destinés à apporter du vocabulaire nouveau et sont basés sur des textes préexistants plus difficiles.

6 Le riz cru se disant bien sûr *o-kome* お米 et le riz cuit dans un bol, *go-han* ご飯［御飯］.

7 Par exemple « wagon », du néerlandais *wagen* qui désignait un charriot (alors qu'en allemand, *Wagen* désigne une voiture en général).

8 Avec la présence notamment du *wasei eigo* 和製英語, l'anglais fabriqué au Japon à partir de mots anglais dont la juxtaposition et/ou le sens a/ont été modifié(e)(s). Par exemple, *bebîkâ* ベビーカー, juxtaposition de l'anglais *baby* (bébé) et *car* (voiture) qui désigne une poussette, au lieu du *pushchair* britannique ou du *stroller* américain.

9 « L'édition française est très certainement celle qui traduit le plus largement l'ensemble des langues écrites et propose la plus grande diversité des littératures du monde » (Pelletier, Geoffroy : « Les chiffres de la traduction », Société des Gens de Lettres, https://www.sgdl.org/sgdl-accueil/presse/presse-acte-des-forums/la-traduction-litteraire/1519-les-chiffres-de-la-traduction-par-geoffroy-pelletier, article consulté pour la dernière fois le 4 mars 2021.

10 Obtenir des informations chiffrées sur ce point nous est apparu extrêmement difficile. Alors qu'on trouve aisément le nombre et la provenance des textes traduits pour chaque langue ou pays, savoir quel pays traduit le plus de langues est une tout autre affaire.

limiter aux tendances les plus générales. Parmi celles-ci, nous avons remarqué par exemple l'emploi abusif et antinaturel des pronoms japonais de thème (*wata(ku)shi ha*, *anata ha*, *kare ha*…) pour traduire littéralement les pronoms sujets du français (je, vous, il), alors que selon nous, ils traduiraient davantage les pronoms toniques (avec sujet) « moi, je », « vous, vous », « lui, il » etc.. Une autre erreur, selon nous, commise très fréquemment par les traducteurs de romans et surtout par les traducteurs de localisation de films (sous-titres et doublages), qu'ils soient français, américains ou chinois par exemple – et qui n'est donc pas propre à la traduction du français au japonais – est l'affaiblissement, la réduction voire la suppression des formes de politesse des langues étrangères. Des personnes se parlant très poliment dans leur langue voient leur dialogue traduit en japonais familier[11], alors que s'il y a bien une langue à même de rendre grammaticalement les nuances de politesse, c'est bien le japonais. Nous tirons de cet écueil deux hypothèses. La première, c'est une possible volonté idéologique de réserver la politesse, l'échelon le plus élevé d'une civilisation « avancée » aux Japonais. Les étrangers qui se parleraient par conséquent systématiquement de façon familière se montreraient ainsi incapables de ce raffinement réservé aux Japonais, et doivent paraître « cool », c'est-à-dire à la fois décontractés, informels, et stylés. Le but n'est pas tant de blesser les étrangers que de donner confiance aux spectateurs japonais. Le problème est que ce genre de conditionnement impacte forcément la communication en langue étrangère. Certains Japonais, sortis du cadre de la société japonaise, ont énormément de mal à se situer dans l'écheveau tout aussi compliqué d'une société étrangère, qu'elle soit française, américaine ou chinoise par exemple. D'où une tendance à rester soit trop effacé, soit trop familier. Ainsi avons-nous plusieurs fois observé des Japonais s'adresser familièrement à des Français dans une situation formelle parce qu'ils avaient entendu ces personnes parler familièrement avec des amis. Le Japonais qui agit de la sorte n'aura pas intégré à sa grille de communication le fait que la notion de registre existe aussi dans la langue étrangère en situation de communication ainsi qu'en narration.

Ainsi, la traduction en japonais vise-t-elle comme dans l'Antiquité, à transmettre avant tout des informations et, rarement et très accessoirement, une partie du contenu social (hiérarchie) et émotionnel. La dimension empathique de la traduction n'est présente que chez certains traducteurs contemporains. Cette nouvelle Ecole de traducteurs, que nous appellerions l'« Ecole de la subtilité », est amenée à se développer du fait de la présence croissante d'étrangers et d'immigrés ayant la nationalité japonaise sur le sol japonais, travaillant notamment dans l'enseignement et parfois même les médias, ainsi que des futures études qui seront menées sur le processus de traduction. Le 26 février 2021, le Pr Kasama Naoko[12] a organisé un événement qui, alors qu'il n'aurait rien eu de nouveau dans le contexte américain ou français, placé dans le contexte japonais, est historique : réunir trois traductrices de haut vol, deux Japonaises[13] et une Française[14] et leur faire traduire et commenter le même texte écrit en français, le tout filmé et diffusé sur Internet. Cela n'est ni plus ni moins que la naissance pleinement actée de la traductologie médiatisée au Japon[15].

Partant de ce constat, et particulièrement du fait que la traduction du japonais au français était laissée de côté, nous nous sommes fixé des principes pour cet exercice de traduction en français dans le cadre de notre enseignement de la langue écrite.

11 Ceci est particulièrement flagrant dans les scènes par excellence formelles : discussions politiques, de savants, subordonnés s'adressant à leur supérieur etc.. Un étranger parlant japonais sera toujours étonné de découvrir ce traitement.

12 Kasama Naoko 笠間直穂子, Kokugakuin daigaku 國學院大学, https://www.kokugakuin.ac.jp/event/215897.

13 Takubo Mari 田久保麻理 et Taniguchi Asako 谷口亜沙子 (également maître de conférence à Meiji daigaku 明治大学).

14 Myriam d'Artois-Akô 赤穂.

15 On signalera également les travaux indispensables de Julie Brock de la Kyôto Kôgei sen'i daigaku 京都工芸繊維大学, mais c'est une Française.

B/ Les principes de la traduction en français

Nous venons de voir que la traduction en japonais visait surtout à transmettre des informations. La traduction du japonais en français doit aussi servir à transmettre des informations, mais également mettre en pratique ce que l'étudiant a appris de manière théorique. En traduisant en français, il *écrira* en français, ce qui est l'étape supérieure après le recopiage d'un texte français et le texte à trous. En cherchant dans son dictionnaire, son manuel ou sur Internet des réponses aux questions qui se poseront au fur et à mesure du processus de traduction, l'apprenant aura de plus grandes chances de retenir du vocabulaire et des expressions, ou encore d'assimiler un point de grammaire, que le tout se sera présenté dans un cadre plus vaste, et avec plus de contexte, qu'une phrase de manuel souvent courte. Le contexte, le défi et parfois la frustration créent l'intérêt et l'envie de vaincre la difficulté. L'intérêt est un affect. Et les points de langue, liés à des affects, se retiennent considérablement mieux[16], ce que nous, enseignants de terrain, avons parfois tendance à oublier. Ce passage du théorique au pratique est fondamental dans l'apprentissage d'une langue, c'est une évidence.

Par ailleurs, le fait de partir d'un texte japonais préétabli met l'apprenant en confiance. Il n'aura pas, pour cette fois du moins, à partir de rien (pas d'angoisse de la page blanche), ni à se « mettre à découvert » en exprimant ses pensées et émotions profondes[17]. Nous sommes ici très proches de « la méthode des modèles » prônée au sein de la méthode immédiate[18]. Il pourra se couler dans le rôle de l'auteur et essayer de transmettre le maximum d'informations, mais aussi rendre les nuances des émotions et des rapports humains représentés ou implicites dans le texte à traduire.

Mais avant de procéder à cet exercice que l'étudiant croit bien connaître, il peut être judicieux de lui en présenter les principes directeurs et les principales problématiques. Dans le cadre de cette étude, nous donnerons ensuite quelques exemples de conseils face à une question précise.

1) la détermination du type de texte, du type de lectorat et la nécessité d'un appareil critique

Pour la première séance de traduction, l'enseignant serait bien avisé de procéder à une petite présentation de l'exercice de traduction, en rappelant quelques principes :

- qu'il n'existe pas de traduction parfaite ;

- que les traductions diffèrent selon les lieux (français standard, français du Québec par exemple) et varient selon les époques (on ne traduit plus de la même façon Shakespeare ou Cervantes de nos jours qu'aux cours des siècles précédents) et la sensibilité des traducteurs ;

- qu'il faut préalablement comprendre à quel texte de départ on a à faire (article de journal généraliste, article académique, roman, publicité etc.) et par conséquent à quel type de public il s'adresse[19] ;

- qu'il existe plusieurs « Ecoles » et approches de traduction, notamment celle qui privilégie la conservation de la longueur des phrases et celle qui privilégie l'ordre des informations, celle qui affectionne les archaïsmes[20] et celle qui les proscrit etc..

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16 La méthode neurolinguistique est loin d'avoir été la première à le dire. De nombreux enseignants de terrain, à commencer par ceux d'école maternelle, savent très bien que c'est en suscitant l'émotion (joie, amusement, compassion etc.) chez l'enfant que les connaissances qu'on cherche à lui transmettre à ce moment-là seront les mieux assimilées.

17 Ce à quoi ne le prépare pas le système éducatif japonais, d'où ce qui est perçu comme de la « timidité » par les professeurs étrangers.

18 Azra, *op. cit*., chapitre 4, p. 91.

19 Dans un texte sur la culture japonaise traditionnelle, par exemple, il s'agira de décider préalablement si l'on conserve des mots japonais. Par exemple dans un texte sur la maison une approche académique parlera d'*engawa* 縁側 et de *fusuma* 襖 avec le mot en japonais suivant la transcription, une approche grand public et/ou sérieuse supprimera les mots en japonais pour ne garder que les transcriptions, alors qu'une approche très grand public (revue de divertissement par exemple) traduira ces mots en faisant au mieux : « véranda », « closions mobiles (opaques) ».

20 Dans un style parfois qualifié de « troubadour ».

Ces principes généraux étant posés, on s'attachera à fournir des règles concrètes.

2) quelques exemples de règles à suivre

Concrètement les règles à suivre sont peu nombreuses.

L'exercice de traduction, à l'heure d'Internet, suppose d'établir préalablement une relation de confiance entre l'enseignant et les apprenants, afin de leur faire accepter le principe de l'exercice : produire par eux-mêmes, sans recourir à un service de traduction automatisée pour l'ensemble du texte[21], le texte étant structuré selon leur idée.

Certains enseignants aiment les traductions plus littéraires, les « belles infidèles », d'autres les traductions plus proches du texte sans être littérales. Là encore, tout dépend du positionnement du traducteur et du type de texte traduit. Il va de soi qu'une traduction d'article de journal ou d'article académique n'obéira pas à la même exigence esthétique qu'une traduction littéraire, de poésie en particulier.

Ce que nous demandons en priorité aux apprenants, c'est de transmettre le maximum d'informations, de conserver le registre de langue (poli, formel, familier etc.), de limiter les répétitions de mots et de faire la concordance des temps selon les règles du français.

Une fois toutes ces informations assimilées par les apprenants, c'est dans la pratique que l'enseignement commencera vraiment.

Pendant la correction en cours, on interrogera un élève par phrase et, en cas de petit effectif, tous les étudiants pour chaque phrase, en faisant un roulement afin que chacun passe en premier successivement. Si la phrase est trop longue, on pourra la couper et traduire chaque segment l'un après l'autre avec interrogation de tous les apprenants.

Ce qui donne donc, dans une classe de quatre inscrits, A étant l'apprenant et E l'enseignant :

Pour une phrase courte :

A1, A2, A3, A4, E

et pour une phrase longue :

Segment 1 : A1, A2, A3, A4, E ; Segment 2 : A1, A2, A3, A4, E ; Segment 3 : A1, A2, A3, A4, E.

La phrase de l'enseignant sera présentée comme le corrigé, mais en veillant bien à ne pas la prétendre parfaite, la perfection n'étant pas de ce monde, à plus forte raison pour une traduction. L'enseignant pourra reprendre certaines trouvailles des apprenants et les intégrer à son texte, sous forme alternative avec le signe « / » et/ou entre parenthèses, ou substituer cette solution à la sienne, si elle n'est pas trop longue. Le dire et le demander à l'étudiant est alors un devoir de courtoisie.

II Le cas particulier de la traduction de textes de sciences humaines japonais

Il est toujours préférable que l'enseignant choisisse un texte d'un domaine en rapport avec le parcours professionnel ou de loisirs de l'étudiant. Dans une classe où tous les étudiants ont la même spécialité, ou une spécialité proche, l'enseignant aura moins de mal à trouver un dénominateur commun. Par exemple dans une classe de juristes, on aura évidemment tout intérêt à choisir un texte juridique à traduire et dans une classe d'informaticiens, un texte sur l'informatique. Lorsque l'on enseigne dans une université généraliste auprès d'étudiants d'un bon niveau, il est néanmoins fréquent que les classes soient panachées avec des étudiants venant de spécialités différentes. Aussi,

21　Pour un mot ou une courte expression, nous tolérons cet usage.

l'enseignant a peu de chances de trouver un domaine ou un sujet qui convienne à tous les étudiants sans exception. Dans une classe de petit effectif, il est toujours plus aisé de prendre en compte les spécialités de chacun, surtout si l'on traite un texte par spécialisation (un texte sur l'Histoire, un texte sur les villes, un texte sur les enfants etc.). Dans une classe de quatre ou cinq étudiants ayant tous des spécialités très différentes, mais un niveau avancé, nous avons choisi souverainement des textes de sciences humaines, notamment ceux de Miyamoto Tsuneichi. Pourquoi le choix des sciences humaines ? (A) Et que pouvons-nous tirer de l'exemple de Miyamoto ? (B)

A/ Les textes de sciences humaines japonais

Après avoir exposé quelques raisons à ce choix, nous donnerons des exemples de problèmes concrets qui se sont posés lors de notre expérience de cours.

1) pourquoi des textes de sciences humaines ?

Nous faisons nôtre le credo de la méthode immédiate (Azra, Vannieuwenhuyse, Benoît), selon lequel le cours doit proposer des outils « formatifs » et être tourné vers la production, sortant l'étudiant de sa « zone de confort » et n'être en aucun cas un « cours de grammaire bis ». Dans le cadre d'une classe mélangée, comme nous l'avons dit plus haut, le plus petit dénominateur commun est une catégorie à tiroirs : la notion de sciences humaines, de sciences dures, de technologie etc. Dans le cas des sciences humaines, l'Histoire, la sociologie, l'ethnologie rurale et les arts et traditions populaires (*minzokugaku *民俗学) offrent des champs d'étude considérablement variés qui peuvent en tout ou en partie interpeller les apprenants et accroître leur motivation, que ce soit pour leur curiosité personnelle, mais aussi pour présenter à des amis étrangers francophones, actuels ou futurs, des points intéressants de la société ou de l'Histoire de leur pays. Le texte fait donc à la fois office de motivation que l'on s'approprie par la réécriture intrinsèque au processus de traduction, mais aussi d'instrument de médiation dans une communication future ou éventuelle.

Comme tout exercice, la traduction en langue étrangère n'est évidemment pas sans poser quelques problèmes.

2) les problèmes concrets posés

Loin de nous l'intention de lister tous les problèmes. Nous nous en tiendrons à quelques exemples qui nous ont paru intéressants. La confrontation à un problème lié à l'exercice de traduction peut être l'occasion de plusieurs attitudes de la part de l'enseignant. À lui de décider s'il souhaite ou non imposer son opinion, dissimuler ou reconnaitre sa perplexité, mettre les idées de tous en commun et préparer à l'avance sa version utilisée comme « corrigé d'exercice ».

Dans un texte sur le Japon, se pose la question des mots « difficilement traduisibles »[22]. Comme nous le disions plus tôt en note, le choix de la transcription ou non de certains termes se pose très vite. D'abord, quels termes doit-on transcrire ? Doit-on les faire suivre des mots en japonais et de la traduction entre parenthèses, ou au contraire place-t-on la traduction du mot d'abord, suivi entre parenthèses de la transcription et de la traduction ? Et le fera-t-on à la première occurrence ou systématiquement ? Il faut établir un règlement personnel afin que le traducteur en herbe dispose de

22 Nous n'acceptons pas l'idée de texte « intraduisibles ». Tout est traduisible : certes, un mot n'est pas forcément rendu par un mot ; il peut l'être par une périphrase, et s'il s'avère nécessaire dans la langue de destination, l'usage intègrera ce mot d'origine étrangère dans la langue (geisha, shogoun etc.). Dans le cas d'une expression, elle sera rendue par une expression de la langue de destination de sens équivalent. Dans le domaine de la technologie qui voit apparaître de nouveaux mots très régulièrement, il faut souvent un temps pour créer des traductions. Enfin, au niveau du sens et de l'effet sur le lecteur, en revanche, les jeux de mots (et les références culturelles censées être connues du lecteur natif) peuvent perdre leur effet comique en passant d'une langue à l'autre et la poésie, sa musique originelle et son côté « poétique ».

rails sûrs à suivre. Ce sera son *kata* (forme-manière[23]) de l'exercice. Dans ce cas précis, nous avons posé comme règle que le texte s'adressait à des passionnés du Japon, et que donc l'usage des caractères japonais et chinois était autorisé à la seule première occurrence, mais seulement dans les notes, pas dans le corps du texte. En revanche, dans le cas rarissime d'une explication étymologique, en particulier concernant un toponyme, l'usage des caractères de la langue japonaise était autorisé à la première occurrence dans le corps du texte. Afin de ne pas trop alourdir le texte, l'usage du mot dans sa seule transcription, accompagné d'une définition en note, est parfois préférable à une périphrase trop lourde. Paradoxe de la traduction en sciences humaines : il faut parfois ne pas traduire un mot plutôt que de le traduire par une périphrase longue et lourde pouvant être utilisée à la première occurrence dans le texte ou en note. Il s'agit de déterminer le degré d'importance du mot original en question, sans considérer par exemple tous les noms communs importants comme des concepts fondamentaux à garder tels quels[24].

A l'égard des concepts importants, il s'agira de dresser pour soi une liste de ces termes avec les traductions retenues afin d'unifier le texte. Cette règle est aussi valable, à plus forte raison, dans le cadre d'un projet de traduction collective. Donnons un court exemple avec un texte[25] de Miyamoto. Les traductions sont des *conventions* arbitraires que nous avons fixées. Nous ne prétendons en aucun cas fournir des traductions parfaites :

1. Liste des termes à garder en transcription (mot en japonais en note à la première occurrence et périphrase ou traduction entre parenthèses ou en note à la première occurrence) :

- *dango* 団子 : boulette de pâte de riz gluant ;
- *matsuri* 祭り : fête traditionnelle ;
- *mi-koshi* 神輿・御輿 : tabernacle portatif ;

etc.

2. Liste des termes à traduire (transcription et mot en japonais en note à la première occurrence) :

- *gyôji* 行事 : fête cérémonielle ;
- *sairei* 祭礼 : fête rituelle ;
- *shûraku* 集落 : agglomération ;

etc.

Penchons-nous à présent sur le choix de Miyamoto Tsuneichi parmi la multitude d'auteurs de sciences humaines japonais à notre disposition.

B/ Le cas particulier de Miyamoto Tsuneichi

Le panachage d'auteurs est toujours possible et Miyamoto Tsuneichi 宮本常一 (1907-1981) n'est qu'un exemple, mais c'est notre choix pour nos classes de sciences humaines (littérature, Histoire, langues, sociologie, Droit etc.). Comme tout texte, il a posé des problèmes spécifiques dont nous donnerons les exemples les plus significatifs.

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23 *Kata* かた［型・形］: pour une analyse poussée de ce concept, nous renvoyons au classique de Boyé Lafayette de Menthe : *Kata : The Key to Understanding and dealing with the Japanese*, North Clarendon, Tuttle, 2003, 184 p..

24 Concernant la traduction d'un texte de sciences humaines, le *Nihon jômin seikatsu ebiki*『日本常民生活絵引』 de Shibusawa Keizô 渋澤敬三 en l'occurrence, nous avions rédigé en japonais un court texte qui pourrait éventuellement être suggéré au lecteur s'intéressant aux questions de traduction :「穿袖の謎－フランス語圏で絵引をどう使うか－」（研究会報告）, 神奈川大学非文字資料研究センター, 非文字資料研究, 24号, juill. 2010, pp. 4-5.

25 *Minzokugaku no furusato*『民俗学のふるさと』, Tôkyô, Kawade bunko, 2012, chap. 1, section 5.

1) pourquoi Miyamoto Tsuneichi ?

L'ethnographe et folkloriste Miyamoto cumule les avantages pour un lecteur japonais qui apprend le français. D'abord, son style, très limpide, est parfaitement explicite et déjoue l'image généralement véhiculée de flou artistique ou d'ambiguïté accolée à la langue japonaise. Il va sans dire que pour un lecteur étranger apprenant le japonais, cette lecture est particulièrement agréable et fluide. À la lecture de Miyamoto, l'apprenant ne pourra pas arguer le prétexte d'une incompréhension pour justifier un travail non fait. Si Miyamoto est compréhensible pour un étranger, à plus forte raison l'est-il pour un Japonais.

Ensuite, Miyamoto fournit un ensemble d'informations de tous ordres fort intéressant à la fois pour l'étranger qui souhaite découvrir la société japonaise en profondeur, mais aussi pour le lecteur japonais, qu'il étudie la *minzokugaku* ou non. Il pourra ensuite les réutiliser pour présenter le pays auprès d'étrangers à un niveau plus élevé que les fondamentaux de la culture japonaise que son interlocuteur connaît certainement déjà (manger avec des baguettes, enlever ses chaussures chez l'habitant etc.).

En outre, Miyamoto ayant traité une variété de sujets, il y en aura forcément un susceptible de plaire au plus grand nombre. Par exemple l'éducation des enfants, les *matsuri*, les auberges, le pèlerinage d'Ise, la formation des villes nouvelles, le Japon vu du ciel, les femmes, la jeunesse, la pauvreté, les techniques…

Enfin, pour ce qui est de l'enseignant, le fait de choisir un auteur qu'il a étudié et qu'il connaît bien peut apparaître comme une solution de facilité, mais cette facilité est au service du cours. Sans faire de longs laïus saugrenus sur son auteur préféré, l'enseignant pourra le présenter en quelques phrases et le remettre en contexte. Cela permettra aux étudiants de se sentir plus proches de l'auteur, de s'intéresser un tant soit peu à sa vie et de mieux comprendre ce qu'il avait à nous dire. Une remise en contexte n'est jamais superflue.

2) Miyamoto pose-t-il des problèmes concrets ?

Contre toute attente, mentionnons par acquit de conscience les rares plaintes sur la difficulté de l'exercice : quel que soit l'exercice donné en cours de langue, les apprenants japonais se plaindront de sa difficulté, plutôt ressentie que réelle. Il s'agit pour l'enseignant de faire la part des choses entre les tentatives des étudiants visant à faire simplifier le cours pour obtenir des unités d'enseignement (*tan'i*) sans trop de peine, la difficulté normalement ressentie mais inhérente à tout apprentissage et une difficulté excessive qui ne correspond ni au niveau de départ, ni au niveau « réaliste » à atteindre au terme du semestre. Dans ce dernier cas seulement, l'enseignant devra modifier l'exercice ou le supprimer pour revenir à des exigences raisonnables. Dans l'exemple de Miyamoto, on pourra choisir un autre texte ou réduire la taille du texte et au sein de celui-ci, le nombre de phrases données en devoir à la maison. Traduire trois phrases plutôt qu'une page entière sera perçu comme « moins difficile » alors qu'en fait le travail demandé sera juste moins abondant et moins fatigant.

Le principal problème pour nous fut la présence de parties de dialogues transcrits d'après entretiens et comportant des tournures dialectales[26]. Tout comme la présence de tournures orales familières, ces expressions locales posent le problème de leur équivalent en français. Bien sûr, on ne les traduira pas en un des dialectes ou langues de la francophonie ou de la France (il serait ridicule de traduire le parler d'Iwate, par exemple, par celui du Nord, voire même par un dialecte Wallon ou par le joual québécois). On optera donc pour des tournures orales en français standard en évitant

26 Dans notre cours de l'année 2020-2021, nous avions à faire à des phrases de style oral parlé dans le Kantô. *Minzoku no fursato*, *op cit*. pp. 41-42.

scrupuleusement les anachronismes et en tenant compte de l'âge du locuteur en question.

Le deuxième problème qui s'est posé fut celui de la concordance des temps. Toute traduction en français pose ce problème, toutefois dans le cas particulier de Miyamoto, écrivain voyageur, la narration d'expérience vécue côtoie l'essai et il arrive parfois que l'ethnographe se mette en scène, aussi faut-il toujours se demander quand a lieu chaque action et quand elle est rapportée. La traduction des temps est donc, ici en particulier, rétive à toute transposition automatique telle que « forme du dictionnaire (non passé) japonaise → présent français » ou « forme achevée japonaise → passé français ». Les règles d'emploi des temps en japonais sont plus souples qu'en français et il arrive souvent que l'auteur passe d'une forme achevée à un non-passé d'une phrase à l'autre. La traduction en français est ici l'occasion d'une révision bienvenue des règles de la concordance des temps et une mise en pratique sur le long terme, difficulté du français que même les meilleurs apprenants (japonais) ne maîtrisent que très rarement.

Enfin, dernière difficulté, qui se pose peut-être davantage pour l'enseignant en position de correcteur que pour l'apprenant-traducteur, c'est la traduction ou non des termes désignant les machines et les outils. Dans ce cas, nous avons privilégié le cas par cas et, comme si le texte allait être publié, nous avons pris la liberté d'insérer des photos ou gravures représentant lesdits outils (par exemple un ***kine*** 杵, pilon à manche utilisé pour le ***mochi-tsuki*** 餅搗き). L'insertion de photographies représentant des scènes de ***matsuri*** a également plu aux étudiants qui voyaient alors dans le texte traduit autant un ***extrait de livre*** au propos concret et visualisable qu'un exercice de cours.

Nous n'avons pour le moment pas rencontré de difficulté infranchissable dans la traduction française de Miyamoto. Le choix de cet auteur fut donc profitable pour tous et moins frustrant qu'un texte littéraire, qu'il soit japonais ou français.

Pour conclure, nous avons pu valider le point selon lequel la traduction en français, exercice pourtant d'une difficulté réelle pour les étudiants et l'enseignant lui-même, était un exercice à la fois formateur et un peu ludique, dont les étudiants eux-mêmes reconnaissaient l'apport dans leur apprentissage du français. Tout comme E. Kourdis, « nous pouvons affirmer que le couple langue/traduction est un outil didactique privilégié dans l'enseignement/apprentissage d'un français à visée professionnelle » (Kourdis, 2011)

Sans conseiller à tout le monde le choix exclusif de Miyamoto qui n'aurait pas forcément de sens dans certains cas, nous conseillons à chaque enseignant d'ajuster sa position en fonction de paramètres multiples : convenance personnelle, adéquation au public des apprenants, formation du raisonnement ou encore préparation au monde du travail dans lequel le futur diplômé cherchera à s'insérer à court terme.

En outre, cet exercice permet, tout comme le travail sur des textes d'actualité, d'être renouvelé chaque année, au bénéfice de l'enseignant-chercheur qui peut réutiliser les morceaux traduits par lui pour la correction dans ses travaux personnels. C'est, si l'on peut dire, faire d'une pierre deux coups.

Procéder à l'exercice de traduction en français fut pour nous une expérience entièrement positive, ainsi que pour les étudiants qui ressentaient un sentiment d'achèvement après ce travail nouveau et exigeant accompli. La rédaction de cet article ne laisse de nous inciter à poursuivre notre découverte du monde non seulement de la traduction en cours de langue, mais de la traduction en général et de la traductologie en particulier.

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The Best of Both: Adaptations of Classroom Practices and Lesson Design in the Transition from an Online to an On-Campus Classroom Environment

Andrew Tyner

Abstract

In this paper, I examine the changes I have made to classroom practices and lesson design as I transition from a fully online classroom environment utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic to an on-campus classroom environment. I find that there are several beneficial technologies, particularly online teaching tools, which could be carried over from one learning environment to the other. These elements include the use of the Zoom platform within the classroom, the Blackboard learning management service, and multimedia lesson components. While the use of these tools has sometimes meant changes to my previously established classroom practices, I find that these tools help make my classes more immediately interactive, overcome some practical limitations of a physical classroom, provide additional learning opportunities, and, in some cases, help facilitate measures that might help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Keywords: technology in the classroom, classroom practices, lesson design

Introduction

The role of technology in the classroom has been extensively explored in both academic and popular literature, particularly over the past two decades. The fact that technology is becoming increasingly prevalent both inside and outside of the classroom is undeniable. In particular, the use of Zoom and other similar platforms has proliferated widely over the past year and a half during the global COVID-19 pandemic. As more and more educational institutions transition back to face-to-face classes in the wake of the pandemic, questions emerge regarding what might be adapted from online lessons to benefit face-to-face lessons. In other words, how might the best parts of the virtual learning environment be carried over into the classroom?

I teach at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, Japan in the department of Foreign Language Education and Research. All my classes were online during the 2020 academic year. In 2021, most of the spring semester was online. The classes taught during this period, English discussion, debate, and presentation,[1] were all taught using a combination of Zoom as a classroom environment, e-mail for communication outside of class or virtual office hours,[2] and Blackboard[3] to deliver documents, announcements, and assignment instructions, as well as for students to turn in completed assignments and receive written feedback.

Now, in the fall 2021 academic term, as my university largely returns to face-to-face lessons, and

1 My debate and presentation courses are conducted in English and have the dual purpose of teaching skills relevant to presentation and debate and improving English language proficiency.

2 Conducted on Zoom.

3 Blackboard is an online teaching tool, often referred to as a learning management system, which incorporates many elements. These include the ability to conduct quizzes or tests online; provide announcements, homework assignments, and other documents to students; receive assignment submissions from students and provide the teacher with a means to give feedback on those submissions; and provide grade management tools, among several other features.

as I teach presentation and debate courses, I am reflecting on my attempts to integrate the beneficial components of the online classes, particularly the technologies used during online lessons, with my on-campus lessons. Chief among my concerns in this process has been that the adaptations will benefit the students in clear, definable ways. In short, I have attempted to enhance my existing on-campus lesson designs with technologies that each offer some specific and immediate benefits.

In this study, I shall focus on on-campus integration of the main technologies used to facilitate my online lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely, Zoom and Blackboard, as well as multimedia lesson components. As I have discussed previously[4], the objectives of, and in large part, the basic methodology for, planning and conducting an online class are in close alignment with those of on-campus classes. The primary difference, in the case of online lessons, is the use of technology to overcome the limitations imposed by the literal distance between the students and their teacher and classmates, yet the physical classroom is not perfect; it has its limitations as well. Presently I wish to explore the use of technology, on one hand, to enhance and improve a given class, while on the other, to overcome various limitations of the physical classroom setting.

Discussion

During the first couple of weeks of the Fall 2021 semester, as most courses at the university returned to face-to-face lessons, I taught my classes largely as I had prior to the pandemic. I used the textbooks and whiteboard or chalkboard as my primary in-class teaching tools. This was not ineffective. However, having used a wider variety of technology during online lessons in the pandemic, I had the feeling that something was missing. Many of my colleagues indicated that they were continuing to use the online tools that they had integrated into their classes over the previous few semesters. Even though, in hindsight, this idea was rather straightforward, I had not fully considered the possibility of carrying over a significant portion of class design and methodology from the online lessons.

Now, my on-campus classes mirror my recent online classes in several ways. When my students enter the classroom, I ask that they sign in to Zoom. The students do not turn on their cameras or microphones, but even by simply signing in to zoom, attendance recordkeeping is made easier. This is a not insignificant help in an environment where all students must wear masks and sit well apart from one another in a large classroom. Problems of teachers and students not seeing or hearing one another clearly during attendance check may be averted. Still a greater benefit is to be had through sharing information with the students using the Zoom platform.

If a given activity has comparatively complex instructions, rather than simply writing the instructions on the whiteboard or chalkboard or displaying them on a single screen as I explain them, I can put the instructions directly in front of each student through the chat feature. This obviates difficulty for the students in seeing instructions clearly in a large, socially distanced classroom. I can also send useful online links or other information to students using the class chat function, enhancing their note-taking ability without drawing their attention away from the device whereon they keep their notes. Rather than having the students wait for me to write something on the board, I can give students information much more quickly as I can quickly type or copy and paste information directly into the chat.

Yet another benefit of having this chat feature available during class is that students can ask

4 Tyner, A. (2021) Finding Time: Reflections on English Discussion Lesson and Activity Timing in the Shift to Online Lessons During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Journal of Multilingual Pedagogy and Practice 1, 16-22.

questions during activities and receive answers. Certainly, students are always welcome to ask questions aloud, but this method is helpful for students who are shy or embarrassed to ask a question. Further, questions and answers exchanged this way to not disturb students who are actively participating in an activity.

Khan and Iqbal (2020) note that taking feedback from students regularly is one means to "ensure quality of the [class] sessions" (p. 1) when using online classroom tools. Regarding this, students are able to not only ask questions but also give immediate feedback to me using Zoom chat. If something is difficult to understand or if more examples are required—in short, there is something a student wishes to express about the immediate circumstances of their learning—they can offer this using the Zoom chat function quickly and unobtrusively. Even something as simple as asking for the meaning of a word, requesting to hear something again, or seeking further examples, can make the difference between understanding and not understanding.

Zoom, as I have already mentioned, helps to facilitate the use of multimedia lesson components. Though the use of video and audio in the classroom is long established, generally, in any given class, my use of audio and video is limited. The main reason for this limited use of multimedia is to give the students more time to speak and use the skills being learned. However, a further consideration has been that, in the past, the use of video or audio often meant some break in the flow of the lesson, a slow-down, or attention transitioned from notebooks and textbooks to a screen or audio device and back.

Now, with concerns about the spread of COVID-19, there are further difficulties. I have mentioned some already. Students are spaced apart from one another in large classrooms, for instance. This makes the use of a single screen difficult, logistically. Additionally, classroom doors and windows are kept open to provide ventilation. This often causes sound disturbances. Playing a video or audio segment loudly enough for students at the back of the room to hear clearly necessarily means disturbing neighboring classes. In addition, the various sources of noise one encounters with open doors and windows means that even relatively loud audio may be suddenly drowned out by the siren of an emergency vehicle or some such other random sound. These concerns must be weighed against the potential benefits of multimedia use.

When considering the benefits of multimedia use in the classroom, first there is the informational content of a given video or audio segment, and then, of notable importance in the language classroom, there is the potential for video and audio segments to provide high-quality examples in real-world or realistic scenarios. Multimedia has the capacity to offer something beyond the immediate classroom experience. Khan & Iqbal (2020) note that a video is, itself, a potential source of student engagement (p. 1). Hall & Dougherty Stahl highlight the "Dual Coding Theory" which holds that "our brains process and remember more effectively when we are actively taking information in through both our verbal and nonverbal channels" (p. 404).

There are numerous reasons to integrate multimedia components into on-campus classes. Indeed, teachers around the world have done this for years. The difference of note in the present situation is that in carrying over the use of Zoom from online classes, the integration of multimedia components can now be almost seamless. Now, short video or audio examples can be used at virtually any point in the lesson with minimal disturbance to lesson flow or to student concentration. PowerPoint presentations as well as video and audio segments that might have been difficult to see or hear for students in the back of a large room are now directly in front of each student on their

preferred screen[5]. Students can also use earphones for greater audio clarity when using Zoom on their Internet-enabled device, which is of particular importance in a language classroom. Students, spaced widely apart from one another as a means of social distancing, need not move close to the front of the room to see or hear clearly.

If the benefits of using Zoom in the classroom are evident, are there any drawbacks? One potential drawback is the much discussed 'Zoom fatigue.' While I am in no way an expert on the physical and psychological effects of technology use, literature on the topic of Zoom fatigue seems to suggest that it may not be likely under the circumstances of my classes as I have described them. McWhirter (2020) notes regarding Zoom fatigue, "The constant eye contact with numerous individuals at once compounded by the awareness of one's own facial expressions can be exhausting in itself… Additionally, fatigue comes from nonstop hours at the computer" (p. 41). Regarding the former concern, the students do not use their cameras while signed-on to Zoom in the classroom. As for the latter, while the students do use internet capable devices, whether a computer, tablet, or smartphone, they do not use these devices constantly throughout the class. Rather, students complete a wide variety of tasks, many of which require them to look away from their screens. Hence, while Zoom fatigue is a serious concern in the realm of online classes, with Zoom integrated as I have described, it seems Zoom fatigue might be unlikely.

One of the other major technologies I am currently using for my classes is Blackboard. While Blackboard is a long-established tool for instructors, I had not, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, used it extensively. I do not wish to explain how the use of Blackboard streamlines many of the processes related to instruction. Rather, I wish to consider how the use of Blackboard has altered my classroom practices[6].

One measure suggested by the university as a COVID-19 prevention measure is not to distribute or collect physical copies of documents. As sensible as this measure is, in classes that involve a fair amount of writing or research, such as presentations or debates in my case, it does make things somewhat difficult. One solution is the use of Blackboard by students to turn in homework assignments and for me to provide feedback and supplementary materials to students.

Prior to the pandemic, most homework was turned in to me either on paper or by email. This was, logistically, difficult to manage. I had to physically manage the documents, keep them safe, write feedback by hand on each one (at least in the case of assignments turned in on paper) even if some elements were repeated, and promptly return the assignments to the students.

Paperless assignments on Blackboard are much easier to manage. For one thing, the student does not run the risk of either losing the instructions for an assignment or misplacing the assignment once it is completed. Another advantage of digitally submitted homework assignments, particularly writing assignments, is that either the student or the instructor can access them at any time. This is particularly helpful to students in cases such that reference to one assignment may help in the preparation of another assignment. Still another advantage is that feedback can be given to studentsin writing at any time and subsequently referred to by either the instructor or student. Concerning the

5 Students are allowed to use laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones. It should also be noted that the university allows students to borrow laptops should they need to do so. Thus, the potential problem of the unavailability of technology for students is sidestepped.

6 I should note that both presentation and debate, as presently delivered, are being taught in-person at Rikkyo University for the first time in the Fall 2021 semester. When I refer to differences between my current and former practices, I refer to either my former practices in various courses at Rikkyo and other institutions or between my planned and actual practices.

submission of assignments through a learning management system, Amirul Islam (2017) notes, "Students will…feel more comfortable to write to their teacher as it can be only one to one communication" (p. 82). While students may work in-class with the words ideas they have submitted electronically, they know that the first person to see the writing will be their instructor. If there is some major problem, they will be informed. It takes away some of the pressure, and possibly some of the feeling of vulnerability that comes with sharing one's writing with classmates.

Additionally, accountability is clear when assignment submission is managed electronically. A student can be immediately aware of their past work, and may be cognizant of their overall performance, at least in terms of homework writing, at little more than a glance. This allows students to visualize what is expected of them and how they have responded to those expectations, to be both responsible and responsive when it comes to homework assignments and, as Khan and Iqbal (2020) note, "Responsiveness is the crux of learning" (p. 1).

Conclusion

Technology has a useful role to play in the classroom. My primary concern, as noted in the introduction, was that any technology integrated into the classroom should be of actual, concrete benefit to the students. The technologies I have integrated thus far certainly meet that criterion.

The transition from online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic to face-to-face classes presents both challenges and opportunities. Many of the same online tools used during the pandemic can continue to perform largely the same function in face-to-face lessons. Going paper-free, for instance, potentially allows a measure of safety7 while also offering the benefits of easy submission of assignments at any time and a means to provide written feedback to students quickly and simply. The use of Zoom or similar platforms in the classroom can allow students to interact with class materials and their instructors more easily. Further, the integration of multimedia elements through Zoom or similar platforms might allow students to engage in different modes of learning than might otherwise be possible, given the typical limitations of the physical classroom and the specific restrictions connected to the prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

In researching the technologies discussed in this paper, I find that one area of future interest to instructors as they integrate online technologies into their classroom practices might be the further development of learning management systems, such as Blackboard. As these systems develop, the potential that the integration of AI and deep learning systems might be able to further tailor these systems to suit the needs of teachers and students. While such AI and deep learning systems are still being developed, Dias et al. (2020) note that in such a system, "knowledge can be extracted concerning the student's preferred learning patterns while interacting with leaning resources, and/or while collaborating in groups" (p. 2). Such feedback would provide the instructor with additional information with which to tailor their lessons to best suit their students. Beyond this, Dias et al. (2020) note the potential of such a system "to provide behavioral information in terms of learning and attention deficits" (p. 2). If such a system were available, it could start to bridge the gap between the treatment of learning difficulties and actual classroom instruction, which is an encouraging thought.

The fact that technology of potential benefit to the classroom will continue to emerge and develop is virtually undeniable. It seems the way forward is to find a balance between both online and in-class tools available to the instructor to best benefit the students. For my part, I will continue to evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of online technologies as they become available. I am certain that my classroom will continue to evolve.

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Applying Course Design for Online Instruction to Face-to-Face Lessons

Andrew Warrick

Abstract

After a year and a half, many courses at Rikkyo University moved from the online format that had been adopted due to the COVID-19 pandemic back to regular face-to-face classes during the Fall 2021 semester. Online teaching had forced teachers to rethink the way classes were conducted and to rapidly learn to utilize technology for instruction. As a result, courses were redesigned and innovative solutions emerged in order to allow for the instruction of courses that were previously intended to be conducted in physical classrooms. At Rikkyo University, two such classes were English Debate and English Presentation, both mandatory fall semester classes for first year students. However, once face-to-face instruction resumed, there was concern not only about health issues and teaching with infection countermeasures, but also about the loss of effective course design and practices that had been born out of the transition to online classes. This paper discusses some of the positive teaching approaches used for online instruction for English Debate and English Presentation, and how those were implemented once classes returned to face-to-face instruction in order to reduce the risk of infection or maintain the quality of classes that had been possible online.

Keywords: face-to-face instruction, course design, technology

Introduction

The global coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020 forced many educational institutions around the world to switch to online classes. Teachers everywhere had to quickly adapt to online teaching in order to protect the health of staff and students. It was a challenging time for educators who were required to learn new technology, rethink their teaching styles, and adapt lessons to a web-based format. With the help of virtual meeting software, cloud technology, and online tools teachers explored new ways to deliver the best education possible under the circumstances. As teachers became accustomed to conducting courses online, it became easier to take advantage of the medium to do things that would not have been possible otherwise, such as teach students new software and partition classes into different breakout rooms to run various activities simultaneously.

At Rikkyo University, classes had largely been online since the spring semester of 2020. Face-to-face classes had briefly resumed for a short period of time at the beginning of the 2021 spring semester, but as the number of COVID-19 infections in Tokyo increased and the prefecture implemented a continuation of restrictions intended to reduce the risk of infection, classes once again returned online. However, with daily infection numbers falling a few weeks into the fall semester of 2021, these restrictions were lifted and Rikkyo University soon returned many of its classes to the face-to-face teaching format, including two mandatory first year English courses: English Debate and English Presentation, both of which have about 20 students per class. While at first it had been challenging to transition to online teaching as both educators and students had to learn new technologies and get accustomed to the format, a new set of issues presented themselves with the recommencement of teaching in physical classrooms.

Even though both English Debate and English Presentation returned to being taught on

campus, teachers and students still had to follow a strict set of rules in order to minimize the risk of infection during classes. First among these was of course that wearing facial masks was mandatory while on campus. While this rule did not directly interfere with the usual way either of these classes were conducted, many of the other restrictions made the typical way classes were managed somewhat problematic. English Debate and English Presentation are designed around having students share ideas with each other. However, since the threat of COVID-19 infection remained with face-to-face classes, teachers were asked to follow a set of guidelines to reduce the risk of the disease spreading. These included limiting the amount of students who were talking at once, limiting the overall amount of time students talked during a lesson, and limiting the number of people a student interacted with during a lesson. Students also had to sit at a distance from one another, and teachers were asked to stay at the front of the classroom and not walk around to students. All of these restrictions made conducting face-to-face classes very different from what would have been possible had there been no coronavirus pandemic, but also very different from what had become the standard for online classes. As a consequence of these restrictions, students were limited to the number of people with whom they could share ideas during a single English Debate class, or the number of people who could offer them feedback during a single Presentation class. With online classes using Zoom this had not been a concern, and it had been possible to frequently arrange students into various groups so that they could gain further perspectives. Previously in online classes, students had been able to freely interact with one another, but a limit on the number of students in a group speaking at once meant that their interactions had to be more regulated once we returned to the physical classroom. As a teacher, I also could not engage with students as closely as I had been able to with online classes, since I was not supposed to directly approach groups in the classroom, whereas before I had been able to visit individual breakout rooms in Zoom and so could speak with students much more easily.

Discussion

All these guidelines meant to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 presented new challenges for teachers of English Debate and English Presentation once these courses returned to campus. Conversely, the online format of instruction had given teachers and students many useful tools for the classroom and brought about creative course design measures. This paper considers the application of some online classroom innovations to overcome these challenges and improve the overall quality of instruction with regards to creating a "partitioned" classroom, putting more emphasis on students, and giving feedback to students.

Maintaining a Partitioned Classroom

During online lessons over Zoom, it is possible to partition a class into separate breakout rooms where students can work on different activities. When conducting my English Presentation and English Debate classes online, I found this useful in allowing my students to make full use of the class time to be productive. For example, in English Debate classes, a group of students who finished preparing their team speech more quickly than other groups could rehearse their delivery without disrupting other students. And in English Presentation classes, students in one group could give presentations while students in another group worked on another activity. I believed there would be diminishing returns for students to watch too many presentations, so instead I had students give presentations in breakout rooms while I was present. I would then give feedback before moving onto

the next group to listen to their presentations. After I left, the group that had given me their presentations would do a peer feedback and discussion activity. Meanwhile, the groups that were waiting for me to arrive could do activities from the textbook and prepare for a future presentation. In this way, students could use the class time effectively and be productive throughout the lesson. Had I asked students to present in front of the class in a single Zoom meeting room, I would have worried about students disengaging from online lessons either before or after their presentation, so I also felt this approach kept students honest.

When classes resumed on campus, I still wanted students to give frequent practice presentations, as they had done online, but I did not want them to watch 19 other presentations while having nothing else to do, as I thought this would not be a good use of class time. I wanted students to utilize class time productively by practicing presentations with each other, learning new presentation skills by doing exercises from the textbook, discussing with each other questions related to the theme of the upcoming presentation and then commencing work on it, all while I gave feedback on the content or delivery of other students' presentations. However, the social distancing guidelines made this somewhat difficult, as I was not supposed to leave from the front of the class. To overcome this, I had students do all tasks that required pair or group work at the beginning of class, and then use the remainder of the time to work quietly on a future presentation by writing the script, creating the slide show, and memorizing their presentation for the remainder of the class. And while the class worked quietly, I could ask students from one group at a time to give me their presentations, with other members of the same group listening in to provide feedback afterwards. In this way, I maintained the same level of productivity in my presentation classes that had benefited my students in our online lessons.

Greater Emphasis on Students

When classes were online, I employed active learning approaches as much as possible. Waluyo (2020) reported that active learning strategies increased student outcomes when combined with e-learning approaches, so by using various online tools and involving students in the learning process it is possible to improve student results. The nature of online courses using video conferencing software can make it very easy for students to disengage from a lesson by doing other things on their computer or phone instead of paying attention to a lecture. To avoid this problem, I had tried to limit the amount of time I lectured during online lessons. Instead, I gave students activities to do in small groups using their textbooks. Al-Shalibi (2015) reported that student engagement was crucial to learning outcomes, and that careful lesson planning and varying teaching strategies helped improve student engagement.

For my English Presentation classes, I used Ready to Present (Bartelen & Kostiuk, 2019) as a textbook, which contains many exercises students can do in pairs or small groups that introduce students to various presentation skills such as gesturing, making eye-contact, and emphasizing words. I combined these exercises with questions I had made that required students to reflect on the importance of these skills so that students would both understand how and why they were important to use in presentations. Previously, with classes online and students using computers, they could check the answers to the textbook exercises online by watching videos or listening to audio tracks from the textbook's website. Following this, we would check the answers to the questions I had created together in the main Zoom meeting room.

When classes returned to campus, not all students brought their laptops, so using the textbook's

website to check the answers to activities may have proven difficult. Furthermore, I felt that having students watch videos on gestures or listen to audio tracks of sentences with word emphasis to check their answers using the media available on the textbook's website would be problematic if all students did not finish at the same time. Just as I had tried to have students take on more active roles in my online classes, I realized that the same could be done in the physical classroom. Therefore, instead of having the students rely on the textbook's webpage to check their answers or me giving them the answer, I had students provide the answers themselves to activities that required matching sentences to appropriate gestures, or read a sentence aloud while emphasising the necessary words.

I employed similar methods in my English Debate classes. I felt the Up for Debate (Mishima *et al.,* 2021) textbook had many sections that were teacher centered, and so to counteract this, I again made questions for students to answer in groups during our online lessons. Using the textbook, students would find the answers and we would take them up together as a class. In this way, students would explain key elements from the debate textbook, such as the structure of a debate or the function of various expressions. These same approaches to teaching students which I had devised to prevent students from disengaging during online lessons worked well once we returned to campus.

Giving Feedback

Monitoring students and providing feedback that is personalized is a central part of English Presentation and English Debate. Hattie and Timperley (2007) go over ways feedback can be effective, and note that feedback on student tasks in relation to overall goals is important to improving student outcomes. In English presentation classes, how a student delivers their presentation, such as the volume of their voice, the way they emphasize words and use hand gestures, and their eye-contact, is of great importance and one of the central focusses of the class. With online classes, it was possible to watch students closely using video conferencing software, and in turn provide constructive advice students could use to improve with each practice presentation. However, the ability to monitor students so closely was reduced once classes returned to face-to-face because teachers could not move freely around classrooms due the anti-infection guidelines requiring teachers to remain at the front of the classroom. These same guidelines also made it more difficult to check in with groups during debate class as they prepared for various parts of their debates. During online classes, a teacher could visit each group and hear their ideas. If students were struggling to make reasons or find evidence, the teacher could offer hints and advice. Again though, this level of monitoring became difficult once lessons returned to the classroom. This inability to give immediate feedback easily was potentially damaging to student productivity, especially among lower-level students who perhaps need more guidance from instructors.

As a way around this, I asked students to submit their written scripts for presentations and debate classes electronically. When classes were held online, this was the norm for checking student work, since it was not possible for students to submit physical copies of assignments. Both the English Debate textbook and the English Presentation textbook I used had spaces for writing segments of debates or presentation scripts, so in a normal teaching environment, it is likely that I would have been checking physical versions of student work that they completed during class. However, Rikkyo University's guidelines for reducing the risk of infection limited the sharing of physical papers and handouts between students and teachers, so once we returned to teaching on campus, I could not check students' work in the textbooks as I would have if there had been no pandemic.

Using Blackboard, I made forums where students could submit relevant work for me to check. By using Blackboard or shared Google Documents, it is possible for instructors to check the contents and structure of debate speeches and presentations. In debate classes, this can enable instructors to ensure that student ideas are relevant to the topic and that they have supported their ideas well. Teachers can also verify that team speeches and other parts of a debate follow the proper format, reference sources correctly, and so on. For presentation classes, teachers can make sure students have a proper introduction, body, and conclusion to their presentations and that each is developed adequately and the presentation looks to be the appropriate length. And by annotating comments directly into shared Google documents, teachers can provide feedback to students that they can use to make adjustments to the contents of their presentations and debate speeches. I found this a useful way to check student work, since due to the anti-infection measures we were asked to follow, I was not supposed to take and return physical papers to students. Using email submissions would have made organizing things difficult as well due to the number of students per class, so it was very convenient to be able to upload shared Google documents to Blackboard for students to write their debate speeches, or ask English Presentation classes to submit their material to a forum on Blackboard. To ensure that students knew how to enable sharing and editing on Google Documents, I demonstrated in class using my own computer and the class projector. If teachers want to make sure that students are able to use a technology or application in the intended way, it is important to walk them through the necessary steps.

In addition to focusing on content and structure, presentation classes also focused on the delivery of the presentation. When classes had been online, I had watched students take turns giving their practice presentations, and the same was possible once we returned to teaching on campus due to the way I partitioned the class. This allowed me to give direct feedback to students during practice presentations. To supplement this, I also asked group members to watch each others' presentations and complete an online Google form checksheet and then use it to give each other feedback. I had used the same approach in online lessons, because peer feedback has positive learning outcomes for learners (Saito, 2013) and wanted to bring the same system into the physical classroom. By creating a check-sheet in google forms that focussed on five to six aspects of a presentations delivery at a time, students could give partners or practice group members advice on items such as eye-contact, voice volume, use of gestures, and word emphasis during practice rounds for their presentations. This type of feedback on the delivery of presentations could be used immediately by students to improve their delivery between presentations. In addition to this, I could also give comments on the overall class results of the anonymously submitted Google form checksheets, telling the class that as a whole certain aspects of their delivery were good, while others needed improvement before suggesting ways to improve.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 global pandemic disrupted education institutions around the world and required teachers to adapt to online instruction. Online instruction itself brought creative approaches to lesson design and a greater incorporation of technology into the classroom. For teachers, many things became easier due to video conferencing software, such as making groups, checking attendance, and quickly sharing digital information with students. For students, researching things for a presentation or a debate was easier than it otherwise would have been on campus in a classroom without computers. So while the transition to online teaching certainly presented many challenges

initially, it was also found to have various benefits.

Teaching online made it easier to design lessons so that students could be productive throughout the class, because separate breakout rooms meant that groups did not disrupt each other and could be doing different things simultaneously. Though impossible to make separate rooms in an actual classroom, the principle of having groups of students work on different activities at the same time was still beneficial to apply to teaching in a physical classroom, as it allows students to use the class time productively without disrupting others.

By designing activities to keep students engaged in online lessons and prevent them from becoming detached from the lesson, I could make sure that students were staying on task. These same activities were still useful once we returned to campus, and I was able to further emphasize student agency in the learning process by having them provide model answers to certain activities in place of a textbook's videos.

Finally, the methods for providing feedback to students when classes were online still proved useful when classes resumed on campus. Asking students to submit assignments digitally allowed me to write comments onto their digital documents and avoid problems of assignments being forgotten or misplaced by students between classes. And creating Google form checksheets was a meaningful way for students to give feedback to each other and also a useful tool for me in providing advice to the whole class.

Necessity is said to lead to invention, and the coronavirus pandemic certainly required teachers to learn to teach online and make adjustments to their lesson plans. However, from these difficult times, many innovative ideas were born and many of those could translate back to the physical classroom well. This paper outlined some of the beneficial innovations that were products of online instruction, and how they were later ported over to the physical classroom once classes at Rikkyo University returned to campus. Some of these elements of course design helped overcome the difficulties posed by guidelines designed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection, but all were useful in improving the quality of instruction and student learning.

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Unlocking Peer and Self-Assessment: A Guided Feedback Activity

Deborah Maxfield

Abstract

Recent EFL research has indicated the advantages of providing students with opportunities for self-assessment or peer feedback in addition to teacher feedback (Choi, 2013; Rodriguez-Gonzalez & Castaneda, 2018; Al Jahromi, 2020). This practical teaching report will cover use of a classroom activity designed to encourage interactive peer feedback and productive self-assessments via Google Forms. This activity was developed in line with relevant literature on peer feedback and self-assessment, which suggests several benefits of offering students the opportunity for these alternative forms of feedback. In line with recommendations from previous research, the activity utilizes both closed and open questions geared towards setting specific goals and developing reflective and evaluative skills; this combination can guide students towards producing more meaningful and constructive feedback, hence boosting their future performance. This tool allows either real-time or asynchronous feedback to be provided in online or face-to-face lessons, which might be particularly useful for teachers working in various environments. Although the example questions provided were designed for use within a first-year university English Presentation course, the basic structure of the activity could be readily adapted to suit a range of speaking or writing courses.

Keywords: peer feedback, L2 feedback, self-assessment, self-assessment online

Introduction

Formative feedback

Feedback is essential within the classroom: it provides information to students on aspects of performance that can be improved upon in the future, and reciprocal feedback between teachers and students can significantly improve both learner and teacher performance (Klimova, 2015). Feedback can be summative or formative; summative feedback evaluates learning and tends to occur at the end of a course or class, whereas formative feedback occurs during the course and aims to set learning targets to improve performance efficiently and expediently(Taras, 2005; Conzemius & O'Neill, 2009). In their seminal meta-analysis on feedback and goal setting, Black and Wiliam (1998) state that formative feedback has three essential elements: "recognition of the desired goal, evidence about present position, and some understanding of a way to close the gap between the two" (p. 6). Formative feedback is therefore constructive and future-focused, as to make improvements in the future, students need to know both how they are progressing (Sadler, 1989) and gain specific advice on ways to 'close the gap' by improving particular aspects of their work (Black & Wiliam, 2010). This process can be motivating, as well as sustain or develop performance (Klimova, 2015). In contrast to summative feedback, formative feedback provides more frequent opportunities to comment on progress by sampling a wider variety of student work, and may reduce learner anxiety (Sadler, 1989, p. 141). Formative feedback can be delivered via teachers or peers, or come from students themselves via self-assessment (Al Jahromi, 2020). This paper will further explore each type of formative feedback before detailing an activity designed in accordance with these principles.

Teacher feedback

Traditionally, feedback on how to close the gap has passed from teachers to students in what could be termed a teacher-centred approach. Several studies indicate that students in L2 learning environments show a preference for feedback from teachers over that of peers (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al., 2006; Choi, 2013), and that teacher-centred feedback is more often incorporated into student work (Yang et al., 2006)I In line with these findings, feedback from teachers arguably has an important role to play in the classroom as they possess greater tacit evaluative knowledge (Sadler, 1989), for instance for assigning grades.

However, it can be hard for teachers to assess examples of work in isolation, and hence, there is a "tendency to use a normative rather than a criterion approach, which emphasizes competition between pupils rather than the personal improvement of each" (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 18). This is because teachers might struggle to provide personalized feedback to each student, particularly in larger classes. Further problems with teacher feedback could include students failing to grasp how to close the gap because of difficulties with L2 comprehension, and it presents fewer opportunities for student autonomy in goal setting (Yang et al., 2006). However, teachers can open two alternative avenues for feedback, which offer benefits to learners by developing students' evaluative capacities via self- assessment and by encouraging classmates to collaborate via peer feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Peer feedback

Regardless of the type of feedback received, Sadler (1989) writes that before students can improve upon their previous performance, the first step they must make is to

> "develop the capacity to monitor the quality of their own work during actual production. This in turn requires that students possess an appreciation of what high quality work is... and that they develop a store of tactics or moves which can be drawn upon to modify their own work... these skills can be developed by providing direct authentic evaluative experience for students" (p. 119).

Giving opportunities for students to engage in peer feedback provides the "direct and authentic" experience needed for students to develop their evaluative knowledge, and therefore, through the process of peer feedback, students can both gain and apply strategies or tactics to improve their own work in future by helping other students to improve theirs (Sadler, 1989, p. 140). In the same article, Sadler provides further advantages, such that students can see more examples of work on the same task they had undertaken, can observe multiple designs or solutions to problems, and can be somewhat more objective when evaluating others' work than they would be of their own.

In their in-depth study on peer feedback in L2 writing classes, Tsui and Ng (2002) noted numerous benefits for students, including greater collaborative learning, an increased sense of audience and authenticity regarding their own work, better understanding of what contributes to "success" on a task, and higher awareness of problems that reviewers could not previously spot in their own work. The authors concluded that this awareness was gained "not only through getting feedback but by giving feedback to peers as well" (p. 166), underlining the importance of peer feedback for future success. Black and Wiliams (2010) found that peer feedback best improved learning when specific strengths and weaknesses were listed and when this advice was offered without marks or scores from peers. Yang et al. (2006) concluded that in most cases where peer

feedback was offered, students could receive more feedback than they would have if only teacher feedback had been provided, and that the process of peer reviewing appeared to boost both critical thinking skills and student autonomy. Finally, peer feedback has been shown to reduce L2 anxiety (Choi, 2013; Rodriguez-Gonzalez & Castaneda, 2018) and encourage or motivate learners (Rollinson, 2005).

However, peer feedback could be vulnerable to issues with L2 language competence that may result in vague comments (Rodriguez-Gonzalez & Castaneda, 2018). Students may also lack task-based knowledge needed for effective peer response (Zhu, 1995) and might require guidance on what constitutes appropriate peer feedback. Zhu (1995) described successful peer response groups as being "task-focused" and providing specific and accurate feedback; however, when training was provided for students in feedback skills, it significantly enhanced the quality of peer response. One method of training students recommended by Rollinson (2005) is to pre-teach the purpose and methods of effective peer feedback and to emphasize that peers should focus on being collaborators rather than correctors.

Other guidelines for generating effective peer feedback include creating a comfortable learning environment, preparing appropriate peer response tasks that guide students towards providing better responses, modeling the process and instructions, and allowing students to discuss the activity afterwards (Hansen & Liu, 2005). Cho and Cho (2011) suggest that providing a combination of strengths and weaknesses (i.e., praise and constructive feedback) has been found to help both the reviewer and reviewee to improve their work in future and that reviewers offering positive comments alone did not improve the quality of work (p. 639). Students in some cultures which particularly emphasize the value of harmony in relationships might feel anxious about criticizing others' performance; however, within a Japanese EFL context, Kamimura (2006) found harmony promoted rather than hindered peer feedback.

Self-assessment

Sadler (1989) argues that formative assessment on how learners can "close the gap" can include both feedback provided externally to the learner (such as that from teachers or peers) and self-monitoring, by which the learner generates the relevant information themselves (p. 122). Self-assessment refers to learners making judgements about their own abilities (Brantmeier, 2006), such as independently evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their own work. Self-assessment was found by Black and Wiliams (1998) to significantly increase students' commitment to their own work, and this statement was taken further in a later paper that claimed "self-assessment by pupils, far from being a luxury, is in fact an essential component of formative assessment" (Black & Wiliams, 2010, p.6).

However, students cannot assess their own work without evaluative knowledge or guidelines on how to do so effectively. For self-monitoring to be successful, students need criteria, standards, or goals (Taras, 2005) which allow them to adequately judge the quality of their own work, and they should be able to choose various strategies on how to improve their performance in future (Sadler, 1989). By allowing students the opportunity to self-monitor, setting criteria to judge themselves by, and offering various strategies for improvement, teachers are effectively downloading their evaluative knowledge so that students can "eventually become independent of the teacher and intelligently engage in and monitor their own development" (Sadler, 1989, p. 141), which enables students to continue learning and utilizing the taught skills beyond and after the course. A further benefit of self-

assessment is that it can develop critical thinking skills as students evaluate their own learning and experiences (Klimova, 2015).

In sum, while teacher feedback is valued by students and is arguably the most suitable for assigning grades or offering summative assessments (Sadler, 1989), alternative forms of formative feedback can offer numerous advantages to learners. These include gaining awareness of what is required for successful achievement of a task and assembling a range of strategies to close the gap, as well as increased autonomy and reduced L2 anxiety. However, students require some guidance or training for either peer feedback or self-assessment to be successful. With these principals and arguments in mind, an activity was designed to guide students toward producing effective peer feedback and self-assessment.

Method

The activity has been trialed in several English Presentation classes in two semesters at Rikkyo University, Tokyo, and has been undertaken in online and face-to-face L2 learning environments. Students were provided with a Google Form, on which a series of questions invited them to consider both their own and other team members' presentations.

First, students were shown a preview of the Google Form. This ensured they knew where to find it (for instance, on the class Google Drive folder) and allowed them to see what topics they would need to write about after delivering and watching presentations. Short instructions or prompts such as *"What did you / your team do well? What can you / your team improve? Take notes"* were written on the whiteboard while the students watched presentations.." These acted as reminders for students to focus on their own and others' work, to include both positive and negative aspects, and to take notes to enable students to recall these in detail later. Students performed the activity as soon as they finished giving presentations and aimed to complete it during class time in order to better remember the presentations they had seen; however, this could easily be adapted as a homework task depending on teacher preference and time limitations.

As written peer feedback is more effective when supplemented by discussions between reviewers (Tsui & Ng, 2000), students were often given time afterward to read classmates' responses and discuss their ideas. These discussions could take place in the same class; a possible alternative for students is to read the comments as a homework task, then discuss them during the following lesson. Discussion of peer comments allowed students to collaboratively ascertain meaning if language use was unclear or to gather more details. For lower-proficiency groups, allowing this discussion to take place in their L1 might also benefit them.

Alternatively, or in addition to peer review discussions, instructors could show the results to the class as a whole and highlight interesting examples or recurring patterns, for instance 'many people mentioned they had found making eye contact difficult in their own presentations'. This could provide a good opportunity to teach extra skills or to review previously learned information in order to benefit students that had found these aspects difficult.

Discussion

Open and closed questions

The activity used a series of questions that invited students to evaluate both their own and other

team members' presentations. Various question types were utilized, including short answer, multiple choice, and scales. Closed questions guided students towards providing feedback on specific points, and open questions allowed for greater self-expression or explanation of their choices. A few examples of these designed for use in an English Presentation course will be provided as follows, although it may be worth noting that these can be adapted for use in other courses, including L1 writing courses, and could be offered in either students' L1 or L2.

Table 1

Some commonly used questions and instructions

Open questions	Think about a team member's presentation. What was the most interesting part? Which person in your team gave the best presentation today? Why did you think it was good ? .. *Your answer will be more helpful if you give detailed information (not "it was great!"... explain why)* Give one piece of advice to someone in your team - what can they improve? (For example: "Yuka - I liked your topic, but it was sometimes difficult to understand because you spoke too quickly. Try to speak slower next time") What do you think was good about your presentation?
Closed questions	Did your team members... Use phrases from p. 19? Use gestures? Look at the audience? Speak loud and clear? Show research? Give interesting information? What do you think is difficult about giving a presentation? *Choose 1–3 of the following:* Making eye contact, remembering my speech, making slides on PowerPoint, choosing a topic, planning and research, speaking clearly, using gestures

Figure 1

Example of a 'checkbox grid' (closed) question using a difficulty scale

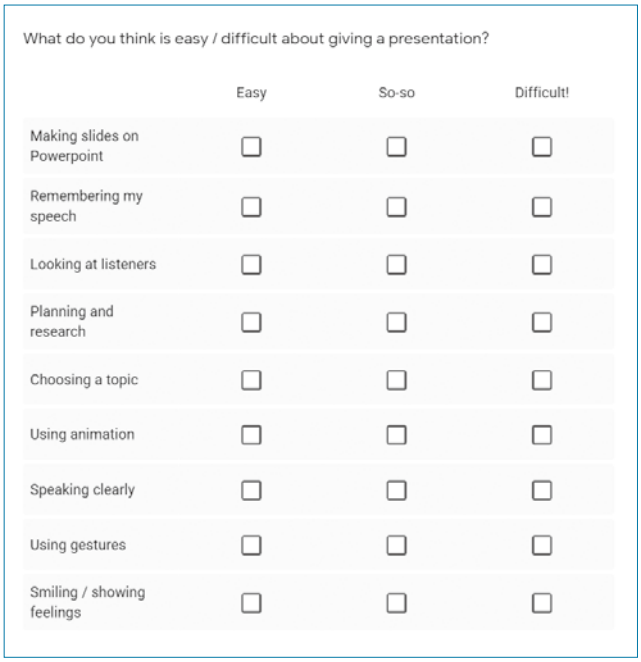
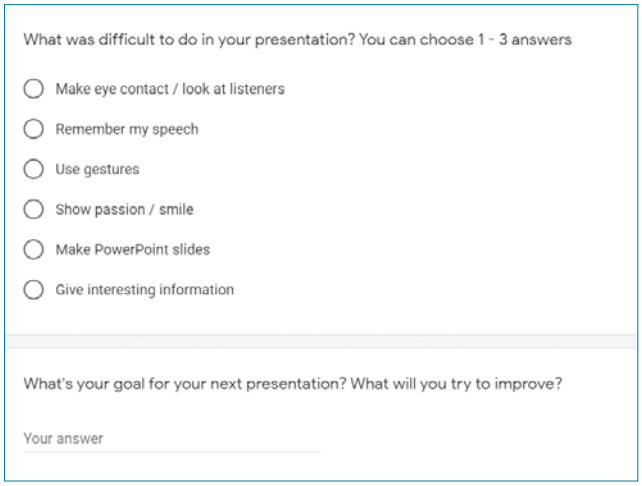


Figure 2
Examples of a multiple choice (closed) and short answer (open) question types



As students might benefit from training to gain the evaluative skills necessary for successful peer- or self-assessment (Hansen & Liu, 2005), closed questions aimed to draw students' attention to cogent, specific features of the presentations, which were listed as various options in multiple choice, ranking, or checkbox questions. Fixed criteria were used here to "narrow the choices of specific items which are considered important and relevant for any specific judgement" (Taras, 2005, p. 467), and they were often used before open questions that offered opportunities to expand upon these selections or decide on the specific items to be used in goal setting.

Praise and points to work on

As providing praise alone does not lead to effective improvements in student work (Cho & Cho, 2011), it was expected that a balance of positive and constructive comments would be more effective. Therefore, questions were structured to encourage both complimentary and critical feedback, such as "what did your team member/s do well?" and "what can they improve?".

It is conceivable that some students may feel nervous about criticizing another's work, so an example of a politely phrased comment that started on a positive note but then gave a specific recommendation for improvement (for instance, *"Yuka- I liked your topic, but it was sometimes difficult to understand because you spoke too quickly. Try to speak slower next time"*) was provided to model how to phrase feedback without being cruel or overly negative. Based on recommendations by Rollinson (2005) on peers being collaborators rather than correctors, this question aimed to elicit advice rather than baldly stating what was "bad". This should be emphasized in oral or written instructions to the class, such as by suggesting *"write a comment to help others improve in the future, and remember to be kind but clear"*.

Self-reflection and goal setting

After choosing from a set of options such as those in the first question of Figure 2, all feedback forms contained some variation on self-reflective questions encouraging students to consider their strengths and weaknesses in their own words, such as "what do you want to improve next time?". As

above, the focus was to consider how to improve in future rather than to be excessively negative regarding their own performance. Having previously decided some weaknesses in the closed question provided before this one, this open question type had the advantages of allowing students to express themselves more freely or justify why they had found certain aspects of the task challenging, as well as to autonomously select a goal on how to improve.

One principal that can guide students in generating productive goals for future improvement is the *SMART* method, which recommends that goals be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely: students who used these perimeters to set goals were found to better achieve learning outcomes, such as delivering more professional presentations (Lawlor, 2012). Asking students to consider one to three weaknesses narrows their focus to become more specific, and all of the options provided are realistic and attainable with some practice or focus. Furthermore, the options also allow timely goals to be chosen as they set the duration of the goal as "your next presentation".

Insights for teachers

Klimova (2015) suggests that this form of goal setting question could not only assist students with selecting goals autonomously, but might also benefit teachers reviewing these answers, as through self-reflection:

> "Students can critically think about what they have learned during the course and also convey some of their personal experience, experiences and feelings... teachers can then draw conclusions about their teaching practices and reconsider some of their teaching approaches and strategies" (p. 174)

By reviewing student responses, either with the class to highlight interesting or important examples, or outside of class contact hours, teachers can gain real-time insights into anxieties or difficulties students are facing. In the English Presentation classes discussed so far, difficulties faced by students may include looking at the audience, remembering their speech, or making gestures while speaking. The act of reviewing and reflecting on student goals or problems can enable teachers to offer strategies targeting these. One such example could be that if students commonly reported difficulties with remembering their speech, teachers could recommend that they practice three times before class: once with a full set of notes or complete speech, a second time with shorter notes, and a third time with brief bullet points. While the problems reported by students will vary on different courses, a review of responses to these types of questions might provide useful insights for educators seeking to combat common issues and improve their own teaching practice.

Effects of group cohesion

The most effective peer feedback offers both strengths and weaknesses (Cho & Cho, 2011), which might be challenging for some students. Although Kamimura (2006) found that harmony promoted rather than hindered peer feedback in a Japanese EFL context, students may feel anxious about criticizing others' performance. Previous research indicates that establishing a comfortable learning environment improves the quality of peer feedback (Hansen & Liu, 2005), and therefore, more cohesive groups might be better able to provide constructive feedback.

Students in the Presentation classes that undertook this activity had previously been divided into teams that had already worked closely together for several lessons, and icebreaker activities were run at the start of both semesters, which explicitly aimed to build cohesive teams by selecting shared

goals (Maxfield, 2021, *in press*). Students were asked to review only their team members' performances, rather than those of other classmates whom they might not have interacted with prior to the feedback activity. Peer review was not initiated until Lesson 5, by which time students had made a team presentation together, given two mini-presentations to their team, and participated in several discussions together. It was hoped that doing these tasks together before the feedback activity helped improve group cohesion and thereby reduced anxiety on giving constructive feedback as well as praise.

Classroom usage and potential adaptations

This activity has been tested in both online and face-to-face teaching formats. When instructions were clear and students could see a brief model or explanation of the task before attempting it, they were able to complete this activity in both environments with seemingly minimal difficulty, and later iterations in the same course required less explanation as the activity became more familiar. As this activity has been successfully used both online and face-to-face, it seems likely that it could also be used in hybrid learning environments. However, this should perhaps be further researched or trialed before being implemented on a major scale because the combination of written and oral feedback might be more difficult to achieve in hybrid environments.

The examples and questions listed above were used in the context of teaching a first-year university English Presentation class but could be altered to suit a range of other courses, including L2 writing classes or even those taught in the students' L1. While questions can be adapted to suit a variety of courses and tasks, previous research has indicated that it is best to offer a combination of closed questions to guide students towards providing specific feedback and open questions to encourage reflection. A good starting point could be to consider what would be needed for successful task performance, perhaps with reference to a rubric, and then to design questions leading students toward those goals.

Conclusion

Both peer feedback and self-assessment can lead students toward closing the gap between their current level and an ideal future performance. When applied with proper guidance, peer feedback and self-assessment can increase the evaluative knowledge essential for successful task performance, assist with judicious and autonomous goal selection, and indicate various strategies on how to get there. The benefits might extend after this activity has been completed as teacher review of self-assessments can improve their own teaching practices. Moreover, learning how to independently set and achieve course-relevant goals enables students to continue building on the taught skills beyond the end of the course.

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The Effects of Reconstructing Reflection Journals According to Students' Recommendations

Devon Arthurson

Abstract

In a fall 2020 study to gather data from first-year university students about the instructor's preliminary implementation of reflection journals, their feedback shaped the instructor's secondary and tertiary implementations of the activity in the proceeding two semesters. In the process of examining and re-examining what students voiced on numerous occasions in preparation for publications and presentations, the instructor reflected on and scrutinized her teaching practices, while also tailoring the activity according to students' needs. These needs were extending the due date of the activity, sharing the activity's goals with the learners, including a prompt for general comments, and allowing for students to review the previous lesson's journal at the start of class as well as share their journals with other classmates. In the sharing of data consisting of the student voices, with peers in professional development settings, the instructor was required to assess how she teaches and responds to learner feedback. This process also aided the instructor with the aim to listen to learners' voices more actively to guide teaching practice.

Keywords: journal writing, reflection, reflective teaching, student feedback, student voices

Introduction

In fall 2020, a research study was administered to gather data about the opinions and feedback from first-year university students regarding reflection journals. As this was the preliminary implementation of reflection journals for the instructor, it was vital to learn more about the students' perceptions of the activity. As student opinions were the focus of a previous article (Arthurson, 2021) this article is based on the data and a further exploration of students' feedback and advice on the journals. A comparison of the original journal format as well as the revised journals implemented in both spring and fall 2021 semesters will be shared as a potential source for other educators in EFL who may be interested in using this activity with their students. Ways the student voices guided the second and third implementation of the activity will be presented. In addition, the instructor reflections of what was gleaned from the first, second, and third implementations of the activity will be explored.

Literature Review

Reflection is a process necessary for both students and teachers to develop their skills in educational settings (Hussein, Al Jamal, & Sadi, 2020, p. 3486). According to Gupta, Mishra, and Shree (2019): "Reflective practice can be seen as both a structure to support critical thinking and enhance existing understanding and a method for facilitating independent and in-depth learning through inquiry" (p. 41). For instructors, it may manifest in taking time to examine their practice, thereby discovering new ways to improve their lessons (Gupta et al, 2019, pp. 39-40). One form of reflection can be in performing research about their practice to improve their teaching proficiency (Al-Baiz, 2012, p. 325). In a study by Rahimi and Weisi about EFL teachers and the effect of research on their practice, participating in research positively contributed to these teachers' professional

development; through sharing research, it allowed for new connections with other educators allowing for a deeper knowledge about English language teaching (2018, p. 9).

Student voices need to be incorporated into educational practice and policy. Many educators dedicated to improving their practice may seek out feedback from their learners. Bloemert, Paran and Jansen state "excluding the voice of students from research leads to an incomplete picture of the educational system" (2020, p. 429). It is vital that once feedback from students is collected, it needs to be examined with time and care (EPFL, n.d., para 4). Once this feedback has been thoughtfully processed by the teacher, it needs to be responded to (Paige, 2017, para. 2). Borg (2010, as cited by Rahimi & Weis, 2018, p. 2), states that teachers who conduct classroom-based research not only ameliorate their own individual practice, but may influence systematic improvement. Teachers who actively engage in reflective practice may find feedback from their learners as a beneficial process for reflection on and improvement of their teaching.

Educators involved in reflection may also want to create opportunities for their students to practice reflection. Reflection journals can aid in this development. Reflection journals are tools for students to not only improve their writing skills but may also be used for processing the lesson content, performing self-assessment and, goal setting. Writing reflection journals can allow for learners to reflect on a past event and share about how they might respond to such another recurrence of that event (Hashemia & Mirzaeib, 2015, p. 104). There are two recent studies about reflection journals in EFL classes at Japanese universities. In *Self-regulated Learning Processes Outside the Classroom: Insights from a Case Study of Japanese EFL Students,* Yabukoshi (2020) has the learners journals about their goals for TOEIC tests. With *Developing Self-Regulated Learners in Discussion Class* by Morita (2020), students not only write about the lesson's activities but their emotions and thoughts in that lesson. Nonetheless, research related to student voices shaping the structure of reflective activities in Japanese EFL settings appears to be quite limited.

Objective

With a shift from in-person to online classes, reflection journals were also a tool to create and maintain student-teacher interactions in a new setting with unique challenges, wherein all members were learning to navigate. As a result of what seemed to be a scarcity in research done about reflection journals in Japanese EFL settings and this instructor's inexperience with the activity, data was collected from students to learn more about their opinions about the activity, and for future adaptations to make it more meaningful for learners. Students were required to do the activity in the fall 2020 semester, examining the student voices through the research project shaped the second and third implementation of the activity and assisted the instructor in her teaching practice.

Setting and Participants

The setting was at a liberal arts university in Tokyo with first-year students from two mandatory writing classes and two mandatory debate classes. The lessons were once a week for 100 minutes. Students were required to submit reflection journals by 23:59 of each lesson for week 2 to week 13 of the fall 2020 semester. The journals were submitted through a learning platform. The students had lower to higher intermediate English proficiency with TOEIC scores varying from 280 to 699. All had the ability to write their journals in English; they were given a list of prompts and a template. The final reflection journal in week 13 was used to gather data about their opinions, experience and advice

about the activity. Though all students needed to submit the final journal for class participation points, 55 students or approximately 75% of the total taught, gave their consent that data from their journals be used in the study. The final journal used as an instrument for data collection contained nine prompts related to the following areas: a) writing journals in relation to improving English skills, b) previous experiences with journals, c) if the current experience was positive or negative, d) if the activity helped with remembering the class, e) goal writing and goal-achievement, f) interest in repeating the activity, and g) advice about the activity. In a latter section, data about their advice will be examined, in addition to how it shaped the second and third implementation.

Preliminary Implementation

The first implementation occurred in the fall semester of 2020, the second semester of online learning. Guided by the literature, the journals had the main prompts which remained unchanged from lesson 2 to 13, focusing on processing the content through reflecting, self-evaluation, and goal setting. According to Bray and Harsch (1996) "limiting the number of items, the teacher is more likely to get quality reflection from students" (para. 29). In addition, the journals also implemented report formatting guidelines including a word count. As all learners were in a mandatory writing class, even if it was not being taught by the instructor, those guidelines were required and it was a practical way to develop students' proficiency with report writing. Appendix A is the lesson 3 journal activity for the writing class.

Before the final lesson's journal, which was the tool to gather data, for the instructor reading the lesson 2 to 12 journals provided direct and indirect feedback about the activity. For the writing class, it soon became evident that in comparison to the debate class, more meaningful topics and more prompts related to the textbook topics needed to be explicitly added to give the students in the writing class more meaningful content to write about. Please see Table 1 for the change in prompts. The debate class prompts remained more or less the same as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 1
Writing Class Prompts for Lessons 2 and 8 in Fall 2020

Lesson 2	Lesson 8
1. Summarize the main points learned in class.	1. Summarize the main points learned in class.
2. Information you already knew before class and when you learned about it.	2. Surprising or interesting things you learned in the class.
3. Information that you just learned about in the class.	3. Any points that you do not know or understand about the topic.
4. Surprising or interesting things you learned in the class.	4. What are two activities that you like to do in your free time?
5. Something surprising or interesting a classmate or classmates said in the class.	5. How long have you been doing these activities?
6. Ways the information will help you in university and/or in the future.	6. What advice would you give about getting better at these activities?
7. Any points that you do not know or understand about the topic.	7. Which English skill or skills did you use the most in class (reading, writing, listening or speaking)?
8. Anything else you would like to share about.	8. For your graded reader, did you know anything about your graded reader 2 before reading it?
	9. For your graded reader, who are the main characters? (Write about at least 3) Describe their personalities.
	10. For your graded reader, What is the relationship between them?
9. A goal for the next class.	11. A goal for the next class.
10. Include the word count.	12. Include the word count. Write over 150 words.

Table 2

Debate Class Prompts for Lessons 2 and 8 in Fall 2020

Lesson 2	Lesson 8
1. What did your team do well in the debate?	1. Summarize the main points learned in class.
2. What did the other team do well in the debate?	2. How did your team members share work in preparing for the debate? (Please give reasons and examples)
3. What can your team do to improve the debate?	3. What are some sources you found? Why did you choose them? Do you think the sources are strong? Why or why not?
4. What is a good system for **taking notes** in debate?	4. What are your team's three arguments? (Please give reasons and examples)
5. What is important when stating propositions?	5. What advice did the other team give you about your arguments?
6. What is important when **constructing arguments**?	6. Whose debate style or technique did you like? Why?
7. What is important when **making a summary**?	7. What are ways your team can work well together in Lesson 9's Debate test?
8. A goal for the next class.	8. A goal for the next class.
9. Include the word count.	9. Include the word count. (Write over 175 words in your paragraphs).

Students' Recommendations

One of the later prompts used in the data collection method of the final reflection journal was: "Do you have any advice about writing reflection journals?" To whom the advice was directed, the instructor or other students doing the activity, was not specified. Of the 55 students, all but one commented. Eight students gave no advice, five gave comments about their own experience, 22 gave advice to other students and 19 gave advice to the instructor. The data focusing only on instructor directed advice to improve the activity will be explored.

The themes that most commonly appeared were about the prompts appearing five times, sharing with other students appearing four times, an extension of the deadline appearing four times, more flexibility with the word count appearing three times, a review of the journal after submission appearing three times, and decreasing the frequency of the activity appearing twice. Below is a selection of student responses:

> *I think, if this journal have more option[s] such as [to] include the content of class, it will be better.*
> *It is hard to write it, so I want you to extend the submission time or reduce the number of words.*
> *Writing it is useful, but I think it doesn't have to be every lesson. Sometimes I have to give similar answers, so reduce the [number of] question[s] a little more.*
> *I want to read this for others because I can find good perspectives that I can't find on my own.*
> *My advice on it is to write in collaboration with friends at the beginning. The reason is that I was confused at the beginning because I didn't know how to write it correctly.*
> *I think if we could add our comments at the end of the journals, it will be more useful.*

The above data guided the secondary and tertiary implementation as well as prompting the instructor to reflect about her teaching practice.

Secondary Implementation

The spring 2021, the third semester almost fully online, was the second implementation of the reflection journals. Though different classes and students were taught, the above data was utilized. And according to the themes, adjusted for the reflection journals. First, the deadline was extended to 23:59 the day after the class. Originally, there was a reluctance that some students may forget the class contents the day after the class. However, if students felt too much pressure and the deadline caused stress, an extension may make the activity more meaningful to them. Of course students were able to submit the journals earlier on the learning platform, so those who felt writing the day of the lesson did so, while others submitted on the following day. Second, more prompts related to the class contexts were included related to the class material taught and it was suggested, but not required that students answer all the prompts. With this adjustment, the instructor hoped that it made writing easier for the students. Third, instead of a required word count, students were asked to write at least half a page. For those students who had trouble with that length, using the learning platform, the instructor made comments about questions that could be further answered or expanded on to help with their future journals. Furthermore, less attention was given to report-formatting guidelines as it was most likely the first time for students to use report-writing guidelines. This is unlike the primary implementation wherein students were studying about report formatting in the mandatory writing class. The instructor gave feedback about formatting, but after the sixth or seventh journal, no longer commented. Note that in fall semester students took the continuation class of spring semester's discussion class as a debate class, and the continuation class of spring semester's reading as a writing class. Fourth, to help students remember the contents of the journals, specifically their goals, at the beginning of class, the instructor asked the students to review the previous lesson's journals. Last, the number of journals was decreased by two, as the lessons before the mid-term and final-term test did not require journals as had been in the previous semester.

There was not a time for sharing journals, but in the third implementation for the first and second time the journals were used in class, time was given at the end of class for students to work in breakout rooms on the journals and then ask questions to the instructor. Appendix B is the lesson 3 journal activity for the reading class. See Table 3 and 4 for the reflection journal prompts for the mandatory reading and debate classes.

Table 3

Reading Class Prompts for Lesson 2 and 8 in Spring 2021

Lesson 2	Lesson 8
1. Summarize the main points you learned in class. 2. What did you do well in class? Why? 4. What do you want to do better next class? Why? 5. A goal for the next class. 6. Free writing: a. Why did you choose the graded reader? b. What graded reader did you choose? Why? c. Have you started reading it yet? How long do you think it will take to finish reading it? d. When is the best time for you to read, for example, in the mornings, on the train, before bed, at lunch, etc.? 7. Text word count.	1. Summarize the main points you learned in class. 2. What did you do well in class? Why? 3. What do you want to do better next class? Why?/ What is your goal for the next class? 4. Free writing: a. How would you define success? b. Name some people that you think are successful? Why do you think they are successful? 5. Text word count.

Table 4

Discussion Class Prompts for Lessons 2 and 8 in Spring 2021

Lesson 2	Lesson 8
1. Summarize the main points you learned in class. 2. What did you do well in class? Why? 3. What do you want to do better next class? Why? 4. A goal for the next class. 5. After Reading - Please answer the following: a. Do your friends or family give useful advice when you have problems? b. How does communication make people happy? Why? For example? 6. Text word count.	1. Summarize the main points you learned in class. 2. What did you do well in class? Why? 3. What do you want to do better next class? Why?/What are your goals for the next class? Why? 4. Next lesson is Discussion Test 2. Review the Discussion Test 1 Lesson 5 Reflection Journal. What did you do well in Discussion Test 1? What are your goals for Discussion Test 2? 5. Review the Discussion Skills 1 to 6 on page 104. Which are most difficult for you to use? Why? Review the Communication Skills on page 105, 1-3. Which are most difficult for you to use? Why? 6. After Reading - Please answer the following: a. When should schools start teaching English to children? Why? B. Should everyone in Japan study a foreign language? Why or why not? 7. Text word count.

Feedback or data was not formally collected about the second implementation. In lesson 1, students were clearly told the purpose of journals as a way to develop their English skills, and for setting goals. It was not an activity to correct English mistakes, but it was noted that common mistakes would be pointed out in the next lesson. As stated above, students were also told about issues with length and formatting by the instructor via the learning platform where the journals were submitted and graded. Another addition to the activity was that students were required to evaluate their writing. One of the prompts for week 10's journal is as follows:

> Review the Reflection Journals for Week 2 and compare it with Reflection Journals for Week 9. What differences do you notice? Do you think your writing has improved? Why or why not?

It was the instructor's expectation that this prompt would give students the opportunity to analyze their performance and hopefully most had improved somewhat, thus potentially giving them confidence in their English proficiency.

Tertiary Implementation

With the review of the data in summer 2021 in preparation for a presentation, it was evident that some advice from students was still not incorporated into the second implementation. These two points were in regards to sharing journals with other classmates and adding the prompt for additional student comments about the lesson. Students were assigned a reflection journal in lesson 1 which followed a similar format to the second implementation. For the first point, at the start of lesson 2 and in proceeding lessons, students were given a few minutes to share their journals with another student in breakout rooms. They were asked to discuss any challenges they had with writing the journals in addition to whatever journal content they were comfortable sharing. Since the classes still remained online until the fifth lesson of fall semester, students were given the option to share screens with

each other. After the sharing activity ended and the class reassembled, the instructor asked if there were any questions about the journals. Though no questions were asked, it seemed like a worthwhile activity for students to share their writing and solve any formatting or content issues with one another.

The second point in this implementation was the addition of a final prompt, "*Optional*: If there is anything else that you would like to comment on about the class, feel free". Since consent has not been requested from students, when the prompt was answered, informally their comments have been related to classroom management or general impressions of the class. If other instructors are interested in using this activity, it might be helpful to keep these types of questions related to the class as unexpected comments, perhaps personal comments unrelated to the lesson, may be shared in the journals. The time for this article is during lesson 3 of fall 2021. Appendix C provides lesson 3 journal activity for the writing class. In lessons 5 and 10, prompts to get feedback from learners about the activity such as the level of difficulty and how meaningful they perceive it to be in remembering the lessons, goal setting, self-evaluation and motivation will also be added to the journals. It is expected with this implementation, student voices will continue to shape the activity.

Instructor Reflections

Gathering data from the learners in fall semester 2020 and then analyzing it was beneficial for the instructor to better understand students' opinions and gain insight into the effectiveness of the activity. In writing the article *Students' Opinions about Reflection Journals (2021)*, it caused me to recognize that I am often inflexible in my teaching practice, for example, once a task is created that is to be used repeatedly, it is rarely changed even though it may not be viewed as meaningful or beneficial to the learners. Instead of only gathering comprehensive feedback at the end of the semester, I should have asked for feedback in the journals starting from earlier lessons, such as the level of difficulty and relevance of prompts, and then followed up with more requests for feedback in succeeding lessons during the first implementation. However, based on the fall 2020 semester's lesson 13 journals, I am glad that I tried a new activity that incorporated reflection, self-assessment, and goal setting with English writing practice. It gave me more confidence in utilizing the task with the second and third implementations. I plan to continue to use this activity in my future teaching practice, in addition to seeking student feedback more consistently to tailor it to meet their needs. Furthermore, to those instructors who have not used reflection journals, or even for those currently using them in their practice, it is hoped that the above sections, particularly Tables 1 to 4, can be implemented or modified to meet the needs of their learners.

Conclusion

Student feedback is a valuable tool in reflective teaching practice. Using one reflective journal for students to provide their feedback to the initial implementation provided a guide to the instructor for the future implementations of this activity. Furthermore, using the journal as a tool for data collection, caused the instructor to closely analyze learner feedback. With learners' consent, the data was then shared in articles and presentations, deepening the instructors' awareness of the effectiveness of the implementations shaped by students' voices. Data in the form of student voices is useful for reflective practice and guiding teaching practice.

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Appendix A
Writing Class, Fall 2020, Class Reflection Journal Lesson 3

After each class, you will write a class reflection journal due the day of the class before 23:59 as a Self-Study Task. Please use the following prompts to help you:

1. Summarize the main points learned in class.
2. Information you already knew before class and when you learned about it.
3. Information that you just learned about in the class.
4. Surprising or interesting things you learned in the class.
5. Something surprising or interesting a classmate or classmates said in the class.
6. Ways the information will help you in university and/or in the future.
7. Any points that you do not know or understand about the topic.
8. Anything else you would like to share about.
9. A goal for the next class.
10. Include the word count.

**Remember to use page 8 and 9 of Becoming a Better Writer to format your journal correctly.*

REFLECTION JOURNAL GRADING INFORMATION: 5 POINTS		
Prompts 2 POINTS	**Understandability 1 POINT**	**Formatting 2 POINTS**
All prompts were answered	Ideas could be understand	Formatted correctly (*BBW* page 8-9)

Appendix B

Reading Class, Spring 2021, Class Reflection Journal Lesson 3

After each class, you will write a class reflection journal due the day after the class. Friday classes due date is Saturday before 23:59. Page 2 has a template for you to use. Please use the following prompts to help you:

1. Summarize the main points you learned in class.

2. What did you do well in class? Why?

3. What do you want to do better next class? Why?

4. A goal for the next class.

5. Free writing: Write about your exercise routine, for example, what activity or sport you do, where, when, etc. If you do not exercise, explain why or what you would like to do.

6. Text word count.

**Write at least half a page to receive full points. Formatting uses page 8 and 9 of "Becoming a Better Writer".*

REFLECTION JOURNAL GRADING INFORMATION: 3 POINTS		
Length 1 POINTS	**Understandability 1 POINT**	**Due date 1 POINTS**
Minimum length is written	Ideas could be understood	Submitted on time

Appendix C
Writing Class, Fall 2021, Class Reflection Journal Lesson 3

After each class, you will write a class reflection journal due the day after the class. The due date is Saturday before 23:59. Page 2 has a template for you to use. Please use the following prompts to help you:

1. Summarize the main points you learned in class.

2. What did you do well in class? Why?

3. What do you want to do better next class? /A goal for the next class. Why?

4. Use "Reading the Future" page 41's checklist and write of a summary of this text in one sentence from "Longman Academic Writing" (Oshima & Hogue, 2017):
   The topic sentence is usually the first or second sentence in a paragraph. Experienced writers often put topic sentences at the end, but the best place is usually at the beginning. A topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph gives readers an idea of what they will be reading. This helps them understand the paragraph more easily. (p. 55)

5. Free writing: As the seasons change from summer to fall, what is your favorite season? Why?

6. *Optional*: If there is anything else that you would like to comment on about the class, feel free.

7. Text word count.

**Write at least half a page to receive full points. Formatting uses page 8 and 9 of "Becoming a Better Writer".*

REFLECTION JOURNAL GRADING INFORMATION: 3 POINTS		
Length 1 POINTS	**Formatting 1 POINT**	**Due date 1 POINTS**
Minimum length is written	Ideas could be understood	Submitted on time

【Teaching Practice Report】

Why Should Students Reflect on the Purpose of Debate?

Heather Woodward

Abstract

Debate teachers at Rikkyo University present the rationale for learning how to debate on a slide show, or they read a paragraph from the syllabus to justify the course's requirement status. For the remaining lessons, they address questions concerning "what" and "how." For example, "What is a rebuttal?" and "How do you create a proposition?" In addition to addressing these types of questions, they also ask students to write self-reflections post-debate. Although essential for improving debate performance, these questions and self-reflection activities can fail to help students connect content and activities to the overall course goals and real-world contexts where they can use their debate skills. To make connections, students need tasks that treat debate as a means to an end. In this paper, I explain the rationale for facilitating student reflection on debate course goals based on Japanese cultural norms and cognitive learning theory. Second, I define the twin sins of course design by Wiggins and McTighe (2008) and maintain that teachers can avoid committing the twin sins by implementing activities that allow students to reflect upon debate course goals. Third, I define and explain practicing- connections hypothesis by Fries et al. (2020). After, I share classroom activities based on the hypothesis, and last, I discuss ideas for potential research studies.

Keywords: debate, practicing-connections, course design

Japanese Cultural Norms and Debate Tactics

Reasons for learning how to debate might be less apparent to Japanese students than foreign teachers realize. In The Japan Times article titled, 'Ditch the debate tactics when it comes to persuading Japanese colleagues on a course of action,' Kopp (2019) explains that most Japanese students are not taught to debate in school, and in Japanese culture, debate tactics are seen as overly aggressive. Kopp advises foreign expatriates, who work for or work with Japanese companies, to write a report or create a slideshow with data and then let the data "do the talking" to persuade colleagues of a specific course of action. This method is implicit and indirect—qualities compatible with Japanese culture, language, and workplace. The method also has the additional benefit of acknowledging the agency of fellow colleagues as it respects their ability to interpret the data and arrive at conclusions for themselves. In Japanese culture, showing this level of respect especially to senior employers and colleagues is important for maintaining good relations.

In contrast to the method of allowing the data to speak for itself, one debate tactic called Label, Explain, Evidence, and Tieback (LEET) entails presenting and explaining the position, interpreting evidence for listeners, and discussing its importance (Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association, 2019). Debate tactics such as LEET are widely accepted in Western cultures; however, their explicit and direct nature makes them inappropriate for certain formal Japanese situations (e.g., presentations with senior colleagues). Additionally, debate tactics' structured and organized nature can make them awkward for informal contexts (e.g., dinner table conversations with family). Students might realize that there are aspects of debate that they cannot transfer outside of the classroom without the consequence of being ostracized by their colleagues or being given awkward side glances from their family members. Consequently, they might wonder why they are learning such debate tactics as some students do not envision themselves living or working abroad for an international

company. So, they answer "Why LEET?" by replying, "The other team can understand my ideas more clearly" or they say, "I can get a higher debate score." These answers are correct, but they fail to connect to the course goals or to real-world use cases outside of the debate classroom.

The Japanese cultural disposition for implicitness and indirectness stems in part from the concept of saving face (*mentsu wo tamotsu*) and losing face (*mentsu wo ushinau*). Matsumoto (2018) writes that the term "face" most closely translates to the consideration for the feelings of other people. To save face means to avoid words or actions in public that might cause humiliation or embarrassment to others. For instance, disagreeing with or criticizing others publicly can cause embarrassment, which in turn, causes a loss of face. An example that Kopp (2006) provides is an American employee working for a Japanese company who challenges her boss in front of other colleagues when she disagrees with him. For another example, Kopp (2006) writes that in business situations, Japanese expatriates working overseas often "avoid criticizing the parent company even when, in the eyes of American employees, such criticism is clearly deserved." The concepts of saving face and losing face are difficult for westerners to understand because the feelings of others are not considered a priority in western business culture (Matsumoto, 2018). Japanese people are concerned with the feelings of others (*omoiyari*) whereas western business culture instead prioritizes truth and facts (Matsumoto, 2018).

Japanese students might associate certain debate tasks with feelings of discomfort or apprehension as their own cultural values of saving face and losing face can create conflict between caring for their classmates' feelings and fulfilling their debate course obligations. Debate teams openly state opposing arguments (i.e., disagree), and summarize weaknesses of the other team's argument (i.e., criticize), and ask cross examination questions (i.e., challenge). Students might privately question why they need these tasks for the future as they seem disconnected from realities of Japanese etiquette. Some debate teachers might counter that their students can reflect on the questions of "why openly disagree with others" or "why directly challenge others" by themselves. These teachers might conclude that students are speaking in English so they should become accustomed to Western cultural norms of explicitness and directness, and therefore, debate tactics do not require any additional justification than the justification given at the beginning of the course. As such, the "what" and "how" of debate are covered more extensively than the "why." In defense of this approach, addressing "what" and "how" questions do improve students' debate performances and exposes them to western cultural norms, but addressing "why" questions can shift students' perspectives from viewing debate as the end goal to viewing debate as a tool that enables the manifestation of their teamwork, critical thinking, and research skills, which are relevant to real-world contexts in Japan. Teachers can design activities and content that helps students make this perspective shift.

Twin Sins of Design

Wiggins and McTighe (2008) state that the twin sins of course design are activity-focused teaching and coverage-focused teaching. For activity-focused teaching, teachers give too many activities and for coverage-focused teaching, teachers cover too much content. Both teaching focuses commit sin because they fail to make big picture ideas explicit to students (Wiggins & McTighe, 2008). In other words, teachers tend to have what Wiggins and McTighe (2008) refer to as expert blind spots, and so they assume that students can connect the many discrete activities and lectures (i.e., content) to the main ideas. To build a defense against expert blind spots and thus, the twin sins

of course design, teachers can help students to connect activities and content to debate course goals. To do so, teachers should encourage students to (a) reflect on the three core debate skills of critical thinking, research, and team-building, (b) connect these three core debate skills to debate preparation stages and debate performance stages, and lastly, (c) identify real-world contexts where students need to use the three core skills. Teachers can determine the extent to which students have achieved a level of expertise in critical thinking, research, and team-building when students have not only performed well in debate, but have also made explicit connections between (a) – (c).

Practicing-Connections Hypothesis

To help student transfer knowledge, they must make connections between core domain concepts, key representations, and real-world contexts (Fries et al., 2020). Fries et al. (2020) state that core domain concepts are important skills or ideas that are central to the domain (e.g., in terms of debate, these are critical thinking, research, and team- building). Debate Committee (2020) cites the goal of the debate course as the development of these three skills. Fries et al. (2020) write that key representations refer to relational domain structures (e.g., stages of debate preparation and debate performance). Lastly, real-world contexts are situations that students can use the core domain concepts (Fries et al., 2020). Students can make explicit connections between core domain concepts, key representations and real-world contexts to deepen their understanding, and by doing so, the belief is that their knowledge becomes flexible and transferable (Fries, et al., 2020). Transferring knowledge from one context to another similar, but different context, entails the ability to use knowledge "creatively, flexibly, fluently in different settings or problems" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2008).

For example, students can answer the question, "Why use LEET?" by explaining LEET's connection to critical thinking and research skills. They can also answer, "Why openly disagree with others?" or "Why openly challenge others?" by explaining their relationship to course goals. As debate tactics in Japan are rarely found outside of the classroom, teachers who use these practicing-connection activities help students to transfer the three core debate skills to other contexts in Japan that do require use of such skills. For instance, many professions require varying degrees of the debate course goals so students can investigate the roles and responsibilities of a career that interests them to determine the extent to which these skills are necessary. In short, this hypothesis implies that debate performance, and self-reflection of debate performance, might not provide teachers with sufficient evidence of students' ability to transfer their critical thinking, research, and team-building to other contexts because these skills are contextualized throughout the course in relation to debate, but debate is not such a common activity outside the classroom so teachers are assuming that students can transfer these skills to other contexts without the need for assistance or guidance.

In addition, the core domain concepts of debate are complex skills as they comprise multiple sub-skills. Practicing-connection activities deconstruct the core debate skills to help students connect their different aspects to relevant key representations and real-world contexts. In other words, these practicing-coracticing-connection activities deconstruct the core debate skills to help students connect their different aspects to relevant key representations and real-world contexts. In other words, these practicing-connections activities do not assume that students already know what good research, critical thinking, and team building skills entail nor do they assume that students will, on their own accord, connect all three skills, or relevant sub-skills, to their post-debate performance reflections. From my experience, without these activities, students forget to reflect on one or more of

the core domain skills post-debate performances. They might reflect that they need to work with their teammates by communicating more often and do more research on the topic, but they do not mention critical thinking skills. To avoid this issue, practicing-connections activities can help students intentionally make explicit connections from their debate preparation and performance to all three core domain skills by having students first reflect on the core debate use.

Practicing-Connections Activities' Descriptions

The following activities below are based on the practicing-connections hypothesis. In this section, I give a short description of each of the following practicing-connections activities presented. For Activity I, students circle true or false about key assumptions of the debate course. In the next activity, they match the debate skills (i.e., core domain concepts) to their definitions. Explicit definitions of the three core debate skills can help students to connect the concepts to key representations and real-world contexts. For Activities III, IV, and V students reflect on the qualities of good teamwork, then connect the qualities to their debate experiences (i.e., key representations) and real-world contexts. The concept of teamwork is deconstructed into its sub-skills, so that students learn about different aspects that entail good teamwork. For Activities VI, VII, and VIII, students reflect on the qualities and characteristics of good research skills, then connect them to debate stages and activities (i.e., key representations) as well as real-world contexts[1] These activities help students to deconstruct core domain concepts to have students connect their different aspects to their corresponding key debate representations and real-world contexts.

For Activities IX, X, and XI, students read a list of qualities, abilities, and knowledge that business owners want from university graduates from a 2018 study by the *Keidanren*, a Japanese business association (i.e., real-world context). Students circle the ones that relate to debate, and then discuss their rationale with a partner. After, they connect these to the core domain concepts of debate. These activities relate to real-world contexts as many students plan to work after graduation. For Activities XII and XIII, students connect core domain concepts and key representations to their career aspirations (i.e., real-world contexts). I give an example by Mintzberg (1973) regarding a possible career as a manager. For Activities XIV, XV, XVI, and XVII, students complete these activities after a debate performance. They rank the debate skills according to their difficulty, discuss why the skills they list are challenging, then search the debate textbook for activities that are designed to develop these skills (i.e., key representations). Students write a plan to help them to improve their weak points, and in the last activity, they think of real-world contexts that they can use these skills (i.e., real-world contexts). Teachers can decide which lessons to give these types of activities. Some activities might be more appropriate at the beginning of the course whereas others are more appropriate after their mid-term debate.

1 Here is the link for the critical thinking activities not included in this paper. Research and team-building activities have also been included: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1qi62lkA9DDo9d3EWnf0A4hfPsJhnPFz9u2s6dU5om_4/edit?usp=sharing

Practicing-Connections Activities

I. Read the sentence and circle true or false.[2]

1. The purpose of this course is to develop the skills of critical thinking, research, and team-building. **T / F**
2. People usually participate in formal debates outside of the classroom. **T / F**
3. People can use the skills of critical thinking, research, and team-building in many real-world situations. **T / F**
4. "Up for Debate" textbook activities by Mishima et al., (2021) are designed to develop skills of critical thinking, research, and team-building.[3] **T / F**

II. Match the debate skills to the correct definition.[4]

1. **Research**	a. To work effectively with group of people to reach a shared goal
2. **Critical thinking**	b. To search for, find, obtain, arrange, assess, and use relevant information
3. **Team-building**	c. To analyze, evaluate, synthesize, interpret, infer, question, and solve problems

III. Read Eri's self-reflection. Which debate skill should she practice?

My last debate performance was bad. I prepared for the wrong section. I was supposed to prepare the cross- examination questions, but I prepared the summary, so my group did not have any questions. My teammate asked me for help with the affirmative speech, I said, "No way! Not my responsibility." If any of the others ask me for help, I will just pretend that I do not know the answer. I do not want to do more work than I already do.

2 Answers are T, F, T, T

3 All "Up to Debate" textbook references refer to: Mishima, M., Kita, S., Donnelly, M., Hartley, M., Iwai, K., & Vaughan, R. (2021). Up for Debate (2nd ed.). DTP Publishing.

4 4 Answers are 1 b, 2 c, 3 a

IV. Read the qualities below of effective team players from Brady (2016). Which qualities should Eri (Activity III) practice?

What does it mean to be a good team player?		
Reliable	Good communicator	Assesses team's strong points and weak points
Flexible	Good listener	Commits to team goals
Helpful	Willing to compromise	Solves problems

Note. From https://www.totalteambuilding.com.au

V. Using the table above (Activity IV), answer the following questions with a partner:

- Think of an experience in debate class where you showed good teamwork skills. Explain the experience to your partner.
- What steps will you take to improve these qualities?
- What situations outside of the debate classroom can you use teamwork skills?

VI. Read Aki's self-reflection. Which debate skill should she practice?

My last debate performance was bad. When I searched for evidence for the affirmative speech, I could not find anything. I tried using keywords in Google; then I gave up. I was so frustrated. I could not think of what to do. So, I just decided to write my opinion without providing evidence because I feel like my idea is common sense, but then during the debate, the other team cited evidence from a study that contradicted my idea, so we lost the debate.

VII. Read the qualities below of good researchers from Study Lecture Notes (2013). Which qualities should Aki (Activity VI) practice?

What does it mean to be a good researcher?		
Brainstorms relevant keywords	Articulates ideas	Open-minded to different viewpoints
Patient when searching for information	Evaluates sources of information for reliability	Avoids plagiarism by citing sources and paraphrasing
Searches for multiple sources of information	Attends to small details of research	Defines terminology to be clear to others

Note. From http://studylecturenotes.com/qualities-of-a-good-researcher/.

VIII. Using the table above (Activity VII), answer the following questions with a partner:

- Think of an experience in debate class where you showed good research skills. Explain the experience to your partner.
- Which qualities of a good researcher do you want to improve?
- What steps will you take to improve these qualities?
- What situations outside of the debate classroom can you use research skills?

IX. In 2018, the Japanese Business Federation (*Keidanren*) surveyed 443 companies on the qualities, abilities, and knowledge that business owners expect from university students. Below are the most popular responses from business owners. Circle those qualities that you develop from learning how to debate.

Initiative	Execution skills	Solve / Set problems	Teamwork
主体性	実行力	課題設定・解決能力	チームワーク
Social skills	Cultural understanding	Creativity	Ethics
社会性	異文化理解力	創造力	倫理観
Work ethic	Communication	Open-mindedness	Logical thinking
職業観	自分の意見を発信する力	他人の意見を聴く力	論理的思考力

X. Discuss the reasons you circled these skills in Activity IX with a partner.

XI. List the qualities, abilities, and knowledge from Activity IX that relate to team-building, research, and critical thinking. You can use the same quality, ability, or knowledge more than once.

Team-building	Research	Critical Thinking
Teamwork		

XII. Read Rena's career goal. Does Rena need the skills of research, critical thinking, or team-building for her career?

My career goal is to be a manager at a large company. I conducted research, and according to Mintzberg (1973), a business professor in Canada, there are three main managerial roles: ***interpersonal, informational,*** *and* ***decisional****. For* ***interpersonal****, I need to have good communication skills to share information with employees. I need to teach others good teamwork skills to help others work cooperatively. For* ***informational****, I also need to do research and learn a lot so that I can help employees if they have any questions. For* ***decisional****, I need to solve problems and identify employees' strengths and weaknesses to allocate work based on their abilities.*

XIII. Think of a career that you would like to pursue post-graduation. How would developing debate skills of critical thinking, research, and team-building help you with your future career? You can do online research about the roles and responsibilities of a potential future career.

XIV. When reflecting on your last debate performance, rank the debate skills of research, critical thinking, and team-building from 1 the hardest for you to 3 the easiest for you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

XV. With a partner, discuss the reasons for your answers to XIII, then write down pages in the textbook that can help you. Write the page number and activity name below.

Debate Skills	Textbook Page / Activity Name
Research	*Example: page 20 / Where do we find sources?*
Critical thinking	
Team-building	

XVI. Write your weak point, and then, create a plan to follow so that you can improve these skills.

Example: *I need to work on research skills because my sources of evidence were too old and so, newer sources of information contradicted my evidence. This info is on Page 20 in the textbook. So, I should review the textbook; then, I also need to…*

XVII. List two real-world contexts that you will be able to use the improved skills.

Example: *If I improve my research skills, I can write better papers for other classes because my sources of information will not be contradicted by more recent studies…*

Potential Research Studies

Researchers who are interested in the practicing-connections hypothesis can test assumptions. For example, they can collect students' self-reflections after debate performances to investigate the extent to which students connect core domain concepts, key representations, and real-world contexts. The study can compare debate students who have been given these types of practicing-connection activities to students who have not been given them. Students who have completed practicing-connections activities should show more evidence of treating debate as a means to an end. For example, they would cite the three core domain skills and real-world contexts more often than students who have not been given these types of activities. Researchers can also investigate the assumption that Japanese students feel uncomfortable with the aspects of debate that entail openly criticizing and disagreeing. They can create a survey that can determine to what extent students feel comfortable, then compare a pre-survey and post-survey results of students who have practiced connections and those who students who have not. The survey might show that students who have practiced connections might feel more comfortable with debate tactics than those who have not.

Alternatively, at the end of the semester, students can rate the effectiveness of classroom activities for developing the core debate skills and then recommend ways to improve the activities. Researchers can compare recommendations of students who have practiced connections to the recommendations of students who have not. The group who has practiced connections might be able to show evidence of using knowledge of core domain skills more creatively and flexibly with their recommendations than the group who has not by stating more real-world contexts and key representations in their recommendations. Additionally, researchers can collect student self-reflections throughout the semester on experiences using debate skills outside of the classroom. Students can share the real-world contexts that students find useful for these debate skills. Lastly, teachers of content-based language courses might contend that there should be two goals—content-based goals and language-based goals (e.g., use of present perfect tense). As this paper only discusses the treatment of content-based goals, teachers might want to investigate how to integrate and assess language-based goals.

Conclusion

Some debate tactics are not appropriate for certain real-world contexts in Japan such as openly disagreeing and openly challenging, but learning to debate can develop students' critical thinking, research, and team-building skills as well as provide evidence of core debate skill development. On the other hand, if transfer is an important process, then teachers need more evidence than debate performance alone to assess students' core domain skills because debate is one context to assess such core domain concepts; yet, not such a popular or common activity outside of the classroom in Japan so debate performance should not be treated as an end in itself. One way to evaluate students' ability to transfer these core domain skills is to determine the extent to which students can make connections between core domain concepts, key representations, and real-world contexts. To do this, teachers can deconstruct core domain concepts into corresponding sub-skills to help students understand what being effective researchers, team players, and critical thinkers entail. Additionally, teachers can help students to make explicit connections from core debate concepts to aspects of debate preparation and performance stages. Lastly, they can help students to reflect on the core domain concept use in real-world contexts in relation to students' goals and aspirations. By doing so,

teachers can collect evidence of students' expertise as well as help students understand the justification for the debate course's requirement status, which might help some students feel more at ease with western debate tactics. During practicing-connection activities, teachers can address issues such as "why openly disagree" and "why openly challenge others" to help students understand how they connect to the overall course goals of improving their critical thinking, team-building, and research skills. I hope that teachers test Fries et al.'s (2020) hypothesis and consider creating similar tasks for other their courses.

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【Teaching Practice Report】

Designing a Technology-Enhanced Flipped Classroom Model Using Instructional Slideshows and Computer-Mediated Asynchronous Discussions

Ian Hart

Abstract

With flipped classroom pedagogy becoming increasingly popular with educators and the field of Computer-Assisted Language Learning also seeing a rapid increase in popularity, sped up by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, this paper explores the possibility of combining these methods of learning by using technology to provide out-of-class instruction and practice-time to learners. After the discussion of existing frameworks and methodologies, instructional PowerPoint slideshows were designed, and an online discussion forum was used to apply a blended approach to several flipped classrooms. Observations were made, test scores were analyzed and learners' opinions were recorded via an online questionnaire. The study concludes with the belief that a blended approach to a flipped classroom is effective in facilitating more meaningful knowledge creation through critical thinking at the learners' own pace.

Keywords: flipped learning, CALL, forums, PowerPoint, instructional design

Introduction

Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching establishments worldwide have been forced to provide online classes to their students. This has led to the introduction of new technologies and online platforms that can be used both inside and outside of a classroom. In Japan, digital devices have been provided to students in all schools, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) classes are being conducted for students at a much younger age. This increased reliance on ICT in the field of education means that ELT educators have had to adapt the way they conduct their classes and look at new methodologies based not only on synchronous but also asynchronous learning and communication through digital platforms and materials (Levy & Stockwell, 2006).

One approach that has gained attention in recent years is the idea of flipped learning (Webb & Doman, 2016). While this approach existed before the pandemic, new demands from online teaching environments have increased its popularity, especially amongst ELT researchers (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Flipped learning is an instructional approach where the presentation of course content is introduced outside of the classroom. Common methods include the use of instructional slides or videos that are viewed and studied outside of class time (Hockley, 2017). The purpose is to allow more in-class time to be spent on production and reflection. The use of technology with a flipped approach is a form of blended learning, which combines both face-to-face instruction and online materials.

For a flipped approach to work in a digital environment, educators have been looking into new ways of presenting content to their learners using computer-assisted methods. One such method is using presentation slides via software such as PowerPoint, Keynote, or Google Slides. Slides can be used for initial teaching, practice and drilling, games, reviews, and tests (Fisher, 2003). They can be published online, allowing them to be easily accessible to learners, and help learners attend to and

retain much of what is presented (Roblyer & Hughes, 2018). While presentation slides can help present target skills or language, online platforms have been designed that allow learners to practice using the taught content asynchronously before synchronous use in class.

Another computer-assisted method is via the use of CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication). A popular example of this is the use of online forums that allow learners to communicate and collaborate online. These forums provide learners with the opportunity to share content, knowledge, and media while working synchronously or asynchronously and at their own pace. The popularity of such forums has led to the development of websites that focus on specific functions such as forum-based discussion or content sharing.

This paper explores the use of technology to provide a flipped approach to a language classroom. Research will be conducted via the use of slides and a newly developed online discussion site named Kialo that describes itself as 'the purpose-built tool for critical thinking, thoughtful discussion, and collaborative decision-making' (Kialo, 2017).

Discussion

Blended Learning – A Flipped Approach

The flipped learning model is becoming increasingly popular amongst educators, especially within universities. The idea is that learners review the content of the course prior to the class session and complete exercises that would usually be conducted together in a face-to-face environment (Bishop & Vergleger, 2013). This pedagogical concept replaces the standard in-class presentation of content with the opportunity for learners to discover their own concepts while also reviewing materials from outside of the class. This removes the need for a lecture-style format delivered within class time, and rather this information is given through homework assignments. This explains the term 'flipped' as historically, the classroom is the usual place where content is delivered. This approach is defined by Gerstein (2012) as a place for problem-solving, and to discover advanced concepts and engage in collaborative learning. Flipped learning can also include digital integration and, in this case, can be considered a form of blended learning. Blended learning is defined as being a student-centered, self-paced, flexible, and multi-modal approach to language learning (Vaughan, 2007). It is considered to be an intersection of face-to-face settings, which includes synchronous and human interactions, and computer-assisted synchronous or asychronous situations in which the learner operates independently. Therefore, when ICT-based settings are used in a flipped classroom, this instructional model can be considered to be both 'flipped' and 'blended'.

The benefits of flipped learning are categorized by Kerr (2020) as: personalization, active learning, and engagement. Kerr highlights the increase in learner personalization by a) supporting learner difficulties; b) encouraging learners to work at their own pace; c) providing a range of study materials for the learner to choose from, and d) delivering personalized support. Fulton (2012) provides additional benefits such as a) insights into students' learning styles; b) ongoing customization to meet learner needs; c) use of technology to boost learning; d) increased learner engagement, and e) support for students who are absent from the class. Kostka & Marshall's (2017) research on the advantages of a flipped classroom showed that if lower-order skills are accomplished before class, then more time can be spent focusing on higher-order skills such as analysing and creating (Woodward & Padfield, 2021). Strayer (2012) also found that students embraced the cooperative learning and innovative teaching methods used in a flipped classroom. This led to increased

engagement by facilitating the learners' ownership of their learning process. As the learners have more control over their learning, they feel more accountable for their contributions and performance in class (Johnson & Marsh, 2016).

While many benefits have been suggested, the flipped approach has potential drawbacks, including a) a possible lack of learner participation; b) ineffective study habits; c) issues with technology or computer illiteracy; and d) resistance to the approach due to a preference for traditional teaching styles (Kerr, 2020). For example, in Japan, many teachers conform to a teacher-fronted, lecture-style approach to teaching, so students may initially be resistant to a new approach. In addition, without knowing the benefits, students may question why they have to complete work at home and whether they are receiving the education that they deserve. Milman (2012) suggests that low proficiency students may struggle to remain engaged with the target material on their own for extended periods and also may have difficulty with various types of media such as online videos.

Both the advantages and disadvantages of a flipped classroom raise the question of how to flip effectively. The learning materials presented outside of the classroom must be both engaging and easy to use and follow. In addition, instructional learning should help the learners understand and transfer what they have learned in in-class production. The successful transfer of knowledge is essential, allowing learners to use their knowledge 'creatively, flexibly, and fluently in different settings and problems' (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006, p.26). In Fries et al.'s (2020) practising-connections framework, they creating a three-step process that can be applied to instructional design. These steps include 1) create a productive struggle (i.e., responsive teaching); 2) making connections explicit, and 3) providing practice with variations. Using technology-assisted learning, I believe this framework can be applied to a flipped classroom.

Presentation Slideshows

The field of CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) has seen a rapid increase in popularity due to the demand for online classes brought on by the pandemic. This means the use of technological tools has become very common in the classroom. This has led teachers to look at new ways of providing classroom instruction and to keep learners engaged. Presenting with software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint, has become the most popular method. Szaboa and Hastings (2000) suggest that the use of PowerPoint can help learners focus attention and reduce distraction. This idea is supported by Catherina (2006) and Wanner (2015) who feel that PowerPoint presentations are more interesting than traditional lectures. In Wanner's (2015) research, his university students stated that pre-lecture PowerPoint presentations were helpful for their understanding of the lecture content. Increased engagement can be explained by Cashman and Shelly's (2002) research that found students learn most effectively when using their five senses. PowerPoint presentations appeal to varying learning styles, such as the use of visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and creative. In Oommen's (2012), study, he found that out of 50 of his university students, 94% of them responded with a positive attitude towards the use of PowerPoint, saying it was easy to follow, stimulated thinking, helped make better use of class time, and held their attention.

For slides to work in a flipped classroom, the slides must be accessible outside of class time. This is possible through online publishing. Google Slides provides the function to publish slides online as HTML. The coding can then be added to other clients and easily viewed by the learners. In many universities, an online application named Blackboard (or Blackboard Learn) is used for online teaching, where the slides can be uploaded and viewed before in-class lessons. In addition, the

research and suggestions made so far imply that these slides should be both visually pleasing and interactive. Presentation software allows the utilization of media such as videos, audio, and images. Animations and timings can also be used to necessitate when content is presented to the learner, simulating the instruction of an in-class instructor. This means that the common use of slides as a tool to complement a class or as a communication aid (Levy, 1997) has developed into the ability to act as a surrogate teacher or manager of tasks.

Online Discussion Forums

Discussion forums/boards are a form of CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication) (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). They are not a new tool in online learning and have been the focus of an abundance of research (Beatty, 2010; Thomas, 2002). They provide many benefits such as allowing students to interconnect at their own pace, participate in group discussions, share content and knowledge, and take part in pre-task planning (Ortega, 1997; Biesenback-Lucas, 2003; Bradshaw & Hinton, 2004; Levine, 2007). Another benefit of having asynchronous online discussions is that they prevent dominant students from monopolising discussions, and students may feel more comfortable expressing their honest ideas and speak freely. Biesenback-Lucas (2003) believes that online discussion boards provide a platform that allows ESL students to achieve "new levels of linguistic competence" (Mahoney, 2021, p. 57) and provides the opportunity to express their opinions in their own words.

Online discussion forums also promote more active participation in students. Research has shown that the forums promote the use of a larger lexical range. Warschauer (1997) found that students used language that was lexically and syntactically more complex in electronic discussions compared with face-to-face environments. Students can learn from their peers' entries while also correcting their lexical mistakes by noticing differences in their usage (Fitze, 2006). This may enable ESL learners to boost their pragmatic competence and give them more time to reflect on their ideas and the language being used. This idea is echoed by Satar & Ozdener (2008) whose research showed that computer-mediated communication offers learners a safe environment to practice what they have learned and also evaluate themselves while also understanding the benefits of speaking skills.

The use of online discussion forums has also been met with some criticism, especially from learners. Recent studies of online discussion boards used in Japanese universities have suggested that students find the discussion boards useful but also challenging, and some did not appreciate the extra time spent outside of the classroom completing discussion board tasks (Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010; Nielson, 2013). Other studies have also been less conclusive where it has been argued that while quantity and attitudes improved, there were no significant increases lexically or syntactically in asynchronous CMC discussions (Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez, 2000; Abrams, 2003).

Regarding the use of discussion forums in a flipped classroom, they can provide a place to practice through pre-task planning. The practising-connections framework put forward by Fries et al (2020) explains the need for varied practice after explicit instruction. In-class discussions would traditionally follow a Present, Practice, Produce (PPP) method, and after being presented with the class content (e.g. slides), the discussion forum would allow the learner to practice what they have learned in an asynchronous discussion. Levelt's (1989) speech production model explains that production starts with conceptualizing, then formulating, and finally articulating. For second-language learners, focusing on both meaning (i.e. generating ideas) and form (i.e. selecting grammatical and lexical forms) at the same time adds an additional cognitive load and may affect

production (Ellis, 2009). However, through pre-practice discussions online, the burden on working memory can be reduced, allowing learners to focus on their L2 proficiency and in-class task performance.

Research Study

Method

The purpose of this study was to apply Fries et al.'s (2020) instructional design framework to a flipped classroom, allowing L2 learners in a university English Discussion class to discover lesson content, make connections to the lesson topic, and practice using what they learned prior to in-class production. The participants were 109 first-year university students from 11 English Discussion classes.

The Discussion Class is a mandatory course that students take once a week. For the first four weeks, before their first discussion test, traditional methods of teaching were used. For their homework, they had to read an article in their textbook to understand the next lesson's topic. In class, the discussion skills and target language were given through a lecture-style presentation, which the students then used during in-class discussions.

After their first discussion test (Lesson 5), a flipped approach was applied to the classes using technology-assisted tasks:

1. Students were presented with discussion skills and target language that would usually be presented in class. Slides were created, which were uploaded to their class Blackboard website (Appendix, Image.1-4). The discussions skills and language were presented through varying methods such as a guided discovery task (e.g. gap fill activity) or dialogue comparison (e.g., one dialogue containing the taught skill and the other without). Then, using animated slides, the discussion skills were explicitly explained in more detail.

2. The students took part in asynchronous, online discussions using a website named Kialo (Appendix, Image.5-6). A discussion question was taken from their textbook and added to the website. The students then added their opinion by adding a "thesis". Other students in the class could then add opinions in agreement or disagreement. They were advised to add at least four responses each and had to use the skills that they had learned from the slides. They were also able the vote on how impactful others' ideas were.

3. The students' entries were collated and added to slides that were reviewed before starting the in-class discussions (Appendix, Image.7).

After their second discussion test (Lesson 10), the students were issued a Google Form questionnaire requiring responses using five-point Likert scale-based answers, where students provided their opinions related to the use of Kialo as a pre-task practice exercise. Qualitative data was collected in the form of students' reasons for whether they preferred the flipped or traditional approach.

In addition, differences in their discussion test scores were observed through the collection of quantitative data.

Results

Out of 109 students, 100 completed the online survey (Appendix, Table.2). The first set of questions were related to learner outcomes. When asked whether Kialo was an easy-to-use tool, 90% responded positively. This also implied that 10% of the students had difficulty with the website, which highlights the issues stated earlier by Milman (2012). The majority (86%) of students believed the online discussions were helpful or very helpful in preparing them for the class, and most students felt that it helped them practice/improve their critical thinking skills. While not an intention of the research, nearly every student believed the online discussions helped improve their English reading and writing skills. In addition, every student believed it was a useful tool to practice the discussion skills that they had learned from the slides. When asked whether their ideas from the online discussions were used in class, 24.2% of students chose 'Always', and only 8.1% chose negative responses. Instead of using ideas from a textbook article, students were able to research and present their own ideas which were later used in class. This may imply that their cognitive load was lessened as they had already generated ideas prior to in-class production. Finally, 97% of the students said that they had used other class members' ideas during in-class discussions which supports earlier research regarding the sharing of content and knowledge.

Part 2 asked the students whether the use of Kialo motivated them to research or think about the textbook's topics before class. Only 19% chose 'Always', which may indicate that the students did not wish to spend out-of-class time researching. Although, 77% of the students chose options 3 or 4 (i.e., Sometimes and Often), which shows high levels of positive motivation.

Part 3 was a general assessment. 82% felt that using Kialo prepared them better for in-class discussions, while 18% chose the textbook reading. Reasons were given such as the examples below:

- *We can see other answers and expand our perspective using Kialo*
- *Reading textbooks takes time, but Kialo doesn't need long time. So, We can do it in our free time. I think Kialo is efficient.*
- *It is because we can write freely what we thought of the question. It's very good tool to prepare to discussion, and practice to say own opinion. It has more uniqueness than reading textbook.*
- *I can research and get some information about the topic. If I have them, the discussion is going smoothly.*
- *Kialo is interesting but many people write Kialo late. So, I hard to coment three person. I usually write coment at the very limit.*
- *I think Kialo is difficult to use. I couldn't log in or anything to Kialo*

In the comments, many of the students liked the collaborative aspect of online discussions, as they could share ideas and understand each other better. This helped them clarify their own opinions and prepare them when presented with ideas in class. Also, many students found it easy to use, and the use of technology (e.g., smartphone) made it an efficient process for them. From a negative perspective, the less computer literate students were not able to access the website. These students never addressed this issue during the course.

Out of the 100 responses, 92% of the students said that Kialo should be used in future classes, and on a scale of 1-10, all students chose 5 or over as an overall assessment, with 20% giving a perfect score of 10.

Test Scores

The Discussion Test is a skill-based test that has five categories. Each category is scored out of 5, with a total test score of 25 points. Points are gained through the utterance of taught skills, questions, or new content.

The results (Table 1) showed a slight increase in test scores from nine of the groups after four lessons of flipped teaching. This increase varied from 1.2% to 14%, with two classes scoring slightly lower than their previous test. It's important to note that the students were given the test questions prior to both tests, which may have affected the results. This was done for ethical reasons. Also, other factors may have affected the results, such as the students being more familiar with the test structure, the students being more comfortable after completing half of the course, and motivation to improve on their previous scores. The use of a control group (that only uses the traditional methods) was considered but was thought to be ethically questionable in an education setting where all students should be treated equally.

Therefore, while the increase in test scores may be attributed to the flipped approach, I feel the results are inconclusive.

Table 1
Test scores

Group	Traditional Teaching Method	Computer-Assisted Flipped Method	Points Difference	% Difference
1	14.4	17.9	+3.5	+14
2	23.6	24.8	+1.2	+4.8
3	20.2	23.8	+3.6	+14.4
4	19.1	22.6	+3.5	+14
5	22.3	23.5	+1.2	+4.8
6	23.4	23.1	-0.3	-1.2
7	21.8	22.8	+1	+4
8	23.4	24.4	+1	+4
9	21.2	20.6	-0.6	-2.4
10	22.4	22.7	+0.3	+1.2
11	22.5	23.1	+0.6	+2.4
Mean Average	21.3	22.7	+1.4	+5.6

Conclusion

The study provided support to existing research regarding the use of both "blended" and "flipped" learning, allowing students to work at their own pace to prepare ideas and better understand course content before their in-class lessons. With the use of technology, the presentation stage of content can be simulated outside of the classroom, giving students more time to process and understand it and creating more time during the class to be spent on production and reflection. In addition, the use of online discussion forums (or in this case an online discussion website) can aid students in preparing and practicing course content by allowing them to asynchronously research, formulate, and develop ideas that can be later presented face-to-face. As explained by Ellis (2009), this can reduce the learners' cognitive load, allowing them to focus more on form.

The research survey results provided evidence in support of such methods, as most students favored the flipped 'blended' approach to the use of traditional methods. An added benefit was highlighted regarding improved reading and writing skills, which adds plausibility to ideas by Biesenbach-Lucas (2003), who stated that discussion forums help with grammar and vocabulary.

A blended approach to a flipped classroom should be considered by ESL educators, as advancements in technology have made it possible for content to be presented and practised in new and more effective ways. Most importantly, it allows learners to have more control over their learning and facilitates more meaningful knowledge creation through critical thinking at their own pace.

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Appendix

Image 1-4

PowerPoint Slide Examples

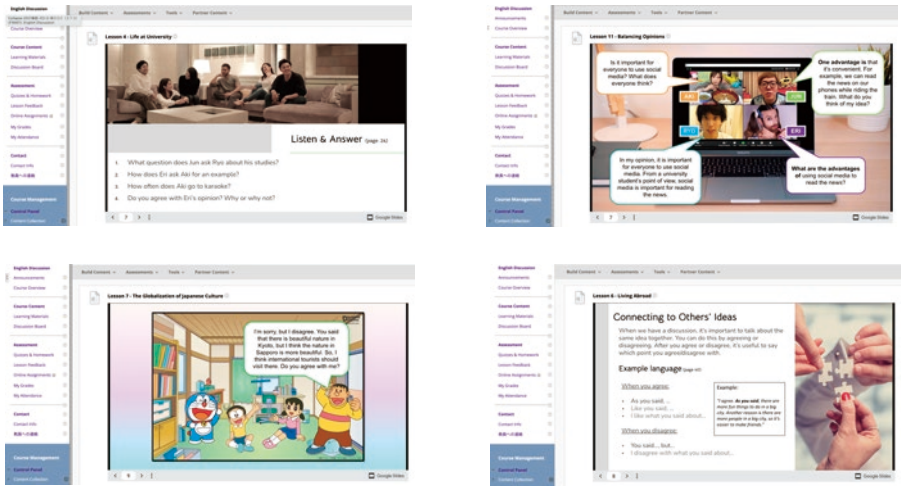


Image 5-6

Kialo Entries

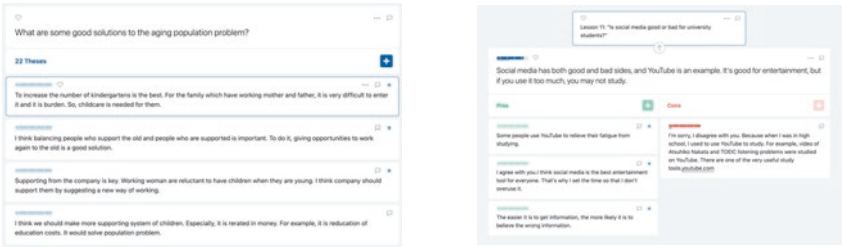


Image 7

Presentation of Kialo Debate

Table 2

Questionnaire Results

Question	Choices	Number of students	Percentage %
1. **Do you think Kialo is an easy-to-use tool?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	29 40 21 8 2	29 40 21 8 2
2. **Do you think Kialo helped you prepare ideas for your in-class discussions?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	43 43 11 2 1	43 43 11 2 1
3. **Do you think Kialo was a useful tool to practice and improve your critical thinking skills?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	29 42 22 7 0	29 42 22 7 0
4. **Do you think Kialo was a useful tool to practice an improve you English writing skills?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	36 39 22 0 2	36.4 39.4 22 0 2
5. **Do you think Kialo was a useful tool to practice and improve your English reading skills?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	34 39 22 5 0	34 39 22 5 0
6. **Do you think Kialo was a useful tool to practice using Discussion Skills?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	35 42 23 0 0	35 42 23 0 0
7. **How often did you use your ideas from the Kialo discussions during n-class discussions?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	24 38 29 7 1	24.2 38.4 29.3 7.1 1
8. **How often did you use other class members' ideas from the Kialo discussions during in-class discussions?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	18 37 32 10 3	16.3 37.8 32.7 10.2 3.1
9. **Do you think Kialo motivated you to research or think about the textbook's topics before each class?**	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree	19 46 31 3 1	19 46 31 3 1
10. **Which Discussion class homework better prepared you for your in-class discussions?**	Using Kialo Completing the textbooj reading	82 18	82 18

Question	Choices	Number of students	Percentage %
11. **Please give reasons for your Question 9 answer.**	Examples from 68 responses: • *Because we can see other people's answers and expand our perspectives using Kialo.* • *Writing my ideas is good for preparing for class.* • *Discussions became smooth after using Kialo.* • *I think Kialo is difficult to use.*		
12. **Do you think Kialo should be used in the Discussion course next year?**	Yes No	92 8	92 8
13. **What is your overall assessment for Kialo as a tool to prepare students for Discussion classes?**	Great Good Neutral Bad Very Bad	32 57 11 0 0	32 57 11 0 0

Online Lessons During the COVID-19 Pandemic: What Technology Can We Continue to Utilise?

Jack Pudelek

Abstract

This paper focuses on what can be learned about utilizing technology from the abrupt change to online teaching in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It uses teacher observations and the results of a student questionnaire to give evidence to support any positive changes that can be made. The paper focuses on teaching methods and practices involving the use of new technology, such as Learning Management Systems (LMSs). During the 2020 COVID-19 crisis lecturers were suddenly forced to switch from face-to -face classes to online teaching and learning platforms. To circumvent the challenges of not meeting students face to face, innovative new methods of teaching and technological advances were used for presentation, interaction and communication. After analysis of the results of the student questionnaire the use of Google Classroom, as an LMS, was shown to be beneficial for students. Finally, the paper discusses whether the technology and practices could continue to be adopted and used to improve learning even after the COVID-19 situation allows us to return to the classroom and face-to-face classes.

Keywords: LMS, online teaching, technology.

Introduction

The education sector, like many industry sectors, faced severe disruption due to the outbreak of COVID-19. In April 2020, 90.7% of the Japanese higher education institutions (HEIs) postponed the start of spring semester classes (MEXT, 2020). Most of these HEIs made the decision to switch from face-to-face classes to online learning. By July 2020, 83.8% of Japanese Universities were employing distance learning (MEXT, 2020). Many educators felt anxious, confused and unprepared due to a lack of the pedagogical knowledge or experience necessary for online teaching (Bao, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). They found themselves facing new challenges such as the digital delivery of content, conducting real time interactive online lessons, testing, presentations and other forms of assessment using online platforms. In addition, other issues arose such as ensuring students could participate in beneficial interactive communicative activities, facilitating practical and efficient means of communication between students and teachers, collection of assignments and providing feedback both verbal and written.

It was not only the faculty alone that felt untrained, inexperienced and unprepared by this sudden move to online learning and the use of new technology; many students were also unprepared in terms of technological experience, knowledge and skill. The MEXT prioritized increasing the digital literacy of Japanese learners in 2010 and created an extensive policy to achieve this goal (MEXT, 2010). However, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)'s skills outlook report for 2015 rated the information and communication technology (ICT) skills among secondary level Japanese learners to be the lowest of all developed nations and only three out of five students claimed they had used computers at school (OECD, 2015). Murakami (2016) concluded that numerous institutions at the secondary and higher education levels were not implementing the actions needed to realize the goal of increased computer skills. As a result, many students were in an unfavorable position to deal with the e-learning systems, which became vital

because of the COVID-19 situation (Rentner & Apple, 2020).

Facing these challenges, HEI lecturers, such as the author of this paper, had to adapt their syllabi and teaching methods. Through research and the sharing of knowledge with colleagues, pedagogical practices were adapted, and new technology was employed such as the use of LMS, online testing platforms, video conference platforms and presentation software to meet the requirements of the courses and the learning needs and goals of the students and the subsequent instruction objectives. This paper will attempt to analyze data from a student questionnaire, along with teacher observations, to answer these research questions:

1. Which technological applications, software or LMS were most effective in an online learning situation?
2. Could this technology also be used to improve the efficiency of face-to-face classes in the future, in terms of pedagogical and administrative augmentation?

Literature Review

Whilst it is far from possible for Computer Assisted Language Learning systems to replace teachers/Human Assisted Language Learning, the development of new computer technology, software and applications within the field of language study has led to a rethinking of the roles of and relationship between technology, educators and learners (Reinoos et al., 2010).

One interesting metaphor for the introduction of new technology to a language teaching environment is the *ecological perspective* (Zhao and Frank, 2003). In this perspective, the school or HEI could be described as a biological ecosystem such as a lake. The lake has an *internal equilibrium* created through the harmony of unchanging or inorganic entities, such as the number of and location of computers on campus, the grading system or the subjects being taught and organic species, which would include the students, the teachers and the administrative staff (Zhao and Frank, 2003, p.812; Colpitts et al., 2020). The use of a new piece of technology, such as an LMS, software or an application is like a new species invading the ecosystem (Zhao and Frank, 2003, p.812). For an exotic invasive species to prosper it must be able to work in alliance with the existing species and interact to create a new equilibrium. Colpitts et al. (2020) describe the situation with a Darwinian standpoint: A certain number of technologies will flourish and create new variant generations due to their perceived value. However, those decided to be of little or no use will not survive. Faculties are viewed as being resolute and logical deciding authorities, their ultimate decision about the new species (e.g., innovations in technology) is related to their perceived synergy and their interaction with other species (Zhao and Frank, 2003, p. 817; Frank, 2002; Colpitts et al., 2020) such as the learning environment of the classroom, their students, grades and the learning goals.

One tool that allowed teachers to make and continue to keep in contact with their students during the COVID-19 crisis was an LMS. Szabo and Flesher (2002) describe LMS as the underlying system that steers every facet of the learning process. One example of an LMS system used in education is Google Classroom, which is the LMS used by the researcher and focused on in this study. LMS are administrative online platforms used by teachers to create and manage a course. They can allow the administrator (teacher) to perform operations such as sharing materials (text, audio and visual) with students, communication, giving and returning assignments, testing, assessment, instant feedback and calculation of grades. The administrator invites students to enroll in the class, so unapproved users cannot access it. Therefore, LMS provides a secure and reliable medium for communication with students.

LMSs have been rapidly growing in popularity since their emergence in the 1990s and have become a prevalent component of HEIs around the globe. Whilst estimates in a paper by Dahlstrom et al. (2014) claim 99% of American HEIs provide some form of LMS, only 85% of faculty claim to use them and only 56% state they use them daily. The same study referring to students stated that 83% said that they use LMS and only 56% said they use one in all their courses. However, according to Murakami (2016), despite moves by MEXT to assimilate ICT more into higher education, utilization of LMS in Japanese universities continues to be low and a significant number of students are unaware of what an LMS was at the time of matriculation.

During the COVID pandemic, LMS provided teachers with the technology necessary to distribute materials necessary for students to take part in both synchronous and asynchronous classes when meeting face-to-face had become an impossibility. In the same circumstances, video conferencing services such as Zoom allowed synchronous interaction to take place between the teacher and the class and between the students themselves. The use of a synchronous element in classes, such as Zoom can help facilitate a feeling of community and social interaction and reduce feelings of isolation (Lowenthal et al., 2017). During the pandemic, Nishikawa (2020, as cited in Maekawa, 2021) noted that students, especially freshmen felt increased isolation due to not having peers to ask for advice since they could not meet and make friends with classmates after the move to online classes. Thus, one can see how the use of Zoom could directly combat these issues.

Most of the research into technology in relation to language study in Japan has focused primarily on the teacher's perceived usefulness of the technology rather than the viewpoint of students (Toland, White, Mills & Bolliger, 2014; Murakami, 2016). One study by Rentler and Apple (2020) showed that students felt positively about the use of LMSs to submit homework assignments and receive assessment and found the system beneficial in preparation for tests. However, there seems to be a lack of research regarding other benefits of LMSs, it's perceived ease of use by students and more detailed qualitative data regarding their opinions about it. Therefore, this study will attempt to examine the student's perceptions of LMS and other technology such as Zoom during the 2020 school year whilst classes were conducted online.

Methodology

Participants

This study took place in the second (autumn) semester of the 2020 school year at a large, prestigious, private university in Japan. The institute is a co-educational facility offering many different disciplines among its undergraduate programs. It is included in the Japanese government's Top Global University project, allowing it to receive funding with the goal of promoting globalization and internationalizing Japanese higher education.

The participants of this study were 38 Japanese students from 4 different courses. 20 participants were taking an intensive integrated skills course, meeting for 90 minutes three times per week. The students were all first-year students aged 18–19 and had a TOEIC score between 530 and 570.
Nine participants were taking a content based elective course. This is an advanced level course, and the students must have a TOEIC level of 600 and above as a prerequisite for enrolling. The course had one 90-minute class scheduled once a week over the 14-week semester. The students were in their 1st – 4th year of university so between 19 and 23 years old.

5 participants were taking a reading focused elective class. This course meets twice a week for

90 minutes. The students were in their 1st–3rd year and between the ages of 18 and 22. There was no level requirement for this class, so their English level was mixed.

Finally, 4 participants were taking an elective class aimed at students who desire low-level English practice. The course meets once a week for 90 minutes. The students in the class were in their second year and thus between the ages of 19 and 20.

Instrumentation

In the final class of the courses, students were given an optional and anonymous questionnaire to complete relating to their experiences of online study during the semester. The research purpose was explained to them, and they were asked for consent. The questionnaire was given as a google form and asked a set of 15 questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data regarding their experience of studying online and using different technology such as Zoom and Google Classroom.

Questionnaire Questions

1. How many of your classes were online in the spring semester 2020?
2. How many of your classes were online in the autumn semester 2020?
3. How easy did you find taking classes in the spring semester 2020?
4. How easy did you find taking classes in the autumn semester 2020?
5. How useful did you find Google Classroom as a tool for receiving instructions?
6. How useful did you find Google Classroom as a tool for receiving materials?
7. How useful did you find Google Classroom as a tool for submitting assignments?
8. How useful did you find Google Classroom as a tool for communicating with your teacher?
9. How useful did you find Zoom for taking part in group discussions?
10. What other online platforms, applications and technology did you use in your courses this academic year?
11. What online platforms, applications and technology had you used before April 2020?
12. What online platforms, applications or technology would you like to keep using even if your classes return to campus?
13. What positive experiences did you have involving taking classes online?
14. What negative experiences did you have involving taking classes online?
15. Which do you prefer (taking classes online, classes on campus, a mixture of both)?

The first two questions were asked to ascertain how much experience they had of studying online due to the pandemic. There were 3 possible answers to choose from: *some*, *most* and *all*. The third and fourth questions investigated whether they had become more used to studying online in the second semester and if it had become easier for them. The answers were given using a Likert scale from 1: very easy to 5: very difficult.

Questions 5-8 were about how useful they found google classroom as a tool for receiving instruction, receiving materials (e.g. worksheets, reading/listening texts, videos), submitting assignments and contacting their teacher. The answers were given using a Likert scale of 1: 'not useful at all' to 5: 'extremely useful'. The purpose was to gauge the functionality of this LMS.

Question 9 asked about how useful they found Zoom as a tool for taking part in group instructions, to assess its usability for interaction in place of discussion in the classroom. It used the

same Likert scale for usefulness. Question 10 asked the students to name any other forms of technology they had used during their online classes over the year and as a follow up Question 11 asked what if any technology they had experienced using before the COVID-19 outbreak. Question 12 then asked if they would like to keep using any online platforms, LMS, applications or other technology if their classes returned to regular on campus lessons. To gather more qualitative data about what students liked and disliked about studying online, especially related to technology, the students were then asked in Questions 13 and 14 what positive and negative experiences they had of taking classes online and the final question, 15 asked which they preferred taking classes online, taking regular classes in a classroom or a mixture of both.

Results

Figure 1

How many of the courses taken by the students were online in the first semester 2020?

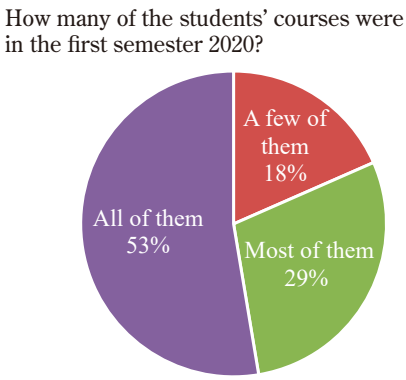
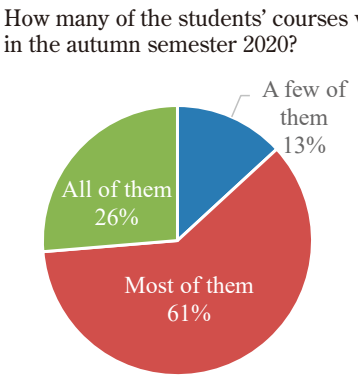


Figure 2

How many of the courses taken by the students were online in the second semester 2020?



Figures 1 and 2 show that the percentage of students taking all their classes online seemed to decrease between the first and second semester. However, it is clear to see in Figure 2 that most of the students' classes were still online.

Figure 3

How easy did the students find taking classes online in the first semester 2020?

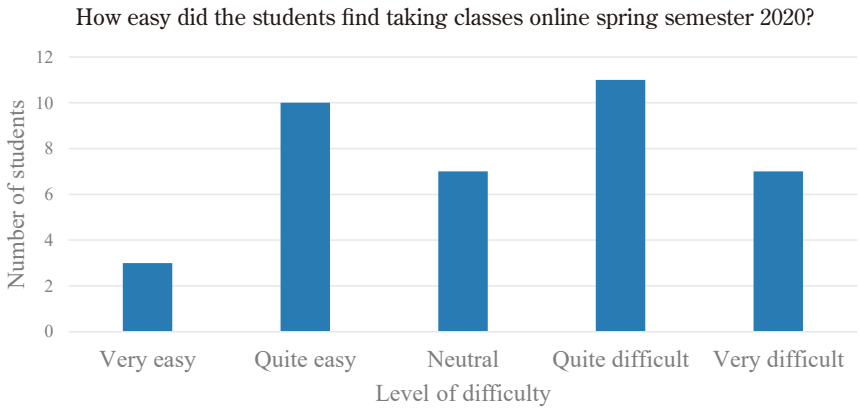
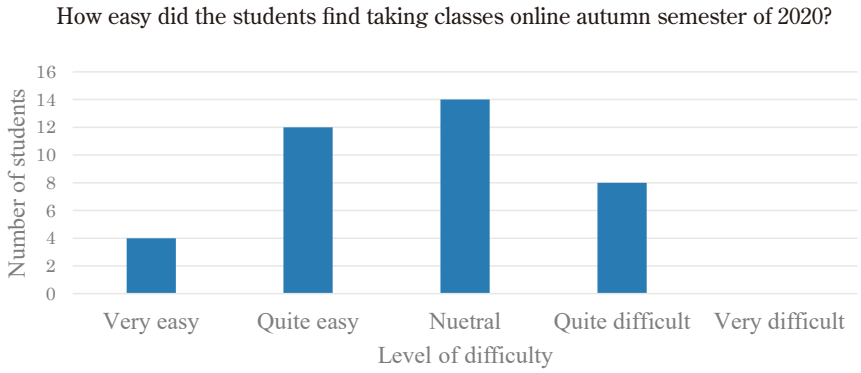


Figure 4

How easy did the students find taking classes online in the second semester 2020



Figures 3 and 4 show that students found online study far easier during the second semester with Figure 3 showing 7 students found it very difficult in the first semester and Figure 4 showing zero students found it very difficult in the second semester. The number of students who found it quite difficult was reduced from 11 to 8 and the number who found it very easy or quite easy increased. However, a significant number of 14 students remained neutral and said they neither found it easy nor difficult.

Figure 5

How useful did the students find Google Classroom as a tool for receiving instructions?

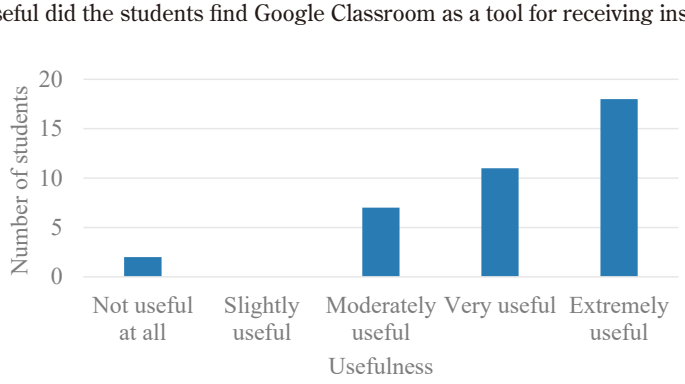


Figure 5 shows that the majority of students perceived Google Classroom as a useful tool for receiving instructions–18 students said they found it extremely useful, 11 said it was very useful, 7 moderately useful and only 2 said it was not useful at all.

Figure 6

How useful did the students find Google Classroom as a tool for receiving materials?

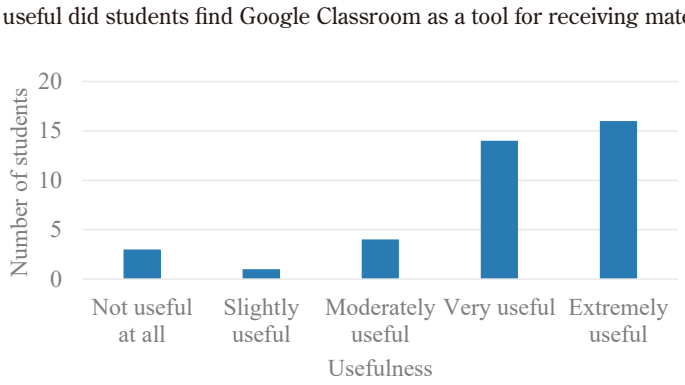


Figure 6 indicates that most students found Google Classroom a useful tool for receiving materials–16 students said extremely Useful,14 said very useful and 4 said moderately useful. However, one student said it was slightly useful and three said it was not useful at all.

Figure 7

How useful did the students find Google Classroom as a tool for submitting assignments?

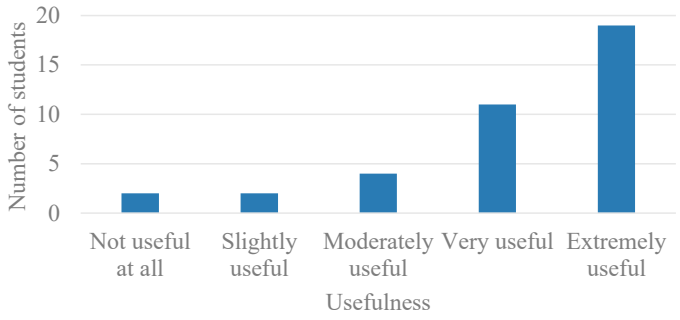
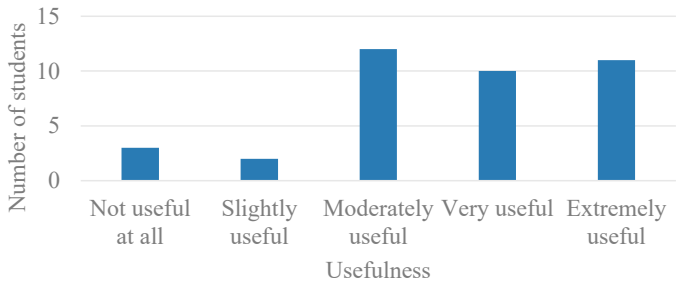


Figure 7 shows that Google Classroom was considered extremely useful by 19 students, very useful by 11 and moderately useful by 4 for submitting assignments.

Figure 8

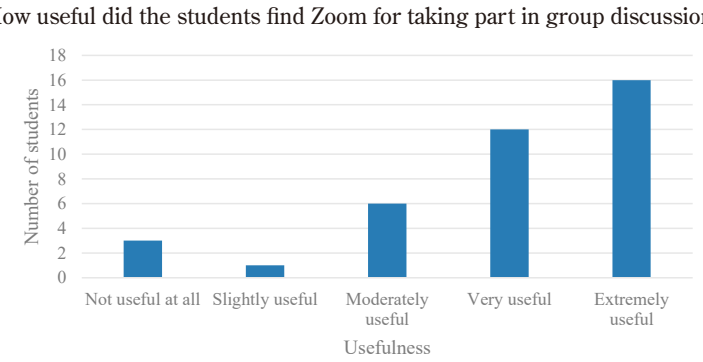
How useful did the students find Google Classroom as a tool for communicating with their teacher?



The graph in Figure 8 shows that the majority of students found Google Classroom a useful tool for communicating with the teacher–11 students said it was extremely useful, 10 said it was very useful and 12 moderately useful, with only 2 students saying it was slightly useful and 3 students saying it was not useful at all.

Figure 9

How useful did the students find Zoom as a tool for taking part in group discussions?



The results in Figure 9 present the case that Zoom was very useful as a tool to create synchronous interaction among students when they could not convene together–16 regarded it as extremely useful, 12 said very useful, 6 moderately useful, only 1 said slightly useful and 2 not useful at all.

Figure 10

What other online platforms, applications and technology did the students use in their courses over the 2020 academic year?

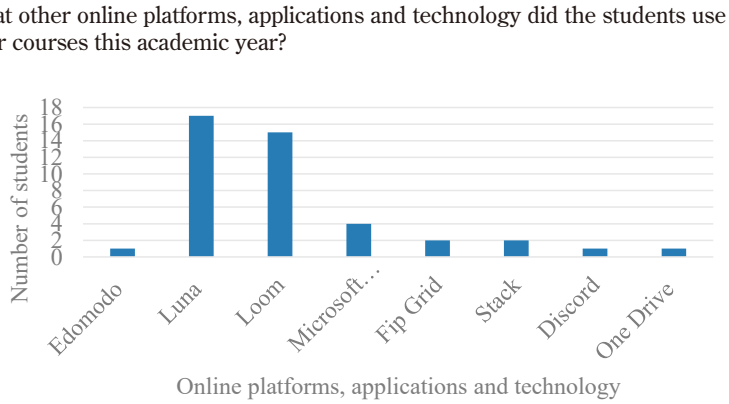


Figure 10 presents that by far, the two most popular other types of technology used by students were Luna, used by 17 students and Loom, used by 15.

Figure 11

What online platforms, applications and technology had the students used before April 2020?

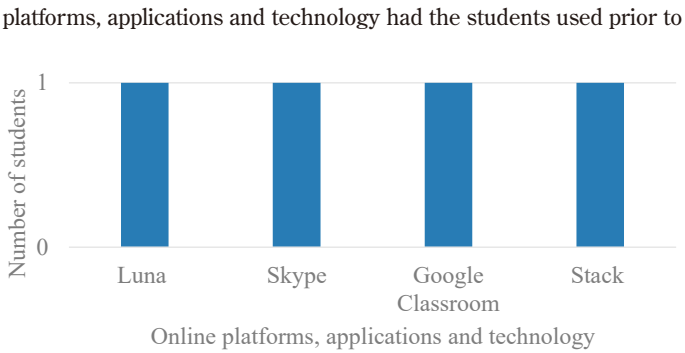
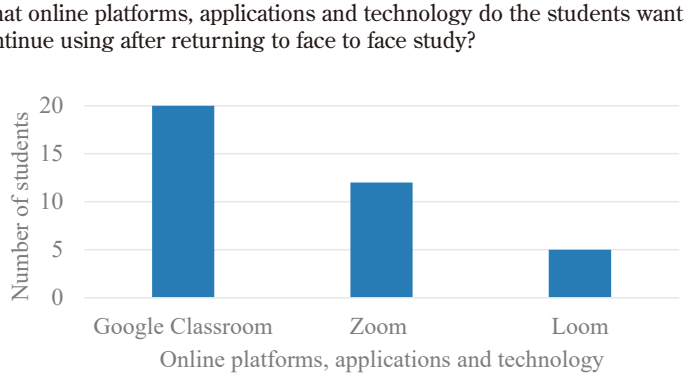


Figure 11 conveys that only 4 of the 38 students had used any of this technology prior to the 2020 academic year–1 student each had used Luna, Skype, Google Classroom and Stack respectively.

Figure 12

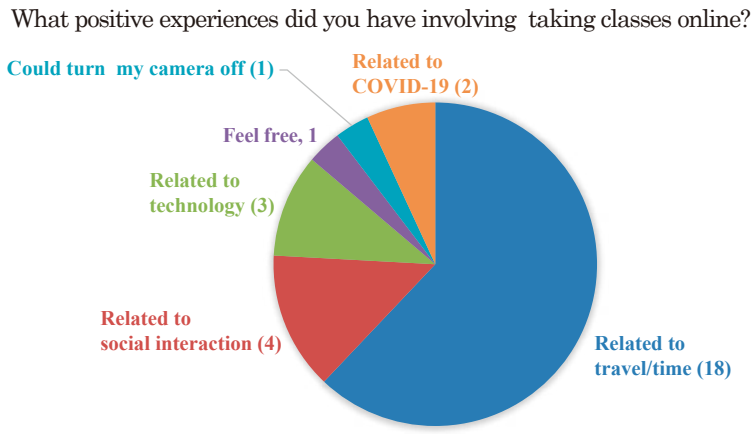
What online platforms, applications or technology would you like to continue using after we return to regular on campus lessons?



Twenty students (51%) stated they wished to continue using the LMS Google Classroom displaying a clearly positive view of its usefulness as a tool to assist their learning (Figure 12). A considerable proportion of the students, 12 (31%) stated that they wished to continue using Zoom even after the return to face to face classes. Loom was the third most popular application with 5 students (13%) advocating for its continued use after the return to regular classroom-based lessons.

Figure 13

The positive experiences students had related to online study



The answers to Question 13 regarding the students' positive experiences from studying online were quite varied, but the graph above has grouped together some of the answers that shared an overall topic or theme. The most common answers were related to time or travel with 18 answers. Some examples include, "I didn't have to wake up early; My house is far from the university" and "I had more time to prepare." Another student said, "I used the commute time to study." One of the students talked about being able to return to their hometown without missing classes.

The second most popular theme was related to social interaction with four answers in this group. Answers were related to being able to talk with classmates and "making friends". One student said that this course had given them "more opportunity for discussion" than her courses in the previous semester. The third most popular group of answers related to technology. One student stated a positive experience was "gaining the knowledge of technology". Another talked especially about giving "online presentations" and finally one stated that through "watching presentations recorded on Loom again and again, it was easier to be objective and find my development by myself". This clearly shows the student found this particular technology useful for self-study and improvement.

Two answers related to COVID-19 and being able to avoid the virus or crowded trains. Two answers were quite miscellaneous and difficult to fully comprehend without being able to ask the students for clarification. One said simply, "I could take the class to feel free", possibly this was related to the social interaction relieving them from isolation or possibly related to freedom of more time. Finally, one student stated, "I can do my camera off". Perhaps, meaning they felt more confident when speaking anonymously although the teacher did tell them to try to keep their cameras on to help assist communication and social connection.

Figure 14

The negative experiences students had related to online study

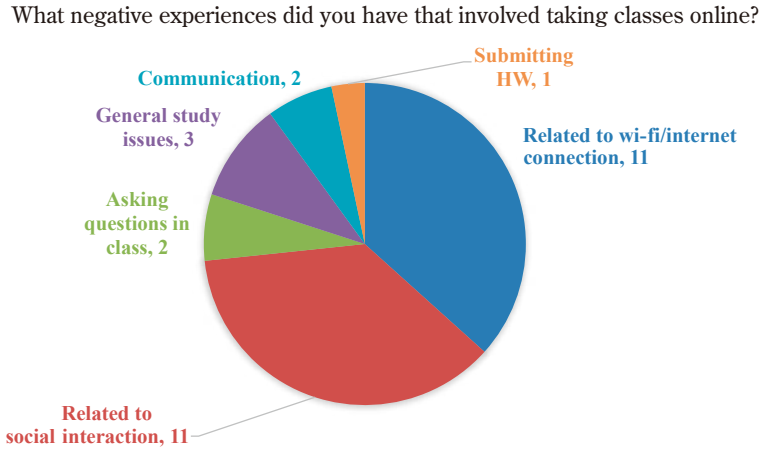


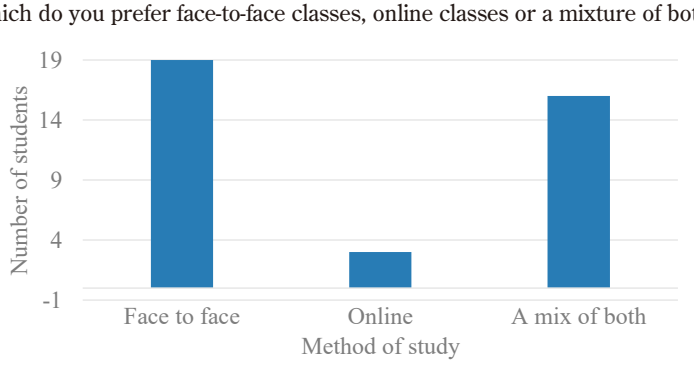
Figure 14 shows the negative experiences students had when studying online. Once more they have been grouped based on a shared theme or topic. The two most common themes were wi-fi/internet connection and issues related to social interaction with 11 answers in each. The answers related to connection issues were that students either had problems with their own connection or wi-fi or that their classmates did, causing a breakdown in communication. One student also complained about having to "borrow a wi-fi router from the university".

Equally common were issues with social interaction. Some answers were related to being unable to "meet friends" or "students" and it being "harder to get along with friends". This difficulty in interacting online was mirrored in other answers like "discussing projects online" being "inconvenient" and "Discussion online becoming silent because no one speaks". Others talked about feeling "alone" or missing "face-to-face" and the "precious conversation with teachers or friends" that happen in classroom lectures.

Besides these two main issues, there were three other answers. Three students talked about general study issues including forgetting classes, missing assignments and difficulty in concentrating. Two answers stated they found it difficult to contact the teacher or class. Finally, one student had "problems submitting homework"

Figure 15

Which medium for taking lessons do the students prefer: face to face, online or a mixture of both?



Although the results are quite close, Figure 13 shows that the majority of students would choose face to face classes as their preferred method of study. This option was selected by 19 (49%) participants. The next most popular was a combination of online and face to face study chosen by 16 students (41%). Finally, only three students (8%) of the participants preferred online classes.

Figure 16

Reliability statistics of questions 5-8 regarding usefulness of Google Classroom

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.881	.886	4

Since questions 5–8 were regarding the same theme and the possible answers were the same, Chronbach's Alpha was used to measure internal consistency and the result was 0.886 (Figure 15). The result showed good internal consistency for this set of questions.

Discussion

Regarding the increase in face-to-face classes in the second semester seen in Figures 1 and 2, due to a reduction in the number of COVID cases, the university gave the option to more teachers (including language teachers) to offer some courses face to face at the beginning of the second semester. The teacher of the classes used for this study chose not to teach those courses face to face due to the difficulty of having to teach a mix of hybrid classes on campus and other classes online. Some other faculties were holding classes face to face on campus in the first semester with 18% saying they only had a few classes online and 29% saying most of their classes were online. Given that this university offers undergraduate degrees in disciplines such as science, it is likely that these classes required some practical elements. Since the university relaxed the rules allowing teachers to teach more of certain courses face-to-face in the second semester this explains why the number of students taking face to face courses increases.

Figures 3 and 4 suggest that most students will adapt to and become comfortable with online study, as they found it much easier after one semester. However, this is not the case for all students, and many were still not completely acclimatized to this way of study despite having taken online classes for the full academic year.

Figure 5 is evidence that Google Classroom can be an effective means for giving instructions to students. Google Classroom offers an efficient, instant and easily accessible method of sharing instructions with a whole class of students in a clear and permanent way. If we consider the teacher giving instructions in class or even writing them on the board, students may mishear the teachers or miss read the teacher's handwriting or students may be out of the room or absent and the instructions may be miscommunicated later by classmates. This is far less likely with Google Classroom. Looking at Figure 14 possible reasons for the two outliers could be their difficulty in or reluctance towards using technology or perhaps their limited access to computers at home or a strong internet connection.

Figure 6 conveys that the students found Google Classroom very useful as a tool for receiving materials. During the pandemic the use of LMS such as Google Classroom was an easy way to instantly share the materials with a whole class of students in a secure and practical manner. Teachers also had the ability to attach the materials to classwork or homework assignments to make instructions clear for the students, and most students could access them with comfort and ease. Regarding the negative responses, it's possible these four students may have had connection, computer access or technology issues, despite the teacher explaining and sharing guides on how to access materials using Google Classroom. Students were also told to ask classmates for help with any technological issues they were facing. The instructor did his best to address issues students faced. Another reason for their response might be that they prefer receiving paper worksheets and disliked reading from a screen. Consequently, one environmental benefit of the COVID pandemic and the shift to online classes has been the reduction in the use of paper used in the education sector around the globe.

Figure 7 presents Google Classroom as an efficient and popular method for students to submit their assignments. The assignments section on Google Classroom allows the teacher to set up clear instructions, share any necessary materials and set a deadline, which students can clearly see. This makes it far more difficult for a student to forget their assignments or miss deadlines. Submission is extremely simple; with the click of a button, they can then choose to type directly into a Google Document or upload any work from files on their computer such as a Word or PowerPoint file or even an audio or video file. Clear instructions were given in the form of Loom videos, which showed an instructor explaining the process using screen shots and this was uploaded to Google Classroom in the first week. At least one student clearly had technical issues or connection issues causing them to have difficulty to submit as shown in Figure 14.

Most students found Google Classroom a very useful system for communicating with their teacher (figure 8). In Google Classroom, students can very easily comment or ask questions on an assignment and Google Classroom will then email the teacher to notify them so that they can reply. The teacher can make their comments visible to one student or the whole class so answers that may be applicable to the questions of others can be made visible to everyone. In opposition, a small number did have issues as also seen in Figure 14, and the reasons may be similar to those already given for other issues above.

Zoom can be a means for group discussions and interactions (Figure 9). However, Zoom, or other teleconference applications can never replace the interaction that takes place face-to-face in a classroom and there are certainly several limitations. One obvious limitation of Zoom is that the teacher cannot monitor the class as easily when they are all in the same main room, and when put into break-out rooms, the teacher can only monitor one room at a time so they cannot see or hear what the other students are doing. It is also far more difficult to gauge other people's facial expressions, body-language and tone of voice and miscommunication is far more common when using Zoom as opposed to face-to-face communication. In addition, technical issues such as students' cameras or microphones not working, or their connection failing can severely stunt or halt an interaction. However, during the pandemic when face-to-face interaction was impossible, applications like Zoom offered the best tool to afford some synchronous interaction and it seems most students would agree and found them to be very useful and usable.

Figure 10 shows a diverse selection of other examples of technology used to assist online study. Luna is this institution's LMS. However, the instructor of these classes found Google Classroom to have a more easy-to-use interface and chose it instead. Loom is a video messaging tool that allows

users to share their screen whilst simultaneously sharing a video recording of themselves using the computer's camera. It can be very useful for recording instructional videos of how to perform actions such as submitting work using Google Classroom, and the teacher of this class used it for this purpose. It can also be useful as a tool for students to record a presentation and show their slides in Power Point or Google Slides whilst also showing their face, adding a more personal feeling to the presentation. The instructor also used Loom for this purpose at times during some of the courses.

The data in Figure 11 concretely presents the fact that almost no students had any prior experience of using the technology discussed in this study before the 2020 academic year.

The data presented in figure 12 indicates a strong desire among a majority of students to continue using the LMS Google Classroom even after returning to face to face study. A substantial 31% stated they wished to continue using Zoom, which draws further questions about how they would like its use implemented. The desire of 13% to continue using Loom is surprising; one might expect students would prefer to give presentations in person in the classroom, but this result suggests some would prefer to pre-record them at home using a computer. As one student mentioned in question 14, she found it instrumental in allowing her to self-analyze and improve her English, so perhaps this means of recording their own presentations is a useful and implementable strategy for improvement.

Figure 13 shows many interesting findings of the study. It seems a popular benefit of this distance style of learning is the convenience of not having to travel to the university campus and the extra time that this saves students. Other results indicate that many students were pleased that despite being forced to stay at home they could still interact with classmates using applications like Zoom. Three specific answers here strengthen the previously discussed data in showing that platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom and Loom can be very useful tools for language study students and online study or the use of these kind of applications is beneficial for assisting the students in learning useful technological skills as well as helping their language acquisition.

Even in a technologically and economically advanced country such as Japan all university students do not have access to a computer at home with a stable wi-fi connection (figure 14).

The prevalence of answers relating to issues with social interaction or the lack of it in Figure 14 conveys that online study cannot fill the void left by lack of real-world contact and although Zoom can be used to create synchronous group discussion and interaction, there are still issues and problems that mean it cannot equate to classroom interaction. Regarding the other general issues mentioned in figure 14, it seems difficult to see how these problems connect specifically to online study but perhaps the students felt they would not have had these issues had classes been face-to-face. The same seems true for the issues with contacting the teacher and submitting homework.

Figure 15 clearly shows that the majority of students would prefer to take classes face to face. This is understandable as they have enrolled in face-to-face classes and are likely attending university not only to learn but also for social experiences such as joining clubs and making new friends. Also, with regards to a communicative skill such as language the benefits of face-to-face study in terms of opportunities for receiving varied input, testing output and receiving corrective feedback are clearly greater than the opportunities when taking part in online study, suggesting face to face would be superior in terms of facilitating language acquisition. This being said, a large number (16 students) would prefer a mixture of face-to-face classes and online and 3 would prefer completely online. It seems to be that having studied for one academic year online many students have adapted to this style and can see the benefits especially in terms of time and convenience of not having to travel.

Conclusion

In response to research question 1, the LMS Google Classroom was clearly the most effective technological application utilized during the online teaching situation. Second, Zoom was also very popular as video conferencing software, allowing interaction between the students and teachers in real time. Finally, Loom was a popular application allowing students to record presentations showing their face and slides simultaneously. The popularity of these mediums is shown by the results of the student questionnaire and the positive opinions about them are shared by the teacher.

Regarding the second research question, data obtained in the student survey may point towards possible pedagogical implications about how to implement and utilize this technology to benefit students and support their learning. The data supports the use of LMSs such as Google Classroom, as a means of giving clear instructions to students, as well as an efficient way of sharing materials with them. The current fear of COVID-19 and other current diseases and viruses means any method of reducing contact such as circulating worksheets helps reduce the risk of transmission. Continued reduction in the paper trail as a trend in the future could also lead to a reduction in deforestation that would be environmentally beneficial for the planet. Google Classroom is also an excellent tool for communication between students and teachers and a straightforward method for students to submit their assignments.

The researcher and writer of this paper has continued to use Google Classroom as his preferred LMS while teaching at Rikkyo University in the 2021 spring and autumn semesters, for classes including Discussion, Reading and Writing, English Communication, Debate and Presentation. Whether classes have been online or face-to-face, it has been a valuable tool for communicating with students, sharing materials, setting and collecting assignments.

Zoom has also been used effectively by the researcher at Rikkyo in 2021 to conduct synchronous classes when the COVID-19 situation again made it impossible to teach face to face. Zoom can be used to create group discussions and interaction, especially in situations like a pandemic when meeting face to face is impossible. However, video conferencing software such as Zoom is far from being able to replace the social interaction that takes place in the classroom and face to face interaction should always be the first choice wherever possible. Other technology that can assist learning might be presentation recording software such as Loom to help students analyze their own speech. Further research into how technology can assist language study and be utilized by both teachers and students, through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, would be hugely valuable to our field.

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Reflections on an unexpected presentation of turn-taking difficulties in an English discussion class

Jonathan Hennessy

Abstract

In this paper, I reflect on a journal kept over the last six lessons with intermediate level Japanese learners of English in Rikkyo University's English Discussion Class. The class in question was observed to speak excessively without yielding the floor and then get stuck unsuccessfully trying to negotiate for meaning. Observations from other teachers' previous work and a review of the journal entries suggest that in addition to using language too far above the group's linguistic ability, problems with turn-taking and signaling comprehension are likely contributing factors to the difficulties that were observed. Feedback and advice targeted at beginning with simple, easy to understand utterances led to a positive improvement toward the end of the semester, but without repeating the advice in a later lesson, the improvements did not continue. It is suggested that identifying the problem earlier and repeating the advice for multiple lessons may have helped create lasting change and hope to better identify and address similar problems in the future.

Keywords: turn-taking, comprehension, teacher journal

Introduction

All incoming first-year students at Rikkyo University are required to take one semester of an English Discussion Class (EDC). The goals for the class are based around building communicative abilities with a specific focus on developing fluency and the ability to negotiate for meaning. Students are also taught specific "Discussion Skill" phrases to help scaffold their communicative abilities, helping to make themselves more easily understood and helping to take turns and share speaking time in their discussion groups. During the semester, students are expected to develop the ability to discuss contemporary issues with their classmates entirely in English (Hurling, 2012). In the spring 2021 semester, classes began in person for either two or three lessons, depending on the specific class, before switching to an online format using the Zoom platform as a response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. This paper will follow the challenges and progress of one intermediate level discussion class that had three face-to-face lessons before continuing online for 11 out of the 14 total EDC lessons.

For most students, this is their first class that focuses so heavily on communication, and many of them have never tried to sustain a group discussion in English prior to starting in the EDC. As such, it is normal for students to struggle with navigating their discussions. In previous semesters, it was common for students to struggle to speak due to shyness or a self-perceived lack of language ability. However, in the spring 2021 semester, one class exhibited a different problem with communication. Some students would regularly hold the floor and speak for an excessively long period of time while simultaneously being unable to clearly explain the ideas that they were trying to share. It seemed that the speaker may have lacked the vocabulary to explain an idea clearly or that they may not have been able to simplify an idea to the level that their classmates could understand it. As these students were speaking, their classmates usually waited patiently despite their lack of understanding, without ever stopping the student during their turn to ask for clarification. In many

cases, this was followed up with failed attempts at negotiation for meaning as another student would try to explain the first speaker's ideas to the group and again often hold the floor despite their classmates not being able to understand this attempt at paraphrasing. In the end, students spent a lot of time frustrated and unable to move on their discussions because they were stuck trying to clarify too many comprehension problems at the same time.

Early in the semester, with the first lessons being face-to-face and into the first few online lessons, nothing stood out as particularly unusual. Some students struggled, using the new discussion skills they were learning, and some students struggled in communicating whether they understood their classmates, but the class did not seem to have any unique difficulties early on. In my experience, these challenges were not unusual in the EDC. Most classes will have some difficulty acquiring the new phrases they are taught, and many classes will have some difficulty conveying their comprehension or lack thereof. The early topics of discussion were concrete and relatable to the students' own experiences which certainly made the discussions approachable. When these students did possess the language ability to discuss a topic, they did fine.

However, in the seventh lesson, students were asked to discuss "The Globalization of Japanese Culture" and the discussions seemed to run into problems that I had not expected. In that lesson, two of the eight students present were marked for poor participation and six of the eight students were marked low in their use of communication skills, a measure of their attempts to communicate comprehension and solve communication problems. Initially, I just thought it was an off day or a difficult topic, but the class continued to have similar problems in the next two classes, including their second discussion test in the ninth lesson. This was when I noticed that the groups would get stuck trying to understand each other on a more challenging idea and would derail their discussion trying to solve that issue, failing to move the discussion forward and leaving the students to finish the activity frustrated, without really having gotten to discuss the topic. After the second discussion test lesson, I felt like I was starting to understand what was happening and began to keep a short journal after classes to better understand the students' behavior and to look for ways to help the students navigate their discussions more successfully.

Looking at past articles from other teachers teaching the EDC gave me a starting point for evaluating my notes, diagnosing the problem, and helping the students to improve. Webster (2018) wrote about working with shy or introverted students and noted that the students he observed were often hesitant to speak and would even pass on taking a turn rather than offering their opinion. This wouldn't explain the tendency of some students to speak excessively but may have been part of the reason that their classmates were unwilling to stop them to clarify and instead waiting until they stopped speaking on their own. Young (2014) suggested that students struggle with turn-taking and noticed that a failure to signify the end of one's turn and demonstrate that the floor was open led to students struggling to identify the appropriate time to start speaking. This could explain why students failed to speak up early and prevent the speaker from continuing when they were not being understood. It could also suggest that the speaker may be unsure of how to finish their turn and may keep talking waiting for some signal that another speaker is ready. Young (2015) also noted that students seemed to follow a limited number of strategies for passing turns, meaning that if individual students were not leaving a clear chance for one of these transitions, the group may not be able to change speakers effectively. Hennessy (2020) found that more advanced students sometimes chose to give the entirety of their thoughts on a topic at once, only fully yielding the floor when their ideas were completely explained. He also noted that students did not seem to naturally want to comment on the ideas of other students in a discussion and often struggled to interact with another student's

idea. This could be an explanation for the student who spoke excessively, that they intended to share all of their thoughts at once but lacked the language ability to do so clearly. Kambe (2015) added another useful observation, noting that students frequently found themselves limited by vocabulary and were frustrated by their inability to express their ideas. This seemed to be a certainty in this group, where they clearly had ideas that they wanted to share but were not able to do so clearly. Combining this research with my own previous observations of students taking this course did give me some insight into potential reasons for the students struggles. As topics became more abstract and challenging students were likely struggling with a lack of vocabulary and their struggles with turn-taking and potential hesitancy to interject may have created situations where they were unable to find an appropriate time to begin negotiating for meaning. In the end, they were forced to try to solve multiple communication breakdowns simultaneously. While this negotiation for meaning and solving of communication problems should be an opportunity for language acquisition (Mackey, 1999; Toth & Davin, 2016), the attempt to solve the problem usually came too late for the students to be able to fully fix their comprehension problems, inevitably leading to further frustration.

The question then became, how could this problem be addressed? Young (2015) suggested that students needed to be taught strategies for signaling the end of their turn. Hennessy (2020) suggested tailoring feedback to specifically focus on turn-taking. Hart (2019) noted the importance of group dynamics for successful discussions and focused on how influential students have the ability to improve or derail a discussion. Suzuki (2018) noted the value of feedback focused on how students' own behavior was impacting their classroom and their discussions. Kean (2018) found that students in the EDC seemed to respond best to positive feedback about their successes in a discussion. I also referred to Krashen (2009) and the Input Hypothesis, emphasizing that for students to progress and succeed in a target language, they needed comprehensible input that was close to their current level. If students continued to fail to understand their discussions, it would be unlikely that they would improve. It has also been found that despite the value in attempting to solve communication problems and get to this comprehensible input, non-native speakers do sometimes pretend to understand rather than entering the process of negotiation of meaning (Zwaard & Bannink, 2016). This would suggest that just asking them to work together when they fail to understand something would certainly be insufficient.

In order to successfully navigate a discussion and see an improvement in English skills, it would be necessary to help students have a discussion where they were able to successfully transition between speakers and produce content that was comprehensible to their classmates. This paper will review my teaching journal entries for the final six lessons and will explain how I attempted to help the students work together more effectively.

Discussion

Journal Entries

I began keeping a journal for this class after the second discussion test in the ninth lesson. In that first entry, I wrote that a few students seemed to be happy to volunteer to speak and share their opinions but that they would often attempt to explain something that they either lacked the language abilities to explain clearly or that was too much for their classmates to understand. This led to extended periods of negotiation for meaning and hurt the group's ability to move their discussion forward. One student in particular stood out as speaking excessively and I wrote a note for feedback

that they needed to relax and that just talking was more important than worrying about whether what they said was "correct." For a different group, I wrote that students needed to take shorter turns and yield the floor more readily to help the entire group have more chances to speak.

In the following lesson students were asked to discuss using English at work and work-life balance. Their new target language was meant to help them discuss different viewpoints to allow for more perspectives in their discussion. I noted that students were hesitant to interrupt each other and that they rarely asked questions. They also did very little to show whether they understood their classmates. In a few cases, students did hold the floor for a longer period of time, and as an observer, it seemed to me that they were explaining more than they needed to. In this lesson, I tried to give this class advice that I had often given to classes that were quiet when listening in the past and encouraged them to do more to show their classmates if they understood or not. A few students did take this advice in their second discussion, but most still continued to be quiet listeners. The behavior of speakers did not change, and students continued to explain more than necessary.

The 11th lesson focused on social media and students discussed students and social media as well as society and social media. The new target language was related to balancing their opinions by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the topic. Students made good use of the target language in the first discussion, and it helped to keep their discussion moving when compared to the previous two lessons. I wrote that they were not discussing each other's ideas but that using the target language did help them share their ideas and seemed to help them pass the turn to another speaker. However, the second discussion again included long turns with excessive explanation that was difficult for the group to understand. Following the second discussion, I gave post-activity feedback that they should start simple and then volunteer to speak again later if they still had something to share for a given topic.

The 12th lesson was one of the most problematic of the semester. The students were expected to talk about punishments for petty and serious crimes and were given the discussion skill of asking for and giving sources for the information they used in their discussions. This topic and discussion skill have been difficult for many classes in the past and students often have difficulty coming up with an answer they are comfortable with. This class was no different. In the first discussion I wrote that, while some students did seem to remember to use the target language, they struggled with finding a good place to interject to ask their classmates about their ideas. Students also struggled to support their opinions. After the discussion I reminded students that they needed to support their opinions and gave them some examples of places in their discussions where it would have beneficial to interject to ask their classmates for a source. In the second discussion students discussed the punishment for serious crimes and most of the students struggled to clearly explain their thoughts. It seemed like the listeners were often struggling to understand the speaker. I noticed multiple occasions where a student provided a great opportunity for their classmates to ask them about their ideas, but the listeners would rarely pick up on this chance. I also saw few attempts to clarify and solve communication issues. Students instead just let the turns pass without interacting with each other's ideas at all. With the final discussion test coming in the next class, I wrote a note to myself that I needed to emphasize simplicity to the students in the preparation activities they would do before their test if they were to have a chance of having a successful discussion.

The final discussion test was administered in the 13th lesson. Students were given no new language to use, and their topics were ways to reduce poverty and possible solutions to the aging population problem in Japan. Based on my notes from the previous class, I decided that I would emphasize starting with short, simple answers from the beginning of the lesson. Students had two

practice discussions on the topics with classmates who would not be in their group for the test, and before each practice, I asked the students to start with simple, easy to understand answers and told them that they could speak a second time later if they felt they had something more to say. They seemed to take my advice, and while they rarely took the opportunity to speak again on a topic, they their speaking turns shorter and linguistically simpler, and they were able to understand each other and move the discussion forward. After the practice, the students changed groups and had an extended discussion. I observed the groups one at a time, and I reminded them once more before starting their discussions to start simple and speak more than once on a topic if they felt they had more to say. All three groups seemed to take this advice and I wrote in my journal that the class had their best discussions of the semester. Students did still struggle to ask questions about their classmates' ideas, but they did a better job of signaling comprehension, and they were able to build on what their classmates said instead of answering the question from the beginning every time they changed speaker. I wrote that one group quickly used many of the discussion skills they were expected to and for another group I wrote that they were doing more follow-up and taking more speaking turns compared to their usual behavior. I wrote that this lesson suggested to me that a key part of being able to work as a group is ensuring that each student produces output that is understandable for the entire group.

The last lesson of the semester was a review and after the success of the previous lesson, I thought it was unnecessary to emphasize simplicity and turn-taking again. I was quickly proven wrong as students reverted to their old habits. The topics for this lesson were how to have good discussions and how to gain skills and personal qualities while at university. In both discussions, a few students held the floor for an unnecessarily long period of time and talked themselves into a corner where they were unsure whether their ideas were understood. Their classmates did not interject to clarify and when the speaker yielded the floor the listeners didn't have an easy way to comment on what the previous speaker had said. Interestingly, their discussions on having a good discussion did shed some light on the problems they had. Students said that when they were quiet listeners the whole group was shy. They also stated that they thought asking questions was challenging for their group. A few students said if they had more knowledge on a topic they could talk more smoothly. This suggested to me that students were unsure of themselves with some of the discussion topics and that they needed more help identifying the appropriate times to join into a discussion to ask questions as well as when to yield the floor as a speaker.

Reflection

My first instinct when trying to help this class was to focus on how some students would try to speak beyond their current abilities. Looking back at my journal does make me think that while this was likely part of the issue, it was certainly not the entire problem. In addition to the comments about students struggling to understand each other when they did attempt to negotiate for meaning on these difficult ideas, many of my notes were about listeners not demonstrating whether they understood the speaker and speakers not yielding the floor until they had already said too much for their classmates to interact with. When thinking about my notes and considering the work of other teachers in the program it seems reasonable to suggest that difficulties with signaling the end of a speaking turn and a hesitation to interject while another student is speaking contributed to the students struggles with comprehension and interaction. This also means that there are more ways for me to address this issue if it arises in future classes and lets me avoid simply telling students to

limit themselves when speaking and not encouraging them to push their limits.

The success in the 13th lesson in emphasizing starting simple is something I need to remember for future classes. In addition to helping in this situation, where students sometimes spoke beyond their classmates' ability to understand, it seemed to have very positive effects on turn-taking, a problem that has been detailed quite a bit in the EDC (Hennessy, 2020; Young, 2014; Young, 2015). I wish that I had emphasized this earlier with this class and I will remember for future classes how effective it was when I repeated the advice multiple times in a single lesson. This may even be beneficial for classes that struggle with turn-taking without the comprehension issues present in this class.

This experience also really solidified the importance of focusing on how different classes are unique and the value of targeting the specific problems each class has with efficient feedback. It can be easy as a teacher to focus on using the new target language and telling students to work together more if they do not understand each other, but that is not enough if there is a different issue that is holding the class back. By looking more closely at a specific behavior that I had not seen before and by targeting the problems that were specific to this one class, I was able to help them make improvements for an important discussion test and have a better discussion than they had previously been able to. If I can improve at identifying problems like this and target them earlier and more frequently, I should be able to help more students succeed.

Conclusion

Students can struggle for a variety of reasons when trying to have discussions in their second language. One of the most important roles of the teacher is helping them identify their problems and giving them strategies for improvement. While the students in my class did struggle for most of the lessons for which I kept a journal, they were able to have an effective and communicative discussion in their discussion test lesson when given appropriate advice and feedback. This experience has left me better prepared for classes that have similar problems in the future.

Keeping a journal helped me to understand the problem better than I would have otherwise as well. The advice to start simple helped this class, but the problem was not simply that students were trying to speak beyond their abilities as I first thought. They were also struggling to signal comprehension and to effectively pass the turn. These struggles are something I have seen before, and I was simply distracted by a new nuance. I believe in the future, I will be able to understand why a class is struggling earlier in the semester.

This paper also provides more evidence to the necessity of appropriately targeted feedback and advice. The difference in performance in their final discussion test when they were strongly encouraged to start simple was very clear and it seems very likely that emphasizing this point early and repeating it really could have helped this class. The fact that the improvement didn't carry over to the next lesson does suggest that repetition will be important in making lasting changes, but also suggests that addressing problems with comprehension and turn-taking before beginning activities may be more effective than only giving feedback after the fact.

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【Teaching Practice Report】

Considerations in Content and Language Integrated Learning

John Paul White

Abstract

This paper outlines two forms of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and outlines some of the theoretical and practical considerations that need to be made when planning content-led and language-led lessons that follow a CLIL approach to learning. It begins by defining CLIL and describing some of the key principals behind this approach, as well as, the low-order and high-order thinking skills that students will need to employ for certain activities. The author then recommends a three-dimensional approach towards planning and suggests scaffolding strategies that could be used to teach both content and language simultaneously through exploration, discovery, and peer interaction. The author gives examples of how he has used these methods in his own classes and some of the considerations that go into the planning and execution of course design. Finally, the author reflects upon his own experiences in teaching English debate and discusses the methodologies that already inform his approach to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Keywords: CLIL, theory, planning, low-order thinking skills, high-order thinking skills

Introduction

The CLIL Approach

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an approach in which students learn a subject in a foreign or second language (Marsh, 2002). As content and language are taught together, students gain exposure to both foreign language input and output as they study a subject of academic or personal interest. Using this approach, students are able to learn grammatical structures, vocabulary, and specialised terminology without the need for additional language lessons outside of the course (Graddol, 2006). This allows students to learn the content of a subject while gaining exposure to the syntax and lexis that make up a foreign language. For example, a native Japanese student learning art in English would be exposed to new phrases and vocabulary in that target language while learning the key concepts of the subject simultaneously. Therefore, students need to improve in the foreign language in order to follow the content of the course and be successful in their studies (Marsh, Marsland, & Stenberg, 2001). This has huge implications as English increasingly becomes a global language, and means that the world is beginning to view English not only as a language but also as a key skill (Graddol, 2006).

Types of CLIL

There are two types of CLIL: strong and weak. Strong CLIL is content-driven and focusses on content learning, while weak CLIL is language-driven and focusses on second language learning (Ball, 2009, and Bentley, 2010, as cited in Ikeda, 2013). In a strong CLIL class, content is given the primary focus and concepts are presented in a foreign or second language (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019). However, in a weak CLIL class, the second language is the focus of the course as the students learn about a specific or specialised subject in a second language. This means that

educational bodies must consider whether to follow a content-led or language-led approach when designing CLIL lessons and planning assessment.

CLIL differs from regular language lessons where the subject, topic, or theme of a lesson may vary in order to promote a particular grammatical structure or communicative gambit with the hope that students will employ these skills out in the field. A CLIL approach negates this issue and instead allows students to gain exposure to foreign language as they learn the content without the need for additional language lessons outside of the course. Target language exposure can be in the form of either input (reading and listening) or output (writing and speaking). Depending on the subject being studied, output may or may not have a linguistic element. For example, in an art lesson, students might learn about vanishing points and light sources in English but then produce a painting as output with no linguistic element.

Advantages of CLIL

Since the year 2000, CLIL has gained popularity among educational bodies across Europe. This has been in response to the European Union's goal of making students proficient in at least two languages without the need for separate language lessons (Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D., 2010). As students are able to learn content and a language simultaneously (Marsh, D. 2002), CLIL provides exposure to the target language as content is learned. Students are therefore not required to have the English language proficiency to cope with the subject before they begin their studies as the target language is learned at the same time as the course content. Moreover, students are able to learn vocabulary and grammatical structures related to subjects of personal or academic interest, which provides opportunities for employment in specialised or professional fields (Casal & Moore, 2009), essentially, killing two birds with one educational stone.

CLIL also motivates students to improve in the target language because the understanding of the subject content is compulsory. Moreover, the students are not being asked to talk about vox pop content (for example favourite movies, celebrities, things they like/dislike) where content is merely used to illustrate certain language structures. Instead, they are focussing on a single subject (for instance, history) and learning how to remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate, and create content in a second language. This gives the students a sense of accomplishment as they engage with the subject material and produce their own output.

Disadvantages of CLIL

One of the challenges that CLIL presents is that most learning materials and subject textbooks have not been designed with CLIL in mind. This means that teachers have to alter or adapt existing materials into more CLIL-friendly forms, and this can take time. Moreover, as we will see later, CLIL teachers need to have an awareness of grammar (Marsh, 2002) and the structural make-up of the target language, and this can be of some concern for teachers who are not well-versed in such structures (Pérez Cañado, 2011).

There are also different models and practices of CLIL that overlap with other communicative approaches. This makes it difficult to determine which model is superior as content and circumstances can vary greatly in terms of context, curriculum, and educational body (Gabillon, 2020). Some research into the benefits of CLIL maybe biased (Bruton, 2011), and that there is a need for more disinterested research needs into the efficacy of CLIL within a curriculum, as well as, its shortcomings

(Bruton, 2013).

Discussion

Key Principals

The key principles of CLIL are Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture — the 4Cs (Coyle, 1999). Content relates to the information, concepts, and content of a specific subject that is to be learned by the students in a foreign language. Communication is the use of a second language to both learn and express ideas on a given subject of study. It is the language in which students will study the content. Cognition is the development and ability to understand abstract and concrete concepts relating to both the content and language of a CLIL-based curriculum. This dimension is concerned with the development of lower- and higher-order thinking skills with regard to the content and language the students are learning. Finally, Culture exposes the students' ability to reason outside of their own perspectives. This helps them to deepen their understanding of a subject's content, others, and themselves. Together, the 4Cs form the basis for a Content and Integrated Learning approach that relies on immersion, communication, exploration, and discovery to meet its goals.

Thinking Skills

There are two types of thinking skills: lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). LOTS are the students' ability to remember, understand, and apply knowledge, while higher-order thinking skills are defined by the students' ability to analyse, evaluate, and create their own output (Bloom, 1956).

For courses such as the language-led English Debate course at Rikkyo University where the author is a teacher, the students benefited from activities that first engaged their lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) at the start of lessons before later progressing to higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) to nurture a deeper understanding of the academic topics that were up for debate. During the warm-up activities of the lesson, the students completed various activities that pre-taught difficult unit vocabulary and scaffolded some of the functional language that would be used later in the lesson. Then, as the lesson progressed, the activities moved more into the scope of higher-order thinking skills.

An example of this would be when the students were discussing what a self-driving car should do when presented with the dilemma of swerving to avoid some innocent people in the event of a catastrophic brake failure. The choice was to either protect the inhabitants of the car or the innocent pedestrians on the street. As the students discussed each scenario, the individuals involved were swapped out for people of varying age, class, gender, levels of health, and occupation or even animals. It was observed that the students began to analyse and reflect on their prior answers to inform and formulate an ethical rule of what a self-driving car should do in such a paradoxical situation. They also discussed whether their original choices had been fair and whether they should be reviewed or changed. This pre-teaching of vocabulary, content, and concepts helped students progress from the reproduction of knowledge (LOTS) to the creation of knowledge (HOTS), which was the underlying purpose of this progression of activities.

Fat and Skinny Questions

To simplify this progression from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills, a teacher should first consider the two types of questions — skinny and fat. Skinny questions focus on the recollection and regurgitation of knowledge. Examples of skinny questions could be prefaced with the following verbs: list, name, define, or describe. These types of questions encourage students to either recall previously taught vocabulary or activate the students' schemata to introduce a concept that will be explored more deeply as the lesson progressed (much like the artificial intelligence example above). Skinny questions can therefore be used as a warm-up to activate the students' lower-order thinking skills and introduce a concept in its most basic form.

Fat questions differ in that they require students to students to analyse, compare, contrast, and criticise information. This requires a much deeper level of thinking, and time should be allocated accordingly to accommodate this. Examples of fat questions could be prefaced with the following verbs: analyse, evaluate, construct, predict, hypothesise, reason, or reflect. These types of questions are more open-ended than skinny questions and usually require an evaluation, hypothesis, self-reflection, or the formation of an opinion on behalf of the student. In essence, skinny questions require lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) and fat questions require higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Therefore, teachers should consider not only in which order they should introduce content but also how to scaffold activities so that they can be completed in a communicative way together.

Lesson Planning

The Three Dimensions

When preparing to teach a lesson, a teacher should look at it through the three dimensions of CLIL: concepts, procedures, and language. There also needs to be some type of input, process, and output. Materials should therefore be designed in such a way as to allow students to work together to solve problems with minimal input from the teacher. To do this, the teacher should think about which concepts the students will need to learn, how they will learn them, and which functional language the students will require to meet all these expectations. These are outlined in more detail below.

Concepts (What?)

First, a teacher should look at what concepts their students are expected to learn. For example, if they are learning art, what do they need to know? For instance, if they need to learn about primary and tertiary colours, which content should come first? A teacher should organise these concepts into a linear progression in which content builds upon prior content to deepen understanding. An artist would know that the first thing to consider when drawing a picture is the vanishing point. Then, they might consider where the light source is coming from. These progressions should be transferred to the student, and first and foremost, a teacher should ask themselves "What do my students need to learn and in what order should they learn it?"

Procedures (How?)

The next question should be "How?" How will the students learn these concepts? How can the materials be adapted to make sure that non-native learners understand them? How can the teacher ensure that the content has been understood? To answer this, the teacher should consider what input they will use and what output they should expect. For input, should they use text, videos, images, graphs, or realia? What are the benefits of each and which would be best? In the case of the aforementioned artificial intelligence debate, the teacher also used the image of a self-driving car heading down the road towards danger beside another image of the same car swerving to crash. Both options and their results were laid bare for the students to evaluate, consider, and weigh up the options. For the most part, the human brain thinks in pictures, so images or diagrams should be used whenever possible to illustrate concepts in the most accessible format.

Language (Which?)

The final question a teacher should ask themselves is "Which language structures and vocabulary will the students encounter and be expected to use?" For example, if we return to our lesson on artificial intelligence and the self-driving car, the students were pre-taught the vocabulary ('swerve') and grammatical structures ('I think the [car] should [go straight]') they would need to use before beginning the activity. This scaffold formed the basis for discussion in which students could share opinions, reasons, examples, and predict the risks and rewards of their choices in a communicative way.

Additionally, the students should be given scaffolds for functional language so that they can direct activities themselves. For example, a teacher might need to say things like 'please get into [pairs]' and 'please get into [a new pair]' as part of their functional language, while the students would use phrases like 'let's work together' or 'let's swap chairs' to find a new partner. In terms of language, it should all be scaffolded to accommodate not only the content but the functions that will need to be applied for students to work together and follow the teacher's instructions.

Scaffolding Strategies

Showing rather than Telling

Students appreciate a scaffold of the language that they will need to accomplish a task. Moreover, it is also beneficial to briefly demonstrate how an activity can approached using the second language. Scaffolded language reduces the need for students to revert to their native language and allows them to engage with the content of the lesson in the second language. This encourages the students to think in the same language as the content is being presented. What is to be avoided is telling students to do something in a second language without showing them how it can be done as an example.

Modelling (Showing)

Teachers should demonstrate how to use the target language so that students can observe and understand how to complete activities in groups or pairs. When doing this, functional language should be modelled with a student, and a language scaffold can be placed on the whiteboard or kept

somewhere consistent so that the students are familiar with it and it becomes habitual to use. For example, the phrases 'Let's work together' and 'I think [X] is [Y]. What do you think?' can be used to set up and complete a variety of activities and also create a learner-centred environment. Students benefit from language scaffolds as they show them not only what is required from an activity but also how to do it.

On occasion, a teacher may inadvertently choose to model with a student who struggles with the activity. In cases such as this, the teacher should first praise the student before swapping roles and repeating the model. For instance, in its most basic form, if a teacher were to model an interaction with a student such as asking their name, and the student was unable to answer, the teacher should then take on the role of answering the question, having already demonstrated how to ask. The participants would then swap back to their original roles so that the student can demonstrate the model successfully.

Pre-Teach Vocabulary (Flashcards)

There are a few ways in which a teacher can pre-teach vocabulary for a lesson, but there are a number of considerations to take into account. Vocabulary activities should be designed in a way that encourages students to interact with each other to either organise, match, or infer the meaning of words together. The teacher should also consider the word class of the words and create individual activities by word class. For example, one method that can be used is to have students organise words into a Venn-diagram of positive, neutral, or negative words. In such cases, the use of flashcards allows the teacher to share the flashcards between pairs and provide a scaffold of functional language to help students discuss and organise the words into their respective section of the diagram. Flashcards are also useful in that they can be swapped out and activities can be manipulated to be more or less challenging.

Visual Aids (Images and Realia)

Visual aids, images, and realia are an incredibly fast and reliable way of introducing concepts. For example, in the case of the self-driving car, it was pretty evident what was happening in each picture, and this allowed students to visualise the hypothetical situation in a much more concreate way than if I were to just explain it. First, I showed them the images and then explained what was happening. Then, I left it up to the students to discuss the best course of action for the self-driving car as the concept was clearly displayed in front of them.

Differentiation

Mixed Abilities

Another consideration to take into account is differentiation and the mixed abilities of students. When planning a CLIL curriculum, the teacher or educational body needs to decide whether the CLIL course will be content-led or language-led. They also need to consider how content or language can be taught not only in tandem but also in a way that it is inclusive for students of varying or mixed abilities. Using the flashcards from before as an example, these types of learning materials can be created in such a way that allows teachers to manipulate, customise, and personalise activities for

different students during the lesson. For instance, if a student found the matching activity too easy, they could be given more cards to organise and discuss with their partner, while a student who is struggling could be given fewer cards and progress slowly from there. It is therefore wise for a teacher to anticipate and accommodate for potential challenges and design materials accordingly. Moreover, activities should always be designed in such a way that they can be scaled in difficulty to become either more challenging or forgiving, as required.

Assessment

Another consideration is whether the teacher is assessing content or language and whether this assessment should be formative or summative (Richards & Schmidt, 1985). In strong CLIL, it would be better to assess content, and in weak CLIL it would be better to assess the language. However, when assessing content, it is necessary to think about and avoid the pitfall of what is called the 'language-risk.' Meaning, if a student makes a mistake, is that because of their language ability or because they did not understand the content? A teacher would hope for the latter, as if they understood the content but could not appropriately prove their understanding of it, then they are inadvertently and erroneously being assessed on their language ability rather than their conceptual knowledge, which would not only be unfair but it would also be an inaccurate summative assessment of their true ability within a content-led CLIL course.

One way of negating this problem would be to offer multiple-choice or other closed forms of assessment or even skinny questions. However, this introduces another issue when a teacher wants to assess a student's high order thinking skills (HOTS) as questions would generally need to be open-ended.

Great care must be taken when planning a content-driven course to make sure that it is meticulously planned backwards so that all the language of 'Which?' and grammatical structures have been given adequate attention in activities so that students are well prepared for assessment and can express themselves appropriately. This means that content-led assessment questions would need to be either closed for lower-order thinking skills or written in such a way as to suggest a structure for students to follow for high-order thinking skills assessment questions. Again, this goes back to the three dimensions of planning (concepts, procedures, and language) that teachers should consider when planning lessons or designing a course.

Conclusion

Teachers who adopt a CLIL approach need to focus on activities that allow students to work together in a communicative and explorative way. Students need to be given the tools and guidance to understand the subject of study's content, and activities should be carefully designed by teachers to accommodate a variety of learner types and abilities. When designing a course, teachers need to consider the concepts, procedures, and language that need to taught to the students and how this can be done effectively.

There are many parallels between my own method of teaching, the Communicative Approach, and Content and Language Integrated Learning in that all methods favour students learning through an active approach towards communicating and completing activities among their peers. I feel that this provides the most exposure to content and language, and through sharing ideas, students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the topics we discuss and debate in class. This helps to

develop their thinking skills and express themselves as active learners rather than passive listeners.

I also prepare all my materials to facilitate such an approach.

Given the current lack of CLIL-dedicated content textbooks, it is often up to the teacher to adapt textbook units and activities that have been designed for native speakers into something more accessible to second-language learners. Therefore, CLIL challenges teachers to be creative and think of the best possible ways to not only present concepts but also consider how to check that these concepts have been understood. This is what makes teaching fun and rewarding. With each lesson taught, teachers will need to reflect upon not only their student's development in class but also their own.

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【Teaching Practice Report】

Opening the Door: Using the International Virtual Exchange Project to Enrich Discussion Classes

Jon Mahoney

Abstract

This paper reflects on using The International Virtual Exchange Project (IVE) as a means of broadening students' perspectives and developing their intercultural competencies by allowing them to interact with other students in different countries around the world. In total, 85 students took part in the study. I utilized a mixed methods approach to collect both qualitative and quantitative data in the form of class notes and a Google Form, respectively. In general, students gave positive impressions about using IVE, stating that it helped improve the content of their discussions, their motivation to study English and their written English. This paper closes out by suggesting that integrating the IVE Project into the Discussion syllabus boosted students' participation and satisfaction of the course.

Keywords: Virtual exchange, intercultural competency, global, online

Introduction

In the age of technology and information, it would seem inevitable that telecollaboration would enter the education sphere. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the inception of such programs has quickened the calibration of platforms into language programs (Jager et al, 2020). In fact, the Japanese business federation Keidanren recently placed the skill of intercultural understanding as being on par in importance with English competency (Hagley, 2021). Virtual exchange (VE) is a domain of online foreign language education that has experienced substantial growth and change in the past number of years (O'Dowd & O'Rourke, 2019). It is a contemporary, economical and pedagogical approach for boosting global proficiency and intercultural competencies through transboundary and multicultural learning environments via virtual platforms (Bijnens et al., 2006; Villar-Onrubia & Rajpal, 2016).

The participating students in this study were all enrolled in the English Discussion Class (EDC) module, a 14-week course taken by all first-years students who are required to discuss contemporary topics using a variety of marked language functions. The primary goal of the course is for students to acquire the ability to discuss topics fluently and to have balanced and interactive discussions about current topics in English with their peers (Hurling, 2012). By frequently uttering these functions, learners gradually develop a stronger network of associations between these features while also gaining a deeper understanding of the contexts in which they occur (Ellis, 2002).

Each class consists of nine or ten students, with each student placed into classes with other students of a similar English competence. The semester began with conventional face-to-face classes with each class being 100-minutes in duration. Due to COVID-19 protocols, all students were required to wear masks and had to remain in the same seat for the entire lesson. I made seating charts for each lesson beforehand to ensure that students were sat next to different classmates in the next lesson. I would use the ready-made seating chart to guide students about who to speak to when speaking practice was commencing, which was useful and efficient. Instructors were advised to keep

a distance from students whilst they conversed, which made monitoring all the students effectively in groups somewhat challenging. After each practice or discussion, I would give verbal feedback and written feedback via the whiteboard and facilitate student-to-student feedback. After three weeks of teaching face-to-face, the classes were moved online. To scaffold the language functions that the students would use in each forthcoming class, I would add a Google Slide to depict the usage of the language function. I would also embed relevant YouTube videos related to the topic of each chapter in the textbook to help the students think more deeply about the topics beforehand.

The International Virtual Exchange Project

In the previous academic year, I had used asynchronous discussion board forums in each of my discussion classes. The main aim of these forums was to allow students the chance to practice using the language skills of the forthcoming discussion lesson, as well as letting them share their ideas about the topic that they would discuss in the next lesson. The results of using these forums were positive. Students reported finding new ideas, thinking more deeply about the topics, and organizing their discussion ideas before the lessons began (Mahoney, 2020). This year, I wanted to expand on these forums by entering my students into the International Virtual Exchange Project (IVE from here onwards).

The genesis of IVE came from a need of connecting students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) in Japan with students studying English in other countries and allowing them to use the English that they are studying in class to communicate (Roarty & Hagley, 2021). IVE first began in 2004, initially with one class from Japan and Colombia, and has now expanded to include 11 countries with around 5,000 students participating in the exchange (Roarty & Hagley, 2021). IVE has been funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) Kaken grant and is complementary for participants (Hagley, 2020). IVE transpires on a Moodle platform where students can exchange information in a variety of ways including text, pictures, audio and/or videos (Roarty & Hagley, 2021).

In the May-July 2021 IVE, 3885 students from a total of 18 different countries were selected and posted on the forum. The main participating countries were Japan with 2100 students (54%) and Colombia with 1127 students (29%). The other most active countries included Indonesia with 211 students (5.4%), Mexico with 90 students (2.3%), India with 78 students (2%) and Turkey with 60 students (1.5%). A total of 5007 students signed up to participate in the project, but COVID-19 and other problems restricted many students from the different countries from participating fully.

Procedure

In the first lesson of the semester, I introduced the students to the syllabus and the grading system for the discussions class. The students were advised that 50% of their grade would be evaluated on their general participation, which involves how much effort they make in each class, the amount of language functions that they use and their attitude towards their fellow classmates; 30% would be from three speaking tests in which they are solely evaluated on their language forms usage and 10% would depend on homework, which was a weekly quiz from weeks 2-13 about the reading section of each topic in the textbook. IVE would run from weeks 4-12 in the semester, and I advised students that this would be 10% of their final grade. During the 8-week duration of the project, students were required to make a minimum of two posts per week. I reminded the students of this

requirement when giving them feedback after each class via email and an announcement on the class homepage on BlackBoard. I posted the link of the IVE website directly below the reminder to encourage the students. Further, I advised students that it was fine to talk about any topic and use any English that they knew and that they should try to enjoy using the platform and use the language functions that we would be using in class, such as opinions, examples, points of view, and follow-up questions. My guidance was influenced by O'Dowd et al. (2020) who proposed that teachers need to provide 'pedagogical guidance' when harmonizing VE into the classroom. Each student was placed into a different group of around 25 other students participating in IVE. In this group, students were encouraged to introduce themselves and share their culture with their group members. The Group Forum was broken down into four main topics that would span the duration of the project. The topics were as follows: Who we are (05/03-05/23); Student life in our cultures (05/24-06/05); The cultures around us (06/06-06/19) and Gifts (06/20-07/03). Participants were also able to post in the Open Forum, which was a place where all participants could post and interact with one another. The Open Forum had 14 topics, including *Art & Music; Your Future; Speaking; COVID-19; The News; Sports; The Environment; Movies & TV; Travel; Food; Politics; Technology; Your Free Time and School Life*. Students were allowed to reply or post new threads on both the Group and Open Forum.

In week 7 of the semester, the topic of the lesson in the textbook was the globalization of Japanese culture. Students were required to discuss which Japanese culture they thought was most appropriate to share with the rest of the world and why. I gave the students a task that week to specifically share their favourite Japanese culture on IVE. In this way, the lesson content directly overlapped into their usage of the IVE. This strategy was founded from O'Dowd et al (2020), who suggested that teachers integrate students' own online interactions into class work. Since students made a total of around 500 culture-related posts (including food, travel, music, favourites, gifts and manga & anime), I believe that this was something that the students truly found interesting to chat about.

Discussion and Findings

Student participation

A total of 1040 posts or replies were made by the 85 participating students, which is an average of 12.2 entries per student. Twenty-eight students (33%) made 17-24 entries, whilst twenty-five students (30%) made 8-16 entries. Five students (6%) made 25-32 entries and one student made 84 entries. Twenty-six students (30%) made 1-7 entries, which was less than the required amount for a full participation score. These figures would seem to suggest that most students participated spontaneously for their own recreation as opposed to participating only as it was a homework task.

Gender differences

Out of the fifty-six female students, thirty-six of them made a total of 84 posts (a post refers to initiating a new topic on a forum). Twenty female students did not make any posts (36%). This calculates an average of 1.5 posts per female student. The female students made a total of 700 replies (a reply refers to a student replying to another student's post on a forum), which was an average of 12.5 replies per student. A total of 34,103 words were written by the female students, with an average of 608 words written per student. Out of the twenty-nine male students, nineteen of them made a total

of 56 posts, which was an average of 1.9 posts per male student. Ten male students did not make any posts (38%). The male students made a total of 234 replies, which was an average of 8 replies per male student. A total of 12,219 words were written by the male students, with an average of 421 words written per student. These figures would seem to suggest that the female students participated more actively, by writing more words and posting more replies. However, the male students were more likely to initiate new topics by making posts. This finding concurs with findings by Mahoney (2020) that male students were more likely to initiate new topics on digital forum platforms.

Topics

The most popular topics that students discussed on the forums included food (110 posts), favorites (90), travel (80), music (80), sport (63), culture (60), manga & anime (60), movies (56), COVID-19 (56), and gifts (35). Students participated in around 50 different topics overall, ranging from superstitions, politics, pets, love and being eco-friendly. This wide range would hint that the students appreciated the wide range of topics and the function of being able to create topics of their choice. One recurring theme was that the students would often compare the food of their local area to that of other Japanese students. The vigorous participation of students in topics such as travel and COVID-19 could be related to the current pandemic. Many students posted in forums such as "Where would you like to travel after the pandemic?" Students also posted often about how the pandemic has affected their lives, whether it be studying or being unable to meet friends.

Advantages

In the final class of the semester, the students were poised with a discussion question: "What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the IVE Project". By the 83 students who were present in the final class, 97 advantages were given. I will now cover some of these.

Usefulness to connect with foreign people and learn new perspectives

In total, 52 students indicated that the major advantage was connecting to foreign people:
It is useful to connect with people far away and share cultures from home.
It is great to communicate with foreign people who speak different languages for the first time.
It was a rare opportunity to exchange my opinion with people all over the world.
I could choose a topic I want to know about and discuss deeply.
Receiving replies from people around the world gave me new perspectives and ideas.
I could learn other viewpoints and broaden my horizons.
I could learn a different way of thinking.

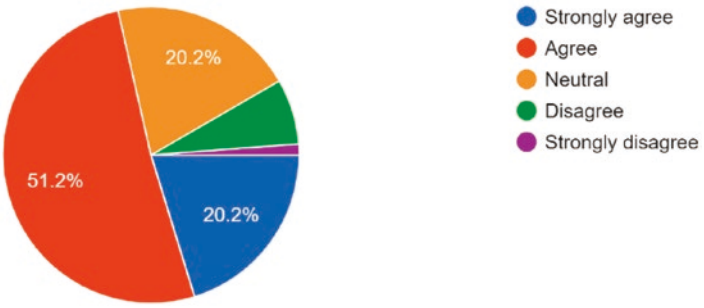
Since students took lessons online from week 4 to week 12, they may have felt isolated from their friends or society. Therefore, this digital platform provided them with a place to share their ideas and feelings whilst also practicing their English. Moreover, four students indicated that they used pictures to illustrate their feelings and culture. The referral by one student that they used the website as something akin to a diary would seem to suggest that the website served as a quasi-therapeutic tool for some during the pandemic. This positive feedback has also been reported by Jager et al (2021, p.22) who argue that VE offers "a more accessible, inclusive form of learning for all

students."

This positive feedback of authentic interaction supports findings by Hagley & Cotter (2016). This result also correlates with the fact that 70% of students made the minimum of two posts per week as I requested of them. In the Google Form survey (Figure 1), 71.4% of students agreed with the statement that it was fun and interesting to chat to other students on IVE (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

"It was interesting and fun to chat to other students on the IVE Project."



Improving writing skills and learning new expressions

Two other advantages that were prominently mentioned (7) were improving writing skills and learning new expressions:

I could improve my writing skills, deepen my knowledge about topics and learn new expressions.

I could improve my reading and writing ability and get confidence and power in using English.

I could learn to express what I wanted to say in the discussion classes.

The main goal of this class was to furnish an environment in which students could converse in English about subjects in that they are familiar with. These utterances suggest that not only did IVE help students practice their ideas and learn expressions for their classes, but it also allowed them to improve their writing skills by interacting in an authentic way. In the Google Form survey, 52.4% of students agreed that IVE improved their English ability and motivation to study English. Although 29.8% indicated a neutral stance to this statement, 59.5% agreed that IVE improved their ideas and use of discussion skills in the classes.

COVID-19 news

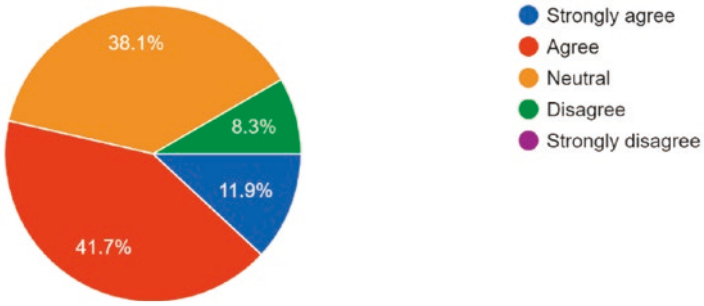
A final advantage worth mentioning (6) was the license to discuss news, especially that which was COVID-related:

It was an advantage to learn what is really happening in the world. We don't really know when we watch the news.

We could easily post and learn about the world. It was a good opportunity and a valuable source of information during the COVID-19 disaster now.

Having the ability to get other sources of information was precious for the students. In the unparalleled times of COVID-19, different countries have been affected in different ways, and the news is therefore reported through the lens of that nation's government. Some 53.6% of students

Figure 2
"Seeing other people's viewpoints changed my view of the world."



agreed with the statement that seeing other people's viewpoints changed their view of the world (see Figure 2.)

Disadvantages

The 83 students in the final lesson expressed disadvantages of using IVE a total of 39 times. There were two major disadvantages indicated by students. I will now discuss these.

Too many Japanese students

The most prominent disadvantage mentioned by students (15) was that they were too many Japanese students. Since the May-July 2021 project contained a total of 54% Japanese students, this complaint was understandable:

There were too many Japanese students. It was strange discussing Japanese culture with them in English. Talking to many Japanese students was not interesting.

There were limited countries. I would like to talk to European students.

Whilst this was mentioned as the biggest disadvantage in the final class, 74.5% of students agreed that sharing their culture and learning about other cultures was interesting (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
"Sharing Japanese culture and learning about other cultures on IVE was interesting."

Therefore, although the students may have wanted more exposure to different nationalities participating, it could be argued that they enjoyed learning some new aspects of Japanese culture

from other Japanese students who lived in different areas of Japan. Since the topics of food and culture were very popular, this would seem likely to be the case. One student did specifically highlight this: *It was fun to share food culture with different prefectures in Japan*.

Website issues

The other main disadvantage expressed (14) was frustrations with the useability of the website. Since IVE is still a relatively new project, this may be logical:

The web format was hard to use and interact.

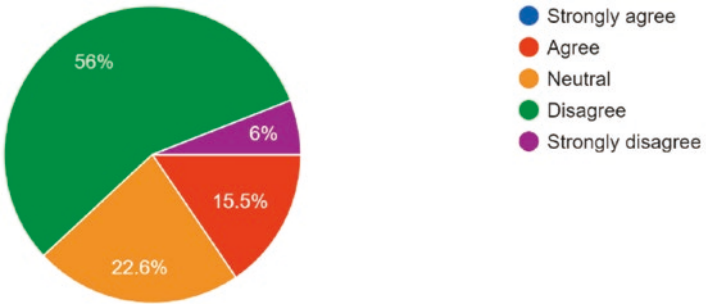
It was hard to find replies to my posts.

It was hard to use. Twitter and Instagram are easier.

This concern has been highlighted by Hagley (2021), who voiced that some students may not have adequate ICT skills to navigate the site smoothly. Despite this being mentioned as the second biggest disadvantage, a total of 62% of students disagreed with the statement on the Google Form that IVE was troublesome and not useful for learning English (see Figure 4). Only 15.5% agreed with said statement. Students were advised that they could use the website or the Moodle application on their phones, but it is unclear if they heeded this advice.

Figure 4

"Using the IVEProject was troublesome and not useful for learning English."



Cultural differences and grammar worries

Some other notable disadvantages indicated by students included cultural differences and grammar worries (3 and 4, respectively). Since IVE had students from over eighteen countries participating, and this was sometimes the first time for some of my students to communicate with foreign students, this drawback would seem to have been inevitable:

There was a gap in value. We should read carefully what foreigners write and try to understand them.

Chatting to foreigners was nuanced and hard to understand.

I was worried if I could accurately convey my feelings in English.

I could not check grammar, so I was nervous about making mistakes and posting.

The students' concerns about making grammar mistakes concur with findings made by Mahoney (2020) and Neilsen (2013). However, this drawback is mitigated by the fact that more

students indicated that the platform improved their writing ability in the discussion in the final lesson of term.

Conclusion

In a time of great stress, uncertainty, and isolation, it has never been more important for teachers to be flexible and to help their students achieve their study goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has understandably caused a reaction in the education industry in exploring the delivery of online classes and VE. With students taking classes at home and a constant flow of negative news from the media about the ongoing pandemic, it may be difficult for teachers to produce inspiration and give students motivation to try their best, especially in a language that they have been studying for over a decade already. By entering my students into the program, which had some overlapping themes to the textbook that they were using in the discussion class, I believe that this elevated motivation and piqued students' interest in the module. This quasi-recreational language usage would concur with Ellis (2014, p.42), who argues that one of the most important principles any teacher should take into consideration is to allow students to engage in "language play" and to form an "emotional identification with the target language". Overall, student participation in the project was active, and most students did more than what was required of them to earn participation points in their score, suggesting that the platform went beyond studying and served as a place where students could make authentic connections and express themselves during a time of great hardship.

Teachers who enter their students into VE programs must devise a means to provide students for what Sauro & Chapelle (2017) refer to as 'langua-technocultural competence', which is where linguistic and cultural abilities collide via VE platforms. Since no two VE platforms are the same and all interactions between users are unique, teachers must be ready to support students and scaffold their interaction to make it meaningful. I would concur and suggest that teachers are obligated to offer students pedagogical guidance, yet that they should also consider taking a step back to give students the freedom to allow their language skills to grow organically in the VE setting, without too much pressure of evaluation.

In the gloom of the pandemic, it has become necessary for teachers to find contemporary ways to enliven their classes. Implementing VE could be a way in which they can attain the goals of language retention, practice and cross-cultural interaction. From the findings of this study, it could be argued that IVE was a useful tool and is a project that will continue to grow organically in the age of information.

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Classroom Management and Teacher Practice: Considerations Following the First Year of a Remote e-Learning Course

Joshua Rappeneker, Satchie Haga

Abstract

This study examines student feedback and discusses the implications of classroom management practices on a newly developed e-Learning course at a private university in Japan. The course was initially intended to be taught in a blended style: students would engage in autonomous language study online whilst also attending in-person group lessons on campus. With the advent of COVID-19, however, and the concomitant restrictions of on-campus activities, the course was rapidly modified to allow students to take the group lessons online. Student feedback on the course was collected via an online questionnaire given to the students in the final week of the semester. This paper reports on one component of the questionnaire: student feedback regarding possible improvements to classroom management. The results show a positive attitude towards the course in general; however, there were five key areas in which students suggested improvements: explanations, speaking time, group work, task time and teacher attention. Pedagogical implications and recommendations are discussed.

Keywords: computer-assisted language learning, blended learning, remote learning

Introduction

In the spring of 2020, Rikkyo University replaced its existing e-Learning course with a newly designed programme. The previous course design required students to attend class in a computer lab once a week for 14 weeks, using the e-Learning software provided by the university. The teachers' main task in the classroom was to help troubleshoot any problems the students had in using the software. Whilst students were physically present in the classroom, they were entirely responsible for their own learning.

The new course was designed to give students further autonomy whilst also providing them with motivation and opportunities to use the language they were studying. Instead of meeting in the classroom for all 14 weeks to study on a computer, students were now expected to study outside of the classroom using commercial software on their own devices and attend three group lessons in the classroom in which they would learn business English and practice the grammar and vocabulary they had studied online.

The course objectives were as follows:

a. To help students develop a practical communication ability essential to effectively function in cross-cultural business contexts.
b. To help students become autonomous learners and establish good study habits via e-Learning (regular exposure to the English language).
c. To help students improve their TOEIC scores.
(Mishima, Rappeneker, Farmer, Machi & Paxton, 2020, p. 7)

In order to achieve these objectives, students were expected to:

1) Complete 40 e-Learning lessons, and spend a minimum of 15 hours using the software
2) Complete a diagnostic test and three practice TOEIC tests
3) Attend the three group lessons and finish whatever homework the teacher assigns

4) Attend the first and final classes of the semester for orientation and review respectively

Almost every first-year student in Rikkyo University was required to take this course. The majority of English teachers in the Center for Foreign Language Education and Research taught the course for the first time in Spring 2020.

Background

The rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in Japan in early 2020 meant that the university policies regarding on-campus activities changed significantly. Many classes were now to be conducted entirely online. This semester was also shortened from 14 weeks to 12 weeks. Furthermore, teachers had to learn how to use new tools, such as Zoom and Blackboard.

Within this context, the syllabus and course requirements for e-learning needed to be modified. Instead of 40 lessons, students were now expected to complete only 30 lessons. Instead of 15 hours of study on the software, students now needed to study on it for 12 hours. Further, the example group lessons were modified to work online. Finally, e-Learning classes typically have over 100 students and the original 4-group plan would have around 25 students in each group, similar to other communication classes; however, with the reduction in weeks, the same class size was split into 3 groups of students instead of 4. This meant that each group was slightly larger than had been previously planned.

These changes to the syllabus and course expectations were relayed to teachers at the faculty development conference. However, it seems likely that many teachers were overwhelmed by the abundant changes occurring to all their courses. It is within this context that the course was conducted, and the data collected.

Data collection

Data were collected from 3673 e-Learning students via an online questionnaire conducted in the last lesson of the 2020 spring semester. All but 9 of the respondents were first year students (99%, n = 3664). The survey was emailed to each teacher of the course, who then asked their students to complete it in the last class. All respondents consented to have their data collected.

The survey was conducted in Japanese, and the vast majority (99.9%) of written responses was also in Japanese. The survey contained 17 questions:

1) The name of the respondent's teacher (this datum was ignored during the study)
2) Four Likert scale questions regarding student attitudes towards the software
3) Two Likert scale questions about the respondent's effort level and autonomous learning
4) A question asking on which devices respondents used the software
5) Seven Likert scale questions regarding attitudes towards the course and its effectiveness.
6) Two open ended questions asking which aspects of the course were useful, and which could be improved.
7) Each of the Likert scale questions were statements with the following five options to choose from: 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree, and 5) strongly agree.

A complete analysis of the survey is beyond the scope of this paper. The purpose of this article is to examine findings that emerged from student responses to question 17 of the survey which asked "このコースのどのような点を改善した方がよいと思いますか。" ["What aspects of this course do you think could be improved?"] As such, the method for data analysis introduced in the

following section will only detail procedures used for that one question.

Data analysis

Of the 3674 responses to the questionnaire, 1546 contained a suggestion for improvement. Each suggestion was translated into English initially via machine learning tools (DeepL) and followed by manual correction of poor translations. Each suggestion was then given a descriptive category. Using a constant comparison method of iterative analysis of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) After An inductive analysis of the various categories, the suggestions were finally coded into 6 major themes

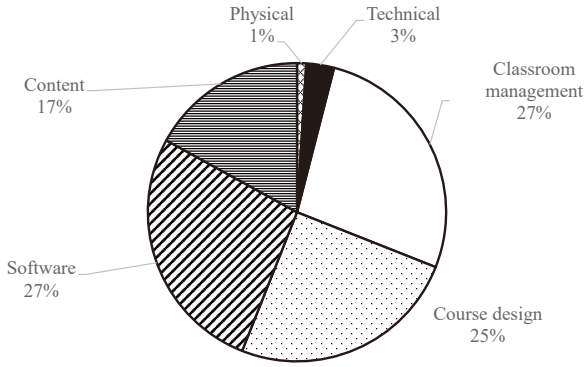
Table 1
Code descriptions.

Variable	Definition	Representative examples
Classroom management	Responses regarding the way the teacher runs the classroom. (e.g., how students are interacted with, how groups are assigned and how much spent on tasks in class.)	授業内でブレイクアウトルームでペアワークに取り組む機会があったが、そこに至るまでの一人用の課題が多く、ペアワークまでたどり着かない場合が多かった。なので、授業内課題の量を減らすか、課題にあてる時間を増やしてほしい。[There was an opportunity to work in pairs in the breakout rooms in the class, but there were many tasks for one person to get to that point, and there were many cases where the students did not get to work in pairs. Therefore, I would like to see a reduction in the amount of in-class assignments or more time allocated to them.]
Software	Responses regarding the e-Learning software.	自分の苦手な文法のレッスンを選んで学習できるわけではないので、そこを改善すべきではないかと思う。[You can't pick and choose which grammar lessons you are weak in, so I think that should be improved.]
Course design	Responses regarding the syllabus, or how the course is run over the semester.	Really English についてですが、オンライン上でカンニングなどは難しいと思いますし、むしろ調べている方が時間がかかると思うので12時間というノルマは必要ないと感じました。TOEICは素早く解かなくてはならないので時間をかけるよりレッスン数で判断した方が良いのではと。[As for Really English, I think it is difficult to cheat online and I think it is more time consuming to look it up; thus, I felt the quota of 12 hours not necessary. I think it's better to judge by the number of lessons rather than the time.]
Content	Responses regarding the appropriateness and difficulty level of the content presented via the e-Learning software, and in group lessons.	もう少しTOEICで点数をとるコツを知りたかったです。[I wanted to know more about how to get a good score on TOEIC.]
Physical	Responses regarding the physical impact of online learning.	課題をやるときに、パソコンやスマホを見ている時間が長いので、目や肩がとても疲れました。[My eyes and shoulders were very tired because I spent a lot of time looking at my computer and phone when doing my assignments.]
Technical	Responses regarding technical issues the students experienced with online learning platform (e.g., with internet connections, problems with Zoom, the student portal).	チャットに文字を打つのが大変である点。[The fact that it is difficult to type text into the chat.]

students suggested for improvement, with 36 subcategories. Definitions and examples of each major theme can be found in Table 1.

Figure 1

Students' suggestions for improvement



Note. This graph depicts the breakdown of the 1546 responses to this question.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the two most common aspects of the course that students felt could

Table 2

Classroom management code descriptions

Variable	Definition	Representative Examples
Explanations	Regarding explanations and instruction language.	重要なところは日本語で話していただくか、あるいはチャットに書き込んでくれると助かります。[It would be helpful if you could speak the important parts in Japanese or write them in the chat.]
Speaking time	Responses regarding time spent on inter-student communication in breakout rooms.	もう少し、ブレイクアウトルームの時間があればお互い確認が取れて安心すると思いました。[I thought it would have been reassuring to have a little more time in the breakout room to check in with each other.]
Group work	Responses regarding issues completing tasks in breakout rooms.	グループワークがやりにくい。[Group work is difficult to do.]
Task time	Responses regarding the amount of time allocated to tasks.	授業内で扱う予定の資料が多く、目を通しきれないことがあったので、資料は授業内で取り扱える範囲にしてほしい。また、課題は授業内に提出すべきなのか、その日に提出すればよいのか、授業時間内に提出すれば加点なのか、という基準を明確に示してほしい。[There are many materials that are scheduled to be covered in class, and there were times when I was unable to read them. Thus, I would like the materials to be limited to what can be covered in class. Also, I would like to see a clear standard for whether assignments should be submitted in class, on the day of the class, or during class time.]
Teacher attention	Responses to teacher feedback or direct one-on-one interaction from the teacher.	大人数の生徒を1人先生が受け持っているという負担は十分承知しているが、グループレッスンで提出した課題のフィードバックを少しでもいただけたら、次の学習につながるのではないかと思った。[I am fully aware of the burden of one teacher taking on a large group of students, but I thought that if I could get a little feedback on the assignments I submitted in the group lessons, it would help me learn better the next time.]

be improved were classroom management (approximately 27%) and the e-Learning software itself (approximately 27%), followed closely by the overall course design. The focus of this report is to examine deeply the responses related to one theme that emerged from the coding—Classroom Management.

We focused this report on the findings related to classroom management for two reasons. First, this was the issue that students reported on the most. Second, although software issues were also highly commented upon, as teachers, we have limited ability to mediate technological issues. Thus, we felt that a deeper analysis of the issues related to teachers' classroom management would help others mediate their experience in teaching the course as we have more ability to control our practices than the technology being used.

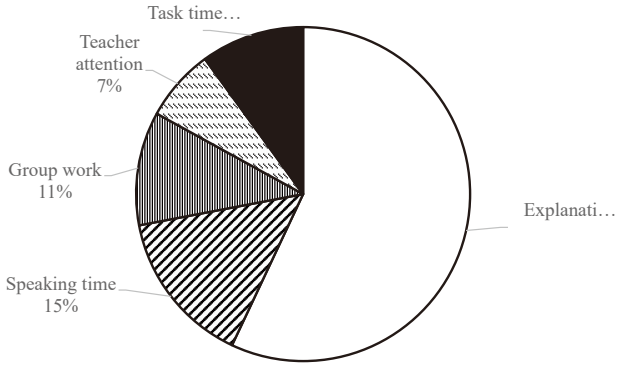
The coding procedure for this theme consisted of broadly summarising the primary concern of each suggestion (Table 2).

Findings

This section introduces the findings regarding student suggestions for improved classroom management. Following this report, a discussion about the practical implications and future considerations will be examined.

Figure 2

Student suggestions for improvement of teacher classroom management.



Five themes emerged from the students' suggestions regarding classroom management:

1. Explanations: Simple instructions that are posted in writing and can be reviewed later

The most significant suggestion reported by students at 57% (n = 237) was related to having instructions or explanations that they could understand more easily. Some students struggled to understand the instructions and then, as a result could not do their assigned tasks. Also, students reported feeling unsure about their understanding of English instructions, for example, "英語だけで説明されるので、自分がやってることが正しいのか確認することができないので、日本語での説明が欲しいと感じました。" ["Since the explanation is given only in English, I couldn't confirm whether what I was doing was correct or not, so I felt that I wanted an explanation in Japanese."]

2. Speaking time: Regular opportunities for students to practise speaking English

The next most requested improvement, at 15% (n = 62), was a request for more speaking time. Some students felt the lessons were 'one sided': ("講師からの一方的な授業になっている点。" ["One-sided lessons from the instructor."], whilst others seemed to miss the opportunity to interact with peers ("もう少しほかの人と話す（意見交換、discussionなどをする）機会が欲しかった。" ["I wanted more opportunities to talk (exchange opinions, discuss, etc.) with other people."]). Thus, they indicated they didn't just want to listen to the teacher, but more opportunities to speak with others.

3. Scaffolded group work: Clear goals for group work, and regular monitoring of breakout rooms

Students also offered suggestions for improving the way that group work (in breakout rooms on Zoom) was handled (11%, n = 45). Some students felt difficulty in speaking up either due to the breakout group size or unfamiliarity with group members. For example, "初めて会う人とのオンライン上でのグループワークは少し難しかったです。" ["Working in a group online with people I've never met before was a bit challenging."], "人数が多かったので発言は緊張するなと感じました。" ["There were a lot of people, so I felt nervous about speaking up."]). Other students noted that very few, if any, participants in the group work sessions spoke at all ("沈黙の時間が長い" ["Long periods of silence."], "グループディスカッションが皆喋らず、ほぼ機能していなかった。" ["The group discussion was almost non-functional because no one spoke."]). Finally, several students felt that the goals for the group work were unclear ("もう少しグループワークの内容を分かりやすく説明してほしい。" ["I would like the teacher to explain the contents of the group work more clearly."], "グループワークのときにもう少し話す内容を明確にしてほしい。" ["I would like the teacher to clarify what we should talk about more during group work."]).

4. Task time: Sufficient time to complete tasks, considering the challenges of online learning

Approximately 10% of student suggestions (n = 43) were for more time to complete tasks, especially considering first year students' unfamiliarity with Blackboard, the university's main content management system ("授業内で終わらせなければならないタスクがあった時、真面目に取り組んでいるのにも関わらずブラックボードの掲示板のシステムが十分に理解できていなかったため完了できなかった。先生や友達に質問する時間もなかったので、よっぽど時間が余っていない限り授業時間を過ぎたらハイ終わり、というタスクは課してほしくなかった。" ["When I had a task that I had to complete in class, I couldn't complete it because I didn't understand the Blackboard board system well enough, even though I was working diligently. I didn't have time to ask questions to the teacher or my friends, so I didn't want them to assign me a task that I had to finish after class time unless I had a lot of extra time."]). More generally, students suggested that they be given more time to complete tasks in class, or less tasks overall. For example, "授業スピードが速くて、ワークシートが終わらない。" ["The class moves ahead so fast that I can't finish the worksheets."], "授業が早く、課題が追い付かない。" ["Classes are fast, and I can't keep up with my assignments."].

5. Teacher attention: Personal feedback from the teacher, individual attention during class

Overall, 7% of students (n = 27) felt a lack of attention from the teacher during class, and whilst

the difficulty of individual attention in a large class was recognised, students still felt as though they could benefit from more teacher interaction (“人数が多いということもあるが、一人一人の様子とかをもう少し気にかけて欲しかったです。” [“There were a lot of people, but I would have liked them to pay a little more attention to how each person was doing.”], “授業に対する生徒の量が多いのでひとりひとりへの対応は少ないのかなと感じた。” [“I felt that the number of students in the class was too large and that there was not enough support for each student.”]). Additionally, students desired feedback on classwork they had completed. Teachers graded classwork on Blackboard, but in some cases, they did not offer feedback (“課題の欠点をコメントして欲しい。” [“I want the teacher to comment on the shortcomings of my assignments.”], “授業で行った課題について、満点でなかった場合どこが間違えだったのか知りたいと思いました。” [“If I didn’t get a perfect score on an assignment I did in class, I wanted to know what I did wrong.]”).

Discussion

1. Explanations & Requests for Japanese Instruction

The overwhelming majority of respondents were first-year students, with presumably little-to-no experience with online learning via Zoom or Blackboard. To help reduce the cognitive load that students in a new technological environment face, some basic steps could be taken:

- Teacher instructions given ‘live’ should also be available on the learning platform (e.g., Blackboard) for reference for the students. This allows students to reference instructions that they may not have correctly heard, and to look up unknown words. In large classes, such as e-Learning, this also allows students the option to correct their own misunderstandings without interrupting the flow of the class.
- Reiterating key points and instructions in Japanese may help students feel more confident about their own understanding of the instructions and should be considered an option for classes that require it.

2. Speaking Time

Giving students regular opportunities to discuss the content of the online lectures allows students to confirm with peers that they have understood the assigned tasks. Additionally, in a course that mostly focuses on listening and reading skills, discussion allows students the opportunity to use their newly learnt language in practical ways. To achieve this, teachers could do the following:

- Schedule brief but regular breakout rooms, giving students a speaking prompt and a short task to achieve every fifteen minutes or so.
- As students in the e-Learning course only meet for a third of the semester, designing in-class tasks that prioritise speaking opportunities and use language they are learning could be beneficial.

3. Group Work

Orchestrating online group work can be convoluted in the best of circumstances. At the start of the 2020 academic year, when most students and teachers had little experience with online learning, it was particularly difficult. With that in mind, here are some suggestions to streamline the process:

- Provide students with language to facilitate turn taking
- Endeavour to check on each breakout room at least once per lesson, making sure to encourage speaking and checking for potential issue causing behaviour (e.g., students leaving both cameras and microphones off)
- After group work, ask students to report their breakout room partners' answers, to provide motivation for speaking during group work
- Start classes with group-based ice breaking activities designed to reduce breakout room speaking reticence
- Show students how to call you for help
- Show students how to view all group members on one screen (gallery view)

4. Task Time

As with group work above, a lack of online teaching experience meant that teachers were less able to accurately gauge the potential length of in class tasks. Even with experience, planning out activities for online classes can be problematic. The following suggestions may prove helpful in doing so:

- Allow students to complete tasks outside of class time without penalty
- Use shared collaborative documents where you can see their progress or Zoom's reaction or polls features to determine when students have completed tasks and adjust the workload appropriately
- Plan your classes flexibly, allowing for certain tasks to be omitted if time does not permit
- Plan for unexpected interruptions due to technical issues

5. Teacher Attention

e-Learning classes typically have over 100 students enrolled students, with weekly group lessons of more than 30 students. It can be challenging for teachers to continuously grade and give feedback to in-class assignments. However, students desire interaction with their teachers, especially when they are given less than perfect grades for an assignment. Some possible methods to achieve this are as follows:

- Use Blackboard's built-in rubric system to quickly grade and give feedback to students.
- Reserve a portion of time at the end of online classes for questions from the students. This allows students who want specific feedback a time they know they can speak to you.
- Encourage student questions via chat, and provide example language for asking questions (e.g., "What does 'X' mean?", "Can you explain the task again please?")
- Use online questionnaires such as Google Forms to allow students to ask questions anonymously
- While students are doing group work quickly go into each group and ask them if they understand the task and encourage them to ask any questions.

Conclusion

This study provides a detailed analysis of one finding that emerged as part of a larger survey of student evaluations of a newly developed blended e-Learning course. The findings indicate that

students' e-Learning experience could be improved with enhanced attention to five areas of classroom management: clear explanations they could reference after class, ample speaking opportunities, scaffolded group interaction, more consideration of the task in relation to the students' contextual challenges, and enhanced opportunities for teacher-student interaction that enables individual feedback and for students to ask questions. In addition, this paper suggests a variety of strategies to mitigate the issues raised. Considering the relative dearth of online teaching experience at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a future study could follow up and examine what, if any, changes in online student experiences have occurred in the last two years.

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Students' Perceptions of Reading Circles in the EFL Classroom

Kathryn Mabe

Abstract

Reading circles require students to engage in peer-led discussions on a chosen text. A key element of reading circles is that the learners read the text and prepare for the discussion from the point of view of an assigned role (Daniels, 2002). Reading circles can motivate students to read and participate in discussions (Elhess and Egbert, 2015) and furthermore, encourage cooperation and peer learning in the classroom (Maher, 2018). Four classes taking an English Reading & Writing Course (RW1) participated in reading circles on three occasions and provided feedback in a questionnaire administered at the end of the semester. This study explores the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing reading circles based on the feedback from 68 students, and the instructor's own observations of the procedure. Suggestions regarding the implementation of reading circles are also proposed.

Keywords: reading circles, literature circles, discussion, extensive reading

Introduction

First-year students at Rikkyo University taking the mandatory RW1 course in the spring semester are required to read extensively in their own time. Since April 2020, this course has been conducted entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Classes of approximately 20 students are held once a week. One of the goals of the 14-week long course is to "develop reading fluency and vocabulary knowledge through reading graded readers" (English Reading & Writing Committee, 2021). Students typically demonstrate their reading by writing brief book reports or summaries, participating in class discussions or giving short presentations, with instructors having relative autonomy as to how these activities are conducted. This research explores a possible alternative method of fulfilling this part of the course through the use of reading circles.

Literature Review

Reading circles, also known as literature circles, were introduced in the United States in the 1990s in L1 literature lessons at primary and secondary schools. Based on the concept of book clubs, they were created in an attempt to engage students' interest in reading (Daniels, 2002). Daniels describes how youngsters "shared responses with their peers, listening respectfully to one another, sometimes disagreeing vehemently, but dug back into the text to settle arguments or validate different opinions" (p.1). According to Daniels' initial guidelines, students make a consensual decision about what they want to read in various groups, and each student takes notes according to a certain role to contribute to the frequent peer-led discussions with the instructor serving as a facilitator.

As the popularity of reading circles grew, the benefits of their usage in ESL classrooms were also widely investigated. Elhess and Egbert describe how the interactive nature of the discussions engages and motivates students (2015). A key element of reading circles is the students' individual assigned roles. Maher highlights the value of their use in terms of collective learning, "the collaborative nature of role-work allows the students to scaffold what they don't know, into what they

collectively learn with their peers" (2018, p.104). In addition, reading the text from the point of view of one role helps to break down various strategies needed for successful reading into manageable parts for second language learners (Furr, 2007).

Various adaptations of the roles in reading circles have been suggested over the years. However, research by Furr is considered to be influential in a Japanese university teaching context (2004, 2007). Furr clearly outlined five basic roles and prepared role sheet handouts (2007). These roles are the discussion leader, summarizer, connector, word master and passage person. The discussion leader is responsible for keeping the discussion flowing and acts as a facilitator in the group. The summarizer uses their own words to give a brief summary of the plot. The connector tries to establish connections between the text and the actual world, such as between characters or events and their own lives or the environment around them. The word master chooses five words or short phrases that they feel are the most crucial to the text and explains their meaning. The passage person selects important, interesting, or puzzling passages from the text and asks the group to share opinions about them.

As reading circles were initially conceptualized for usage in L1 literature classes, discussion has also focused on selecting suitable texts for ESL lessons. Furr adapted the initial procedure suggested by Daniels with ESL reading circles in Japanese universities, proposing that the instructor rather than the students selects the text, which could be a graded reader rather than an original text, to ensure it is acceptable for students (2004). Shelton-Strong also recommends using graded readers in reading circles as they can be read easily (2012).

Design and Procedure

This section will explain the rationale behind the version of reading circles I used in this study and explain the procedure for instructors who are interested in incorporating reading circles into their own lessons. It also includes my personal reflections on the procedure. The following table shows the schedule for the implementation of reading circles.

In order to assimilate reading circles into the pre-existing course requirements, I made a number of deviations from previous research. I chose to use only four roles in the reading circles

Table 1
Class Schedule for Reading Circles

Lesson 1	Course orientation. Students took the Macmillan Readers online level test for homework and informed me of the result through a Google form. I made groups according to the levels.
Lesson 2	(1) An input session introduced the concept of reading circles, the roles and assessment procedure. PowerPoint slides were used as explanation and shared with students for their independent reference. (Please see the Appendix). (2) Following the explanation, students met their groups in Breakout Rooms on Zoom, chose a graded reader at the correct level from Macmillan readers online library and decided the roles. (3) Students read the text out of class, completed their role sheet (a Google form) and submitted it by week 5.
Lesson 5	Reading Circle 1. Students discussed the book in a reading circle in Breakout rooms on Zoom. They also decided the next book/different roles for Reading Circle 2. I acted as a facilitator and provided feedback at the end on discussions and shared good examples from Google forms.
Lesson 8	Reading Circle 2.
Lesson 12	Reading Circle 3. Students were invited to fill out a voluntary, anonymous feedback survey using Google forms at the end of the lesson.

rather than the five suggested by Furr (2007). As extensive reading is only one of many aims on the RW1 course, I needed to simplify the reading circle procedure to reduce the potential burden on students. In addition, fostering discussion skills is not an aim of this course. Therefore, I ensured that the emphasis remained on improving reading abilities. I selected the roles (discussion leader, connector, word master, and summarizer) as I felt they would be effective even if the students were reading a low-level graded reader. The explanation of the roles was based on Furr's role sheets as described in the literature review in a simplified manner (2007). They can be seen in the Appendix.

Furr recommends that all groups read the same book selected by the instructor, proposing that it makes post-reading extension activities easier to be implemented (2007). On a different type of course, I believe this would be effective. However, after consideration of the differentiation in students' reading ability levels and limitations on the online availability of graded readers, I opted for each group to select a reader by themselves according to their level. This also meant that it was not feasible to follow Furr's suggestion of temporary groups as it would be too complicated to reform into new reading circles and then find a new text that no member had previously read (2007).

In his study, Furr describes the optimum number of group members as about five or six (2007). As I was using four roles, the ideal number of students in each group in my lessons would be four. However, it was not possible for me to control the number of members in each group to this extent as the students had to be grouped according to the result of the Macmillan reading level test that they took online. Generally, six to eight pupils in a class were classified as pre-intermediate and intermediate, with a few members classified as elementary level or upper intermediate. However, with a little flexibility regarding the number of roles within each group, this did not pose any serious difficulties. After forming the groups, there were six groups consisting of the ideal number of four members. Eleven groups had three members; in this scenario, the discussion leader's mandatory role was fixed; however, there was a probability of either a connector, summarizer or word master to be removed from each reading circle. Two groups had five members. I asked these groups to elect two discussion leaders for each reading circle. There was one upper-intermediate reading level group with only two members who chose to remain together rather than moving to a lower-level group. Two groups initially assigned as four and three member groups became a six-member circle as one student from the group of three withdrew from the university. I based this decision on individual dynamics within the pre-existing reading circles.

Students were required to submit a Google form with the notes they made for their individual role before each of the three reading circles and these were used as the formal assessment of this section of the course. Even within a regular, face-to-face classroom environment, I believe that monitoring all groups simultaneously and effectively evaluating each individual contribution would be unfeasible. In each class, there were approximately five or six groups simultaneously holding reading circles in Breakout Rooms.

A summary of the process of a typical reading circle in my classes and informal notes taken from my observation of an initial reading circle are presented below, followed by my overall reflections of the procedure.

The essence of reading circles is that they are peer-led while the teacher monitors the procedure and intervenes only when absolutely necessary (Daniels, 2002). In the first reading circle, one or two groups in each class needed encouragement from me to begin answering the discussion leaders' questions. However, in subsequent lessons, the reading circles were largely managed effectively by the group members without my intervention. Overall, my impression was that students, in general, greatly enjoyed the opportunity to discuss and share ideas in small groups. I believe that this was a

Table 2

Summary of Reading Circle Process

Approximate time frame	Description of activity in the reading circle process
10 minutes	The discussion leader asks the group their pre-prepared questions and facilitates the discussion, encouraging reticent students to speak.
5-8 minutes	The connector explains how they thought the book connected to their own life or the world around them. Depending on the group, members comment and share their own thoughts.
5-8 minutes	The word master shares five words or phrases from the book that they thought were important or difficult. They explain why they thought they were important and teach their group the meaning. Depending on the group, members comment and share their own thoughts.
2 minutes	The summarizer summarizes the book in about one minute.
10 minutes	Students choose the next book and assign new roles. In some groups, this stage was done out of class through the LINE groups they formed.
3 minutes	I share good examples from Google forms and student discussions in the main Zoom session.

Table 3

Informal Observation Notes from May 13th, 2021

One group using a lot of Japanese. Silence after discussion leader asked a question.
A couple of very effective connectors. In one group of all female students, members very active and able to relate the story (about a romance) to their own lives, “would you like a boyfriend like X?”. By the end, they were sharing boyfriend stories and having a laugh in English.
Helping each other to understand, for example “what is holy bread?” and the vocabulary master explains.
Summarizer role seems difficult as we have not studied summarizing in depth yet.
The discussion leader part seemed the most effective in terms of creating an active reading circle environment. The majority of discussion was prompted by the discussion leader.
Word master and summarizer do not seem to hold very communicative roles and do not generate much discussion.
Some groups could continue for much longer than set time, other discussions dried up before the set time.

vital opportunity for students to communicate, especially because most of the spring semester was held exclusively online, limiting students’ opportunities to interact with their peers. A key element of reading circles is having fun. According to Furr, “a spirit of playfulness and fun pervades the room” (2007, p.17).

In terms of the use of role sheets, my perception was that these were effective in encouraging students to actively participate and cooperate together to understand various elements of the book. I observed in particular that the role sheets seemed to benefit students of a lower level of ability or those more reticent to participate in reading circles in as the content was prepared in advance.

One challenging issue for an instructor was the varying lengths of discussion within the reading circles. This was partly due to the varying group sizes in this study and also factors such as individual motivation and group dynamics. Groups that finished before the allotted time often needed my assistance to prompt additional discussion. Other groups appeared to be able and willing to engage in in-depth discussions for much longer than the set time. Overall, however, as discussion skills do not form part of this course’s aims, I believe the time I allocated, i.e., approximately 30 minutes per reading circle, was appropriate.

Methodology

Participants

All four RW1 classes involved in the study were first years at Rikkyo University and on Level 2 courses (TOIEC scores above 480). A total of 75 students took part in the reading circles from four colleges; Arts, Sociology, Contemporary Psychology and Tourism in the spring semester, 2021.

Instruments

An anonymous Google form, written in both Japanese and English, was used to collect responses, which could be written in either language. Responses that were written in Japanese were translated by the author. Information about the research was written in both languages and explained verbally by the instructor. A total of 68 responses were received. Students were asked for their feedback regarding reading circles for the following areas:

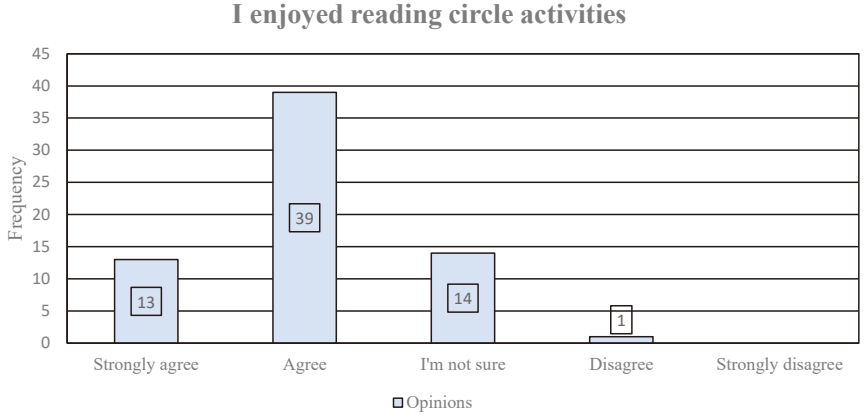
- how much they enjoyed them
- if they felt their reading skills improved through participating in them
- whether or not the roles helped them when reading the book
- which roles they liked or disliked
- if they felt reading circles helped them to improve any skills other than reading.

Findings and Discussion

Prompts 1 and 2

Students were asked how much they had enjoyed the reading circles and to give reasons for their answers.

Figure 1
Participants' Responses to Prompt 1



A total of 67 students answered this question. Over three quarters of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that reading circles were enjoyable. Most of the remaining students stated that they were not sure, with just one student disagreeing. Sixty-four students provided reasons for their

answers (prompt 2). The reasons given by those who enjoyed reading circles primarily fell into three categories; enjoyment due to social reasons, pleasure gained from the material being interesting and in English, and enjoyment of the discussions. Below is a selection of student comments:

- *Because I read English book[s] in earnest for the first time.*
- *I needed a lot of time to read stories, but I like to read stories and it was fun to share opinions with friends. Also, I could make friends through this activity.*
- *These activities w[e]re [a]good chance to read some books in English. I got new thing[s] about old stor[ies] and life in foreign countr[ies], and it was very interesting for me.*
- *I can enjoy talking with our group members. The talking was exciting and the time is not enough!*
- *Because I can be friend[s] with my team members.*

The comments appear to support my own observations that reading circles were not only valuable from a pedagogical viewpoint but also formed an important chance for students to communicate with their classmates, in addition to some students benefitting from longer discussion time. Reasons provided by students who did not feel positive about reading circles centered mainly on the reason of reading in English being difficult and a time-consuming activity:

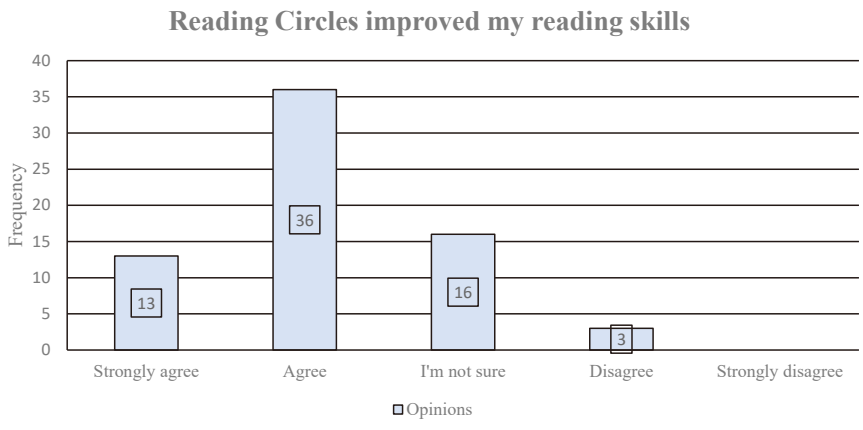
- *For me, it's [to]o hard to read long sentence[s] in English.*
- *I need explanation sometimes.*
- *The number of words was too much.*
- *I enjoyed sharing my opinion with group members, but it was hard to find time to read books.*

These comments are pertinent as in my view; the RW1 course has a fairly heavy workload in terms of assignments. Reading circles could place an additional burden on weaker students and the emphasis on them being peer-led may be less effective for students who prefer more teacher-centered instruction.

Prompt 3 and 4

Respondents were asked to what degree and how they felt reading circles improved their reading skills.

Figure 2
Participants' Responses to Prompt 3



Of the 68 respondents, 49 agreed that reading circles improved their reading skills to a certain degree, 16 were unsure, and 3 perceived the activity as not improving their reading skills. Sixty-two

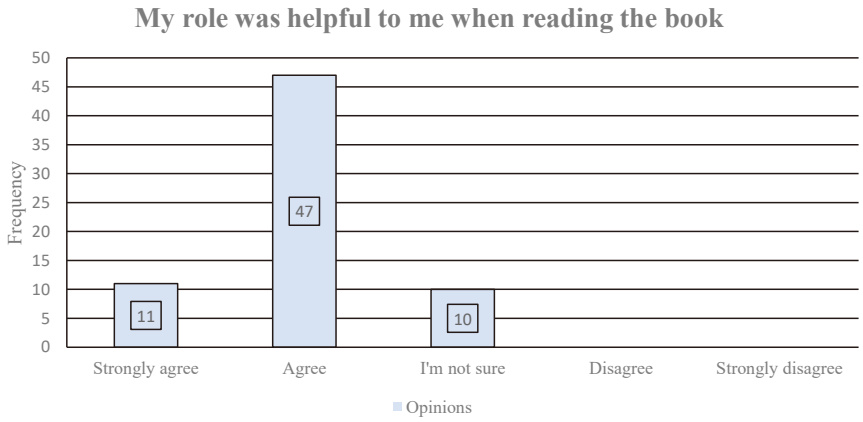
responses were recorded for prompt 4; however, some students misunderstood the question. Therefore, those answers were not included in this report. Fifteen of the comments received pertained to a perceived improvement in reading speed. Nine students felt it improved their vocabulary. From these positive comments, it can be deduced that students felt the act of reading graded readers improved their reading skills. However, no student mentioned the reading circles themselves as beneficial in terms of aspects discussed in the literature review, such as learning from peers. Therefore, it is difficult to confirm that the reading circles themselves were of value in this aspect. Only a few comments were received from students who did not feel reading circles improved their reading skills and these focused on the difficulty level of the task. A section of the student responses is listed below:

- *These books have some difficult words, so it improve[d] my vocabulary skills and helped me infer their meaning.*
- *I honestly didn't read everything but I read by skimming. This helped me to read faster.*
- *When I understood the gist of the story, it was interesting but because there were a lot of characters, I was often confused.*
- *The story was interesting but because it takes time, it was a heavy burden.*

Prompts 5 and 6

Respondents were asked to what degree they perceived their role as helpful whilst reading and for reasons to explain their answer.

Figure 3
Participants' Responses to Prompt 5



The responses to this prompt provided the clearest evidence in the survey; 58 of the 68 respondents felt the role was helpful to some degree, while the remaining students stated that they were unsure of the role's value. This data supports both my own observations of the value of the roles detailed previously in this report and the findings of previous research described in the literature review. Students felt that having a role helped them concentrate on the book, gave them a purpose to read and helped them to personalize the story and interact with it. However, one student felt that the role placed an additional burden on them.

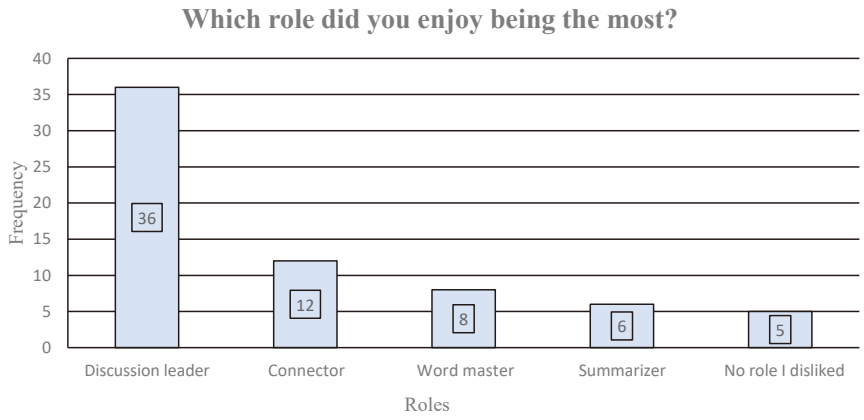
- *I could think the story as my thing.*
- *[I] co[u]ld make target when [I] read*

- *We have to focus on the books, not just reading.*
- *These roles helped us not only read the story smoothly but also have my own opinions and ideas about the story. For example, connector should think about the similar parts of our lives and express it in English. And also, discussion readers pay attention to find the important points, which can improve our reading skills.*
- *While reading the story, I was aware of my rol[e] and thinking about it. So[,] it is useful to think deeply.*
- *The story in English is not easy to understand. So[,] I [couldn't] afford to think about my role.*

Prompts 7 and 8

Students were asked which role they preferred and why.

Figure 4
Participants' Responses to Prompt 7



The most popular role was discussion leader, chosen by 36 of the 67 respondents. The connector the second favored role, was selected by 12 respondents. From the reasons provided in prompt 8, it appears that as highlighted by Daniels, reading circles can serve as a book club where readers can enjoy sharing their ideas (2002). In addition, it appears that the roles encouraged some students to engage in critical thinking too.

A selection of the reasons given is listed below:

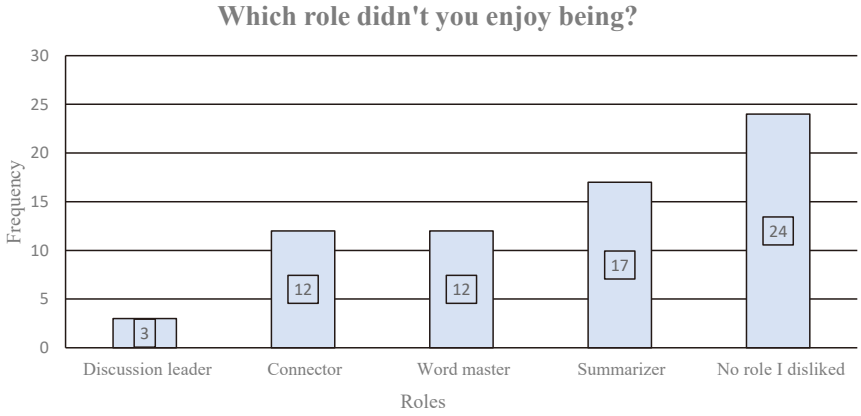
- *We can interpret books just like reading in Japanese, and it's interesting. (connector)*
- *Because I often do this in my mind but I have not told other people. (connector)*
- *Because I can share some idea about the book with friends. (discussion leader)*
- *It is because I can hear other's opinions and it is interesting and surprising. (discussion leader)*

Prompts 9 and 10

Respondents were asked which role they disliked and why.

Over a third of the 68 respondents reported that there was no role they disliked. A quarter of the students selected the summarizer and all of their explanations highlighted the difficulty of that role. Twelve respondents disliked being the connector or word master respectively. The data reflects my

Figure 5
Participants' Responses to Prompt 9



own perceptions of the summarizer role. During the course of observing the reading circles, I noted that this appeared to be the most difficult role for students. However, the skill of summarizing is a key component of the RW1 course, therefore I believe it was useful for students to focus upon this. Some of the comments from prompt 10 reveal the personal anxiety that certain roles caused. This was enlightening to me as I had been unaware of potential stress caused to the students by the roles.

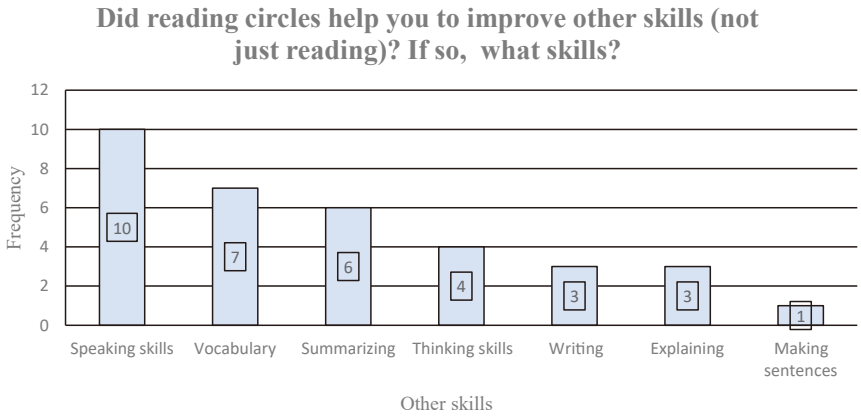
A selection of comments provided is shown below:

- *Because I couldn't concentrate on the book's content. (word master)*
- *I mind telling words which I thought difficult to other members because others maybe think those words [are] easy. (word master)*
- *I read a sad book so I couldn't connect to my life. [A]lso when I connect[,] I become sad. (connector)*
- *Because it is hard to summarize the story. (summarizer)*

Prompt 11

Students were asked if they felt other skills improved through reading circles and if so, which skills.

Figure 6
Participants' Responses to Prompt 11



Fifty responses were recorded. However, 16 of the respondents misunderstood the question, stating that their reading skills had improved, and therefore their answers were omitted from this prompt. The majority of respondents selected speaking abilities, which is not unexpected considering that reading circles are discussion-based. The fact that the students believed their vocabulary and summarizing abilities had improved matches my predictions for the possible advantages of the roles associated with those areas. Four students answered "thinking skills," defining this as being able to think more in English or to be able to empathize more with characters in the books. Even for a course such as this, which aims to develop reading and writing skills, I believe it is beneficial to students when other skills also are fostered during lessons. As Shelton-Strong comments, reading circles can provide "a collaborative, multi-dimensional learning platform" (p.222, 2012). Selected responses are listed below:

- *I found many words that I didn't know. My vocabulary was enriched.*
- *I think my skill to think in English [has] improved.*
- *Thinking skill. For example, read English book and think the character`s feelings.*
- *I could express what I want to say in English.*

Conclusion

Overall, based on the feedback received and my personal classroom observations, it can be concluded that using reading circles in class was valuable in various ways. In particular, it seems that the using roles while conducting an extensive reading program was beneficial in helping students to personalize the reading experience. Moreover, the majority of students reported that they enjoyed the procedure, which I believe is an important facet as it could encourage students to persevere with extensive reading. However, I would urge caution if using reading circles with students of a lower-level reading ability. The feedback reveals that reading circles could potentially place an additional burden on students who find reading in English difficult. The use of reading circles with lower-level classes is an area of further potential research.

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Appendix

Explanation of the roles in reading circles (lesson 2)/prompts for the Google forms

Reading Circle Roles

Discussion Leader

You need to make the discussion interesting and make sure everyone speaks.
Make at least six discussion questions. You can use some questions from pages 10 and 11 in Reading the Future if you want but you must also have your own questions too!

Summarizer

You need to make a short summary of the book. Only talk about the most important events/points/themes in the story.
Write your summary and try to keep it to about 1 minute in length.

Word Master

Find at least five words or phrases that you think are difficult in the story and IMPORTANT. (Words you didn't know the meaning of and had to check).
Teach your group the meaning and why you think these words/phrases are important

Connector

You need to think about how the story can be connected to your life or the world around you.
Think about things like:
-Something that happened in the story that is similar to something that happened to you
-Something that happened in the book that is similar to something in the news recently
- A character in the book similar to you or someone you know.
Talk for approximately 1 minute about it.

Debate Planning and Practice Using Argument Diagrams

Robert A. Smith

Abstract

Effective debate is predicated on the debaters' sound understanding of argumentation. When attempting to teach debate in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, students initially require instruction in the fundamental skills of argumentation and opportunities to practice those skills repeatedly. This article describes how Stephen Toulmin's model of argumentation and the argument diagrams derived from it could assist students in practicing essential debate skills such as argument creation, argument comprehension and argument analysis. The practice activities are designed to fit into a task-based language teaching (TLBT) framework and reference cognitive theory. Practicing the basic concepts of argumentation using this diagram technique may provide EFL students with a simple, flexible and easily repeatable method for acquiring debate skills. Teachers and students could both benefit from applying some or all of these debate practice techniques in their debate classes.

Keywords: EFL, Debate, Argumentation, Skill acquisition, Task-based Language Teaching

Introduction

Debate can be a useful task to assign students in EFL classrooms as there is a strong focus on speaking and listening. Newman & Woolgar (2014) state that "…the point of [debate in a classroom environment] will be to develop the students' speaking and listening skills [but] can also be a useful teaching tool for delivering content and understanding across the curriculum" (p.7). Debate offers not only a communicative element, but also the opportunity for students to learn and think about unfamiliar content or re-think familiar content in a more deliberate and critical manner. The competitive nature of debate can also be a motivating factor that encourages students to be better communicators and better researchers. Debate is essentially "The process of inquiry and advocacy; the seeking of a reasoned judgement on a proposition" (Freely & Steinberg, 2008, p.2). This process is driven by argumentation, "…reason giving in communicative situations by people whose purpose is the justification of acts, beliefs, attitudes, and values" (Freely & Steinberg, 2008, p.5). In an academic debate, it is assumed that both debate teams have an equal understanding of what an argument is and how to justify arguments so that a reasoned judgement can be realised. To ensure a fair debate, all debaters should be able to recognise an argument as opposed to an opinion, construct (strong) arguments, analyse arguments and discover weaknesses in them, listen to and comprehend opposing arguments, and present their arguments and rebuttals in a comprehensible manner. The common element in all of these competencies is the knowledge of argumentation. Winning the debate is dependent on sound argumentation and both teams must feel confident in their ability to argue effectively. If the debating teams do not have an equal understanding of this basic concept, one team will have an unfair advantage over the other. However, many EFL students need substantial practice in argumentation before they will feel comfortable participating in a live academic debate. Language ability and confidence can also vary significantly from student to student so that one student may dominate a debate or do more work than is required in a team that is supposed to be cooperating equally. Practicing argumentation in a debate class is therefore beneficial because it raises awareness of the central concept of debate, ensures a fair debate, and can give students

confidence in their ability. To this end, Steven Toulmin's model of argumentation and specifically the diagrams in which he represents arguments presents itself as a convenient and useful pedagogical tool in EFL debate classes. Argument diagrams formalise the structure of reasoning behind each and every argument by separating and clarifying the essential elements. Existing arguments can be deconstructed into the diagram so that students can practice analysing logical (or illogical) connections between the elements of any argument. New arguments can be constructed by filling in empty diagrams with relevant information. Repeated practice of deconstruction, analysis, reconstruction, and construction of new arguments could provide the solid grounding in argumentation that may lead to more coherent arguments and improved language skills. There may also be the added benefit of students becoming better critical thinkers as many scholars recognise a close connection between proficiency in the skill of argumentation and the ability to think critically about a topic. (Diyanni; 2016 Egege; 2021 Freeley & Steinberg; 2008 Swatridge; 2014)

Literature Review

Freely and Steinberg (2008) highlight the significant cognitive load that is required for argument construction and analysis. According to Freely and Steinberg (2008), when preparing arguments for a debate, students must research issues, organise and analyse data, synthesize data, and evaluate the quality of information they find. They must also understand how to reason, recognise and critique different methods of reasoning and comprehend the logic of decision making. Subsequently, students must then acquire the skill of communicating their arguments with words and be able to process the arguments of others quickly. It is not surprising that, "The creation of an argument is one of the most complex cognitive acts students can engage in" (Freely & Steinberg, 2008, p.38). Teachers can utilise task-based language teaching methodology and cognitive theory to help students deal with this complexity. In task-based language teaching methodology, tasks should always involve a "pre-task" (Ellis, 2003) or a "facilitating task" (Willis & Willis, 2007). Essentially, this is a planning and preparation stage that enables students to become familiar with what the goals of the task are and how to accomplish the goals. This step also functions as a way "…to ease processing load and to push learners to interpret tasks in more demanding ways" (Ellis, 2003, p.249). Ellis also presents research-based evidence for a positive effect on fluency and complexity when strategic planning (planning completed before the commencement of the task itself) is employed (Ellis, 2003). A learning strategy specific to argumentation can also be beneficial to debate skill acquisition. "In L2 learning, task-relevant learning strategies increase the likelihood of task success [and] have a positive spill-over effect onto other task outcomes: affective judgements about the task, the language, and the self" (Oxford, 2017, p.72). Therefore, practicing argumentation using a strategic plan before doing a formal debate should reduce the cognitive load of the task and instil more confidence in students' ability to successfully complete the task. Argument mapping is conducive to use as a strategic plan for debate because the key elements of an argument can easily be distinguished and checked for reasoning and logic. This familiarizes students with the goals of a debate and makes successful completion of the debate more likely. Toulmin's model of argumentation (Toulmin, 1958), also known as "Toulmin's Argument Pattern," has been applied to academic English composition classes in the United States (Kneupper 1978; Karbach 1987) and in EFL writing classes in Japan (Oi, 2005). These writers concur that using the model results in improvements in the logical organisation and coherence of essay writing and note benefits for students and teachers. For example, Locker & Keene (1983) as cited in Karbach (1987) acknowledge the benefits for both teachers and students by

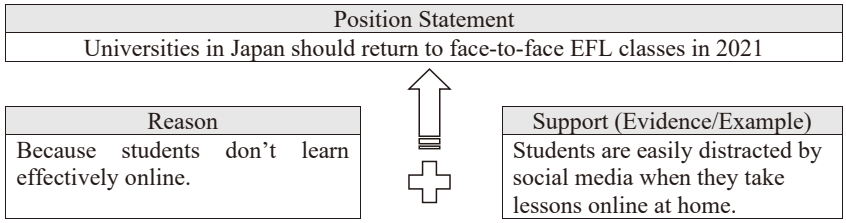
stating “Instructors can use this model to show students the faulty or inadequate logic in their writing, but best of all, students can use the model as a heuristic to check the logic in their own rough drafts” (Karbach, 1987, p.90-91). Although the studies mentioned above concern the teaching of writing, I believe that Toulmin’s model of argumentation can provide similar benefits when applied to the teaching of debate. Toulmin’s argument model consists of three main parts: claim, warrant and grounds. The “claim” is the thesis of an argument, the “warrant” is an assumption that links the claim to the grounds, and the “grounds” is the support/evidence for the claim. Toulmin also identified the “backing,” “qualifier,” “reservation,” and “rebuttal”. Of these, the “rebuttal” and the “qualifier” seem the most useful to debate practice activities. “Rebuttals” are possible objections to the claim, warrant, or grounds, and a “qualifier” is something that limits and restricts the range of a claim. In an EFL class, these terms may be difficult for students to remember so adapting some of them to those in the right column of the table below may be of some assistance.

Toulmin Terminology	Debate Class Terminology
Claim	Position Statement
Warrant	Reason
Grounds	Support (Evidence/Example)
Rebuttal	Rebuttal (But /However /Unless)
Qualifier	Point of view/Viewpoint

Using Toulmin’s diagrammatic style and the terminology for a debate class, an example argument for the proposition ‘Universities in Japan should return to face-to-face classes in 2021’ can be represented diagrammatically in the following way.

Figure 1

Example of a Completed Argument Diagram



Debate Practice

The style of argument diagram described above can be used to practice argumentation in a number of ways. I believe it is useful to use when practicing all elements of argument construction, analysis, note-taking, and presentation. In this section, I will describe how the diagrams could be used to practice each of these debate skills.

Practicing reasons and support (argument construction)

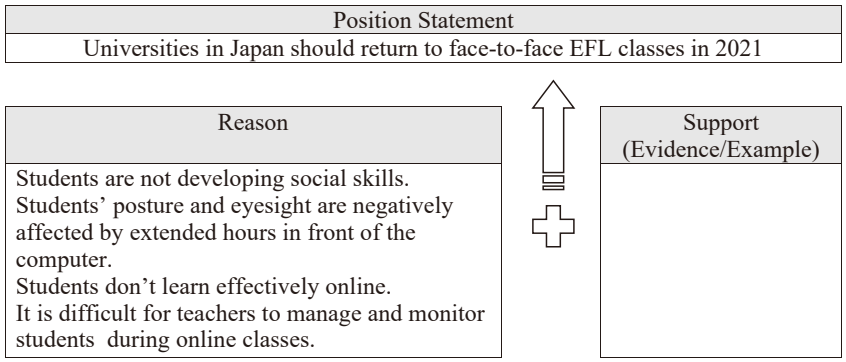
One way to practice reasons could be for the teacher to provide a list of supporting evidence and have students brainstorm one reason based on each support. This activity is limited in possible reasons that students could conceive of, however, it could be a useful alternative for lower-level

students.

Another more creative way (figure 2) for students to practice could be to give them a position statement and then have them brainstorm as many reasons connected to the position statement as they can think of.

Figure 2

Example of a Completed Argument Diagram Used for Practicing Reasons



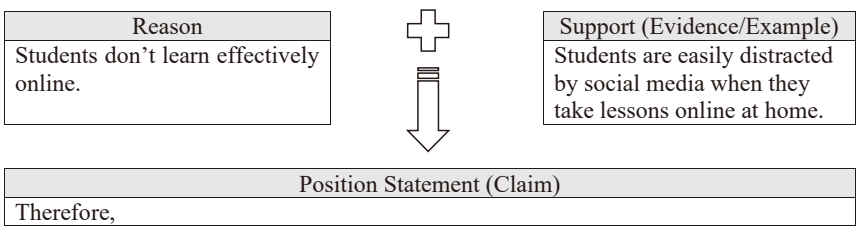
In order to practice support, students could then be asked to search the internet for relevant examples or evidence that matches the reasons they have brainstormed. Alternatively, the teacher could provide a diagram with a position statement and a reason in addition to providing a newspaper article or internet webpage relevant to the topic. Students would then be asked to search for supporting evidence or examples from the article/webpage and to complete their argument diagrams. A separate box or space for the source (author, year, etc.) could also be added to the diagram and practiced if deemed necessary.

Practicing position statements (argument construction)

The position statement is in fact the conclusion of the argument. If we take the argument we used in the diagram in the previous section, we can make this relationship clear by rearranging the three elements of the argument in the following manner, "Students are easily distracted by social media when they take lessons online at home so students don't learn effectively online. Therefore, universities should return to face-to-face EFL classes in the second semester of 2021." As a result of this relationship, students can practice developing position statements by being given reasons and support and then drawing a conclusion from them. For example, a student might be given a reason and support such as those in figure 3 and then be asked to complete a third sentence starting with "Therefore…" This conclusion, minus "Therefore", would be the position statement.

Figure 3

Example of an Argument Diagram Used for Practicing Position Statements

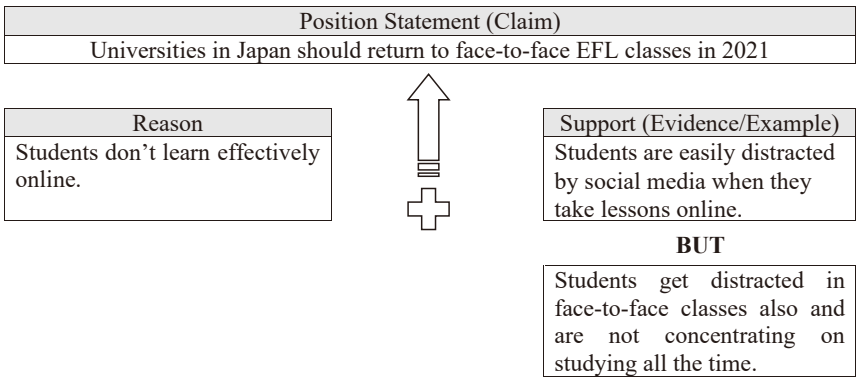


From the reason and support in figure 3, students could possibly deduce a position statement, such as "(Therefore) learning in the classroom is better than learning online." When creating and practicing position statements, students may find it helpful to include a viewpoint such as, "From a health/economic/safety point of view…". If not qualified in this manner, information that may otherwise be implicit becomes explicit. An example and reasons for this will be described in the next section on practicing rebuttals.

Practicing rebuttal (argument analysis)

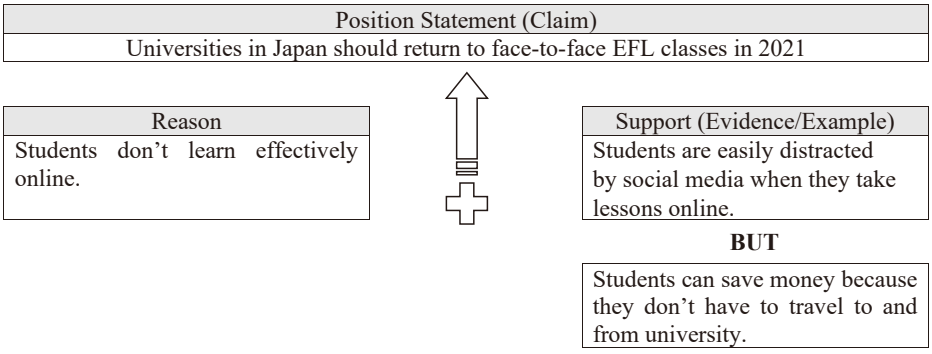
Students need to understand that it is necessary to look at all three parts of the argument when formulating a rebuttal and to attack the reason/claim connection and/or to attack the support if it is unreliable or untruthful. Rebuttals can be practiced by including another space to the three original spaces. This rebuttal space can be labelled something along the lines of "but", "however" or "unless". A completed rebuttal for the proposition "Universities in Japan should return to face-to-face EFL classes in 2021" can be represented diagrammatically in the following manner.

Figure 4
Example of a Completed Argument Diagram Including a Rebuttal



Students can practice analyzing and writing rebuttals to arguments by filling in a blank rebuttal field after reviewing the previous three elements. Completed arguments could be supplied by the teacher or students could utilize previously completed diagrams from their own practice of creating arguments. It is worthwhile spending quite a lot of time on practicing rebuttal as this skill is essential to debate and can easily be practiced in the wrong way. For example, consider the argument and rebuttal in figure 5.

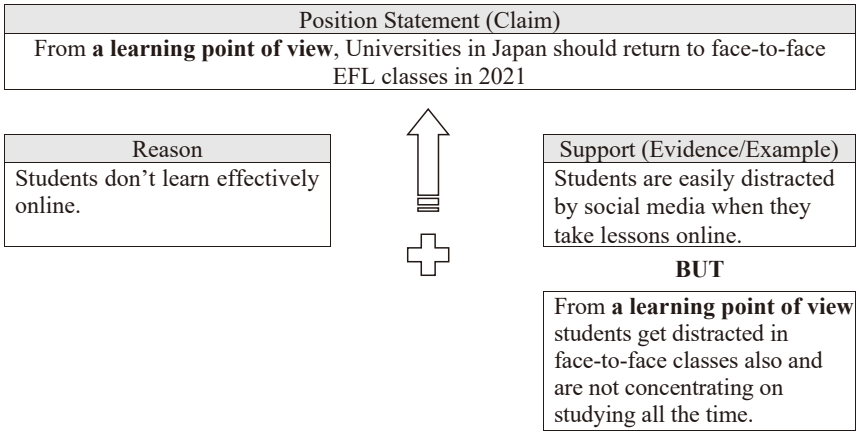
Figure 5
Example of a Completed Argument Diagram Including an Erroneous Rebuttal



When viewed simply as a rebuttal to the position statement, the rebuttal above seems to be satisfactory, however, the rebuttal does not address the reason of the argument and the implication that classroom learning is superior to online learning. The central idea of this argument concerns the effect on learning. In the above example, the cost of travelling to and from university is irrelevant to whether or not learning improves in an online or face-to-face environment. However, many students may falsely believe that "students can save money" is an effective rebuttal to "universities should return to face-to-face EFL classes." Using the diagram, teachers can easily exemplify such erroneous rebuttal suggestions and highlight inferences that may not be immediately clear to students. Moreover, adding a viewpoint can help students avoid such examples of weak argumentation. When formulating rebuttals, students should keep this viewpoint in mind and add it to the beginning of their rebuttal so that connections to the reasoning of the argument are explicit. Teachers can refer students back to this viewpoint if/when students provide vague or irrelevant rebuttals during practice. A completed rebuttal practice (including the revised position statement) would resemble that as represented in figure 6.

Figure 6

Example of a Completed Argument Diagram Including a Point of View



Qualifying the position statement can also make it easier to analyse and adjust rebuttals that might otherwise be weak. For example, by considering the viewpoint more closely the rebuttal in figure 5 could be changed to the following. "But (from a learning point of view) students don't have to spend time travelling to and from university and therefore should be able to get more sleep and be more alert when they are taking lessons online." The rebuttal now has a relevant connection to the effect of online classes on learning. Before a debate, students can perform this sort of analytical practice with their own arguments in an attempt to predict possible rebuttals and reinforce their own arguments.

Practice speaking/fluency (argument presentation)

The practice activities that I have described so far have a clear focus on thinking and writing down ideas. After having done some written argument practice, students also need opportunities to practice argumentation through speaking. Creating cards from argument diagrams can facilitate a variety of communicative interactions. As an initial starting point, (especially for lower-level students) teachers could create practice cards with various arguments already written on them. For example,

10 simple arguments are printed onto argument diagrams. Three sets of cards could then be created from those arguments; one set of position statements, one set of reasons, and one set of supporting evidence/examples. Once the basic idea of arguments (the idea of having three parts) has been introduced to the class, groups of students would then be asked to recreate the 10 arguments by communicating the information on the cards. After the groups have finished matching their arguments, each group could move around and look over the other groups' work to check for similarities or differences. Another idea is to create two sets of cards; one set of argument cards containing a position statement, reason, and support and one set of cards containing rebuttals to those arguments. In pairs, one student has argument cards and the other has rebuttal cards. The aim is for the two students to match correctly the arguments and rebuttals by communicating the content of their cards to each other. This activity could lead into a less structured 'ping-pong debate' activity where students could use rebuttals they remember from the previous card game or come up with their own ideas impromptu. Another slightly more advanced card idea could be to provide cards with various position statements related to level appropriate topics. One student in the group (preferably a group of three) would start by reading the position statement and the student on their left would then say a reason for or against the proposition. The next student on the left would give an example to support the reason. In a group of four, the fourth student could give a rebuttal. Points could be awarded for contributions. Students can reinforce their knowledge of the basic elements of argumentation while they practice presenting their arguments before a formal academic debate. As preparation, diagrams can be used as note cards in the same way as note cards are used to give a presentation. For example, completed argumentation cards could be used in conjunction with debate phrase cards (cards which include useful debate phrases) and practiced as a mock debate in teams. Ultimately, the aim is to have students use the cards as a scaffold when they first begin speaking but then to gradually introduce practice activities in which they rely less and less on the cards and concentrate more on their speaking fluency.

Practicing listening for specific information and note-taking (argument comprehension)

It is necessary for students to take detailed notes when listening to other debaters either as an opposing team member or as an audience member. To practice this skill, blank argument diagrams can be given to the listeners and used as note-taking templates. Specific information related to the proposition, reason, and support for each argument can then be easily recorded. While listening, some information may be incomprehensible and a blank or incomplete space will be left on their note-taking template. In this case, when the speaker concludes, it is easy for the listener to recognize which piece of information is missing and then ask the speaker for repetition or clarification. Students can also practice asking comprehension checking questions once all the template fields have been filled, to ensure the information they recorded is as the speakers intended. Thus, through this activity, students can practice both note-taking and cross examination skills.

Summary

In this paper, I have described the reasons why I believe Toulmin's argument diagrams are useful for practicing debate skills in EFL classes. I have also outlined how the diagrams could be applied to the practice of argument construction, analysis, presentation, and comprehension. Debate

is an extremely complex task that requires many hours of practice. Incorporating this model of argumentation into the planning and practice of debate could enable students to manage the task complexity and provide them with a common springboard from which to learn effectively.

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The Effects of Question Type on Student Discussions

Russell Minshull

Abstract

As teachers, the questions we use play an important role in our practice. When teaching English conversations or discussions, the questions we ask our students will strongly influence the content of their conversations. For instance, it is often stated that open-ended questions will generate more dialogue than closed-ended questions. Considering this significance, teachers should experiment with various question types to determine which ones best suit their needs. Throughout this semester, I adapted my in-house textbook using different types of question, with the goal of eliciting nuanced discussions and observing the impact of different question types on critical thinking and student talk-time.

Keywords: Open-questions, Closed-Questions, Nuance, Critical Thinking, Student Talk-Time

Introduction

This paper is a reflection on a semester of a private university in Japan. The purpose of the study was to experiment with different types of discussion questions in order to investigate their impact on student discussions, primarily in terms of critical thinking and how much dialogue is produced.

The course in question is mandatory for all first-year students. The main designated course outcomes are building spoken fluency and communicative confidence in English, with faculty placing a high emphasis on student talk-time in order to gain practical experience in communicating in English. There are also peripheral goals to the course, such as providing students with critical thinking practice.

Teachers use a mandatory in-house textbook, which is structured to maximise student talk time during lessons. This textbook is called What's Your Opinion? (Fearn-Wannan, J. et al. 2021). Throughout the paper I refer to this textbook.

Every week, students participate in two group discussions, which account for the majority of the talk time, with each discussion lasting between 12 and 20 minutes depending on the size of the group. Each discussion is generally structured in the manner, with a preparation activity leading to two discussion questions.

In my previous experience teaching on the course, my feeling was that the questions used in the textbook tend to give mixed results. Some questions are written in an open-ended way. In my opinion, this type of question works well in a discussion. Students tend to produce a lot of dialogue, discuss multiple lines of inquiry, and give the impression that they have thought quite deeply about the topic.

Table 1

Examples of open-questions from the What's Your Opinion? Textbook

"What are some good ways companies can provide a good work-life balance?"
"When is a good time to study abroad?"
"What are some good things to do after high school?"
"How can student's use social media more safely?"
"What are some good solutions to the aging population problem"

There are a number of questions in the textbook that are not so open- ended. On several occasions, questions are binary in nature, requiring only an either/or response. There are also a few questions that are closed, requiring only a yes/no response.

Table 2
Examples of closed and binary questions in the What's Your Opinion? textbook

"Should all students get a part-time job?"
"Should everyone study abroad?"
"Is it important for everyone to experience living abroad?"
"Is social media good or bad for university students?"
"Should the Japanese government introduce other systems (apart from the exam and recommendation system) for entering university?"
"Is it easy or difficult for university students to be independent?"

While it could be stated that such questions give students an easy chance for rote-like practice of target phrases, or could push them into expanding discussions on their own, I find that groups do not usually take the initiative to do this. On the contrary, I find that this kind of question is often counter- productive.

Students can only provide the either/or answer, a framework that limits discussions in terms of ideas. Groups often cover similar ground in discussions, and their answers are often similar or repetitive. I believe such discussions are not particularly interesting for students, and that they are probably not getting much out of them. While it is not a stated outcome of the course, I believe that students learn things from each other about topics as they discuss them, and that binary questions limit this learning. In turn, students probably find these questions unrewarding to discuss. As Rizzo, Fairley and Nostas (2021:2) state, if we want students to learn something about the issues they are discussing, then we might need to ask questions that encourage them to think in a more nuanced way.

Moreover, open questions make us think more deeply than binary questions. Teachers are often advised to use open questions to enhance their students' critical thinking skills (Sarwanto., Fajari, L. E. W., & Chumdari: 2021). As stated by Dr Ken Beatty (2017, para 13) "with open-ended questions, a simple binary answer is not possible, and the conversational expectation is that you will think more deeply on the question." Therefore, it follows that by asking open-ended rather than binary questions to students, we can expect to enhance the level of critical thinking that goes into their discussions.

Furthermore, when there are limited angles to explore, the discussion tends to be brief. As a result, student talk-time can be limited. In the main discussion each week, a group of four needs to talk for 16 minutes, and I have sometimes found that groups will fall short especially if one of the questions does not generate enough content. It is often recommended that teachers use open questions in the classroom when looking for a communicative classroom that is rich in dialogue (e.g., Çakır, H. & Cengiz, Ö., 2016), because with more ideas to explore there tends to be more points to discuss. This leads to more opportunities for interaction. Therefore, in student discussions, it is likely that open questions generate more dialogue than binary questions, because there are more possible lines of inquiry and more possible topics to discuss.

In my experience, even where questions suggest a more in-depth comparison between options, discussions are often quite limited. For example, the textbook question "Which is better – the entrance exam system or the recommendation system?" could be a chance for students to conduct an in-depth comparison between the two systems, but instead, each student tends to present an argument for the system they prefer, before passing the turn onto the next group member. In my

opinion, this often leads to a lack of depth in discussions, as groups have no incentive to explore topics beyond these initial answers. Moreover, many students, in my experience, prefer to answer textbook questions as directly as possible, rarely seeking complexity in the subject. However, if we consider our students' age and educational experience, this is perhaps to be expected. As first-year Japanese university students, many do not have any experience with group discussions in English, and most evidence points toward a lack of confidence in this cohort when it comes to speaking English (e.g., Templin, 1995). Because of their lack of experience and communicative confidence, students may be hesitant to take chances in conversations and instead conform to the textbook's instructions.

Moreover, because students have limited experience in this kind of academic environment, it is highly unlikely they have practiced the skill of analysing academic questions. Various English for Academic Purposes textbooks and student/teacher resources, such as Uncovering EAP: How to Teach Academic Reading and Writing (McCarter &Jakes, 2009) and Barron's Writing for the IELTS (Lougheed, L, 2016), feature sections or even chapters on how to analyse academic questions. This suggests that understanding questions is a skill in its own right, and it follows that someone untrained might not look to answer a question in a nuanced way. Therefore, as our students are inexperienced in the academic environment, we should not expect them to discuss much beyond what is literally asked in the question.

If this is the case, then it is understandable if students give short answers to binary questions. Therefore, if we want them to discuss topics in more depth, then we have to write questions that guide them in that direction.

In summary, the purpose of this project is to provide students with questions that would encourage more nuanced discussions, critical thinking, and dialogue, which, in turn, would help them achieve these goals despite their lack of experience in analyzing academic questions

Questions

While a systematic approach to rewriting the questions was considered, eventually I opted to adapt the discussions on a weekly basis. This was done to provide a flexible approach to the project and to avoid having to completely redesign the textbook.

However, there were three question types that I favoured during the project. These were advantages and disadvantages questions, problem-solution questions, and hypothetical questions. The reasons for using the nominated question types are explained, and examples of the adaptations made are shown in tables.

Advantages and Disadvantages/Balanced questions

As mentioned, I have found that although textbook questions such as "should all students get a part-time job?" might vaguely imply that students discuss various sides of an issue, discussions will rarely go into much depth. If we could ensure that students discuss both the pros and cons of part-time jobs before drawing conclusions, then this would probably leader to richer, more nuanced discussions. One way to ensure that students could do this is by making in-depth discussions a mandatory rather than an implied process.

Students tend to closely follow textbook instructions, so if we write questions that explicitly tell students to discuss both advantages and disadvantages, then it is highly likely that they will. In

theory, discussions should be richer for going into details about both sides, and this could lead to more interesting and nuanced discussions.

I rewrote several questions to explicitly address the pros and cons of the relevant topical issues.

These were mostly advantages and disadvantages questions; however, there were one or two exceptions. The notable example, which I discuss later, is the following question:

1. "Which Japanese cultures are good to export to foreign countries?"

To which I added the following question, in order to make it explicit that they discuss both sides of the issue:

2. "Which Japanese cultures are not good to export to foreign countries?"

The following table shows some examples of advantages and disadvantages/balanced questions that I added to the course this semester.

Table 3

Examples of Advantages and Disadvantages/Balanced Questions used this semester

Original Questions	Adapted Questions
1. Which is better — the entrance exam system or the recommendation system? 2. Should the Japanese government introduce other systems for entering university?	1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the entrance exam system? 2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the recommendation system? 3. Which system is better?
1. When is a good time to study abroad? 2. Should everyone study abroad?	1. What are the advantages of studying abroad? 2. What are the disadvantages of studying abroad? 3. When is a good time to study abroad?
1. Is social media good or bad for university students? 2. Does social media make life easier for university students?	1. What do you think about the following social media apps? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? - Twitter - Instagram - TikTok 2. Which social media app is the most useful? (Think about different points of view).
1. What types of Japanese pop culture are good to share with other countries? 2. Is it important to share culture with other countries?	1. What types of Japanese pop culture are good to share with other countries? 2. What types of Japanese pop culture are **not** good to share with other countries? 3. Is it important to share culture with other countries?

Problem-Solution questions

In the textbook, several discussions include questions asking for solutions to problems, but without really discussing what is the actual cause of the problem. For example, in Lesson 2 ,the discussion asks for suggestions on helping hikikomori without discussing why people become hikikomori in the first place.

Problem solving is a valuable critical thinking skill, and therefore it is good that we ask students to discuss solutions to difficult issues. However, in general, when asked to suggest solutions to difficult problems, it helps to analyse the problem in-depth first. In a group problem-solving scenario, sharing information and reaching a mutual understanding of the reasons for the problem is highly valuable, even crucial. It follows that getting students to discuss the problem in-depth before they develop solutions should give them more experience with solving problems in a collaborative setting.

Moreover, it could lead to more insightful and considered solutions.

Therefore, I occasionally added questions to prompt students to discuss the reasons for a problem in-depth before discussing a solution.

Table 4

Examples of Problem-Solution Questions used this semester

Textbook Questions	Adapted Questions
1. What are some effective things that can help hikikomori? 2. Which is more important for hikikomori — communicating with family or making friends?	1. Why do people become hikikomori? 2. What are some effective things that can help hikikomori?
1. What are some good ways that companies can improve their employees' work-life balance? 2. Do Japanese people have a good work-life balance?	1. Do Japanese people have a good work-life balance? 2. What are some good ways that companies can improve their employees' work-life balance?
1. What is the best way to punish serious crimes? 2. Is it important to help criminals return to society?	1. Why do people commit serious crimes? 2. What is the best way to punish serious crime? 3. How can Japan reduce serious crime in the future?

Hypothetical Questions

A hypothetical question is one where students discuss an imaginary situation. For example— "if you were going to study abroad, where would you go?" These were used mainly as extra questions. The textbook usually uses two questions per discussion, and these were added as a third or fourth question. The hypothetical questions were used because they offer a chance for students to think creatively. Moreover, in my previous experience, this kind of question tends to be enjoyable for students.

Table 5

Examples of Hypothetical Questions used this semester

Topic	Question
Study Abroad	If you were going to study abroad, where would you go?
Work-Life Balance	Would you rather work very hard and have a lot of money, or have an easier work-life but have less money?
Social Media	How might social media change society in the future?

Reflection of the Results of the Adapted Questions

In this section, I will reflect on the discussions generated by the adapted questions, thereby discussing the three types of questions individually.

Results of the Advantages and Disadvantages/Balanced Questions

Generally, I think using these questions worked well in bringing nuance to discussions. Because the advantages and disadvantages were written into the questions, students were obliged to discuss both and this meant that when observing the discussions, there was clear evidence that students had considered both sides of the question. In general, there was a wider range of ideas than those in

previous courses. This gave me the impression that students were more engaged in discussions, and that they were thinking more and consequently might be learning more than with closed-ended questions.

Furthermore, this semester I had far fewer instances of groups finishing discussions before the allotted time limits, which implies that using this kind of question probably does generate more student talk-time. In certain instances this was because adapting the questions meant they had more questions to discuss; however, several discussions that were usually brief on previous courses were elongated, such as the part-time job and university entrance system discussions from table three above. Basically, ensuring they discussed various sides of a topic meant they had more to discuss.

The adapted discussion questions at times significantly changed the content of the student discussions, with the adapted Globalization of Japanese Culture discussion probably being the best example:

Table 6
The adapted discussion for the Globalization of Japanese Culture topic

1. Which types of Japanese pop culture are good to share with foreign countries?
2. Which types of Japanese pop culture are **not** good to share with foreign countries?
3. Is it important for countries to share their culture with other countries?

On previous courses, students were only required to discuss which Japanese cultures are, or would be, successful if exported abroad. Students almost always end up debating the features of Japanese culture they enjoy while ignoring the cross-cultural similarities, which I feel is the true goal of this conversation. A typical student response could say that manga is popular outside of Japan because it is beautifully-drawn, but my sense has always been that they are expressing their own tastes rather than a reason why non-Japanese people enjoy it as well.

Adding the question "Which types of Japanese pop culture are not good to share with foreign countries?" pushed them to consider why certain types of culture are popular abroad as compared to others. For example, students discussed how humour can be lost in translation and how western countries seem to prefer individual pop stars (e.g., Billie Eilish) rather than large pop groups (e.g., Nogizaka 46). My view is that propelling students toward this angle challenged them to think and contributed to discussions that were more intellectually stimulating than original questions.

There was an issue with this type of question, which was that sometimes students did not have enough ideas or require more time than normal to generate ideas. Early in the course, students were using the textbook preparation, which was not designed for the adapted questions, and therefore, not really appropriate as scaffolding for the adapted discussions. This issue was improved by having students brainstorm the pros and cons of both sides and making sure they had enough time to do so. This is something to remember when changing the textbook questions —if you are adapting or using new questions, you probably need to adapt the discussion preparation accordingly.

Results of the Problem-Solution Questions

Having students discuss the problems before discussing solutions added an interesting layer of content to their discussions. For example, when discussing why people become hikikomori, students discussed issues, such as bullying at school or family problems. When discussing why people commit serious crimes, they discussed issues, such as how children raised in violent homes might go on to

become troubled adults. Students were able to discuss these issues in a deep and insightful manner.

The adapted crime and punishment solution question three, "How can we help prevent serious crime in the future?" also provoked some interesting ideas, such as how a more equal society could help reduce crime. This discussion happened in the penultimate lesson and was the first time students needed to discuss how fundamental changes to society could improve an issue. I think that discussing such changes to society could have been beneficial in the other problem-solution discussions, as it makes for a logical conclusion to the discussion. For example, to conclude the hikikomori discussion students could be asked "What can Japan do to reduce social isolation?" and a similar question could be asked about how a shift in societal values or practices might help improve work-life balance.

Results of the Hypothetical and Dilemmas Questions

From my observation of students, they seem to really enjoy this kind of question. They use the hypothetical situation to think of creative answers, share humour, and become slightly more casual in the discussion. This feels like a good change of pace, and they seem encouraged to speak more, probably because they are having fun. Moreover, I noted that more follow-up questions were asked and that students would go on tangents sometimes. For example, "if you were to study abroad, where would you go?" would often lead to students discussing their travel experiences. In some classes, this kind of conversation can be lacking and perhaps gave them a chance to bond.

The future hypothetical question "how will social media change society in the future?" seemed difficult for students. They often remarked that the question was difficult and tended to hesitate before answering. However, they were usually able to answer eventually, such as by saying that people will have worse social skills in the future. This proved to be interesting to listen to.

In each instance, the hypothetical questions were used as a final question. I thought this would be appropriate, as hypothetical questions can be quite abstract and tangential, so my theory was that this would be better saved for after the main topics of discussion had been covered. However, it could be interesting to develop a discussion based entirely around this kind of question and observe the results.

Drawbacks to the Project

There were some difficulties and drawbacks to the project. As mentioned, occasionally students did not seem to have a lot of ideas for the more challenging questions. I had to adapt to this by giving them more time, and also by having them share their ideas during preparation time. It is highly recommended that when introducing questions that are more challenging in terms of critical thinking, they are given sufficient opportunity to generate and share ideas before starting the discussion. Moreover, it was essential that I change the preparation activity in the book so that it was suitable for the new discussion. Again, if you are going to adapt textbook questions, then you probably need to adapt preparation activities to suit the adapted questions.

Furthermore, I tended to use three or more questions per discussion during this project, and although this likely generated more student talk-time, toward the end of the term it seemed that students had difficulty continuing a discussion if there were just two questions in the discussion. On previous courses, many groups seemed to become adept at continuing discussions using target phrases and often could complete a full discussion with just two questions. I believe that providing

them with more questions may have hampered their practice of the target phrases, as the target phrases were less important to continue the discussion when there were other discussion questions available.

Conclusions

First, I would highly recommend rewriting binary and closed-ended questions into open-ended questions. Judging from my observations this semester, open questions are more likely to develop into a nuanced discussion. When listening to students discuss binary or closed-ended questions, I find discussions to be predictable and repetitive. Throughout this semester, with the adapted questions, students were discussing a wider range of ideas. In my view, the discussions were more entertaining to listen to, which lead me to believe that they would have been more interesting to engage in.

Second, I think it is a good idea to use questions that will explicitly guide students to the kind of content you want them to discuss. While a question such as "should all students study abroad?" might imply that students discuss the pros and cons of studying abroad, there is no guarantee that they will actually cover both sides in much depth. Alternatively, if you ask them "what are the pros and cons of studying abroad"? or if you ask them to discuss both the pros and cons separately, then you are far more likely to get a balanced discussion. In other words, if you want students to discuss certain content, then it is better to use discussion questions that lead them directly to that content.

I attempted to create new questions in such a manner that they would inspire more critical thinking exercise, and I believe I witnessed plenty of this throughout the semester.

I think that the question types used were conducive to this. With advantages/disadvantages questions, students have to analyse an issue in depth. Problem/solution questions mean students have to analyse a problem and then create a solution. Moreover, hypothetical questions allow students to think creatively and offer an abstract change of pace. Alternatively, these are far from the only types of question that could be used, and I will experiment with other types in the future.

On several occasions, some of the questions seemed difficult for students, but I welcomed this as I believe that students were being propelled to think outside of their comfort zone. Moreover, it felt more like they were learning something about the topic. While the discussions course is mainly about fluency building, I believe that it is beneficial to challenge students intellectually sometimes and while content learning is not a stated aim of the course, the students will find the course more rewarding if they are learning about the topics they discuss.

Along with the discussions being more interesting to listen to, and students needing to think in a more nuanced manner, another major difference this semester was that I believe they were producing more dialogue than those on previous courses. In previous courses, I have witnessed that students, particularly those in lower ability classes, would conclude discussions quickly, and I would have to intervene in some manner to continue the discussion. I found myself doing that rather less this semester, as a wide range of ideas seemed to produce more dialogue and opportunities for communication.

Despite the course being conducted online, I maintained contact with a few course colleagues, and we would often share discussion questions on social media group chat.

This proved a great help to the project, and I would encourage teachers to discuss their approach to the discussion questions and share their experiences.

Finally, another benefit of this project was that I felt that taking control of the questions from the textbook gave me more control over the course. As this is a mandatory course, with an in-house textbook, it can be easy to feel like you do not have much autonomy. The discussion questions dictate the content the students discuss and much of what they learn during discussions, and thus, by taking control of the questions I felt more ownership of the course. I recommend teachers to attempt to rewrite the textbook questions to suit their own purposes.

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Implementing Readers' Theater for a Project-Based *Advanced English* course

Nfor Samuel

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the efficacy of readers' theatre-based instruction in an *Advanced English* course involving 21 freshman at Rikkyo University. The students were enrolled on an advanced-level English class in the first semester focusing on reading and writing. In the second semester, the same students embarked on a readers' theatre project to reinforce first semester skills. Walker's (Walker, 2018) *Her Own Worst Enemy* was chosen as the main text for the course. A background discussion of the play involved techniques of skimming, scanning, and inferencing to further develop students' reading skills. Three groups comprising seven students performed different roles in the seven-member cast. The teacher facilitated rehearsal sessions by having students highlight their parts, add descriptions of action on their scripts, delete or add lines, practice movements, make notes of different emotional moments, and mark different levels of intonation. Dramatic reading rehearsals enabled students to experience language use from within and think on how sentences, vocabulary words, and phrases can be used to achieve communication goals. Rehearsals culminated in readers' theatre performances where students read aloud and only glanced at the script half the time. Rehearsals culminated in readers' theatre performances where students read aloud and only glanced at the script half the time. Finally, students wrote an alternative ending to the play and performed it in groups. A questionnaire was administered after the project to gather data and student feedback. The findings of the study indicate that implementing readers' theatre as a project-based English class enabled positive changes in enhancing students' reading, writing, and presentation skills.

Keywords: reading, writing, presentation, rehearsals, readers' theatre

Introduction

In view of Japanese university-level EFL learner needs regarding reading, writing, and presentation skills, a drama-based approach to English language teaching can prove effective as Göksel (2021) asserts that Drama in Education (DiE) is a well-recognized pedagogy in many educational systems. However, there seems to be some hesitance in experimenting with drama-based pedagogy in EFL classes at the university level in Japan (Donnery, 2013) although the use of drama in teaching of foreign languages is not a novel approach and its beginnings can be traced back to the 19th century. (Schewe 2007, cited in Giebert, 2014). Since the late 1970s, with the increasing popularity of the Communicative Approach, drama-based pedagogy has been an integral part of foreign language teaching and is recognized and appreciated by some English language teachers although the approaches to integrating them in classes vary. This paper outlines the production process of a student-centered readers' theatre project. Starting with a discussion of the playscript and comprehension questions, the project progressed to theatrical readings, performing readers' theatre, adding a scene to an existing script, and presenting it in class. At the conclusion of the study, students answered a survey, with the results indicating that readers' theatre enhanced reading, writing, and presentation skills.

The Teaching Context

A class of 21 first-year university students (aged 18–19 years), majoring in Business and International Business at Rikkyo University, participated in this project. The students had TOEIC scores of 600 and over, which is equivalent to *The Common European Framework of Reference* for languages (CEFR) level B1. Demographic information collected through a questionnaire showed that the students have received six years. of English education at junior high school and high school. Some had lived in English-speaking countries for a considerable amount of time, and a few others had studied English outside of regular school curricula in Japan. Thus, they had acquired English skills advanced enough to be able to enroll in the *Advanced English* course taught twice a week for 100 minutes each time.

The course ran for a year (28 weeks) and the aim was to nurture and encourage creativity and to develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. In addition, the course aimed at developing the ability for students to provide logical and reasoned explanation of their views and the ability to argue and convince their peers and develop independent learning, thereby enabling them to be autonomous, collaborative, and creative. The second semester of *Advanced English course* is project based and shifts the focus of the course from academic skills to content. By virtue of my interest in Drama in Education and because the course was more focused on content, I speculated that a readers' theatre project would help me work intimately with students, placing them at the center of learning, while keeping them motivated to meet the course goals. With this in mind, the project focused on readers' theatre that combines language and skills practice to help students develop strategies for interacting with others and provides an opportunity to develop their imagination.

The choice of the participants was based on the fact that Business and International Business major students are often highly motivated to study English. The motivation often arises from their aspirations to work in global environments in Japan or abroad or obtain jobs with international organizations. Because of the high aspirations that such students have to accomplish their future career objectives, most are open and receptive to experimental project-based learning.

Motivation for the Project

Although drama as a process-oriented method is present in Japanese education through school drama clubs, where students put on plays and performances, drama as a process-oriented approach is mostly missing within classes (Kobayashi, 2004). Drama-based language instruction has been defined by different scholars, but Holden's (Holden, 1981) definition is widely cited:

> …any activity which asks the student to portray himself in an imaginary situation or another person in an imaginary situation-a definition which can be applied to most formats of drama in language teaching and includes role-play as a form of drama. However, vocal and physical exercises that do not imply the creation of a fictional character or situation, such as articulation exercises or movement games, should also be included (p.1).

Regardless of the drama-based instruction tasks implemented, they often require students to interact in pairs or groups and are aimed at helping students acquire a language skill. According to Kember (1977), when language learners take charge of their own learning, they co-construct knowledge with the instructor as a facilitator rather than becoming a class speaker. One such way students construct

knowledge with the teacher as facilitator is through readers' theatre of which Ødegaard (2003) argues that its implementation in learning places students at the center of the learning process, offering them the chance to learn through experience, with teachers taking on a facilitator role throughout the learning process.

The effectiveness of drama-based instruction for language learning was affirmed by Holden (Holden, 1981) who stated that "they help students have the opportunity to experiment with the language they have learnt, and the teacher has a chance to see how each person operates in a relatively unguided piece of interaction" (p.8). On a similar note, Via (1987) holds that drama-based instruction tasks "enable students to use what they are learning with pragmatic intent, something that is most difficult to learn through explanation" (p. 114). Drama-based tasks for language teaching could involve full-fledged performances that run from casting to rehearsal to performance, or simple ones like role plays, mime, simulation, or games. Some teachers choose to embark on more sophisticated drama-based tasks, such as process drama or readers' theatre.

This study focuses on readers' theatre, an activity in which students are not asked to memorize their lines, but to read directly from scripts, while telling a story in an entertaining manner, without props, costumes, or sets. It is an integrated teaching tool, involving students in communicative skills that includes voice projection when reading, script writing, goal oriented performance, and collaboration during group work. Although the students engaged in a readers' theater activity are not asked to memorize their lines, they are encouraged to show facial expressions and to use intonation and gestures appropriate to their characters and their characters' words. Moran (2006) summarizes readers theatre stating that:

> Readers' theatre is different from traditional theatres and conventional plays as the readers (or performers) do not have to memorize lines but read directly from the scripts…costumes, scenery, props are rarely used and it can take place in any setting. Readers use their voices, facial expressions and bodies to interpret the emotions, feelings and attitude (p. 318).

The pedagogical potentials of readers' theatre for enhancing reading fluency, with appropriate tone and proper expression has been affirmed by Worthy & Prater (2002, p.295) who state that "…reading performance encourages students to read at an appropriate rate rather than to simply read fast without attending to meaning…and that when students read and interpret texts regularly, they make progress in all aspects of reading."

In the same light, Allignton, (2013) underscores the usefulness of readers theatre stating it is a teaching technique that exploits students' thoughts and actions as they study a playscript to perform it. Readers' theatre parallels Vygotsky's (Vygotsky, 1978) Sociocultural Theory, which argues that an important learning by a child occurs through social interaction with a skillful tutor who models behaviors and provides verbal instructions for the child, by so doing, developing cooperative or collaborative dialogue necessary for effective communication. Readers theatre provides an authentic chance for interaction with peers while practicing and performing a play script.

Literature Review

A review of literature found a few researchers who have covered aspects of drama-based language instruction in their teaching in Japan and have written about their experiences. In (Yoshida, 2007) *Play Building in Japanese College EFL Classrooms,* the author had students present an

adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Her objective was to have her all-female class in a women's college create a play about a historical female figure in Japan who contributed to higher education development for Japanese women. Although she tried to demonstrate how integrating play building and performance promotes student competences in language learning, her main focus seemed to be empowering her all-female class through the work of a female writer by having them empathize with the four female characters' situations in the story.

In one study, Charles & Kusanagi (2007) led workshop sessions where participants discussed activities to be performed with short feedback times between the activities. The workshop detailed the purposes of the activities, how they tapped into learning, and possible outcomes in participants' own teaching situations (Charles & Kusanagi, 2007). One activity in the workshop was role-playing characters in scripts for students to guess the adjective matching the characters being played. In groups, the students discussed adjectives describing characters and then presented in front of class for others to guess. The researchers concluded that drama-based learning were nonthreatening and classroom environments affected students' motivation toward learning. Greater self-confidence created good classroom communities because students worked collaboratively to complete tasks, thereby creating bonds between them (Charles & Kusanagi, 2007). Besides creating classroom communities, as demonstrated by Charles and Kusanagi in their study, the current study will show how working in groups on a readers' theatre project impact students' reading, writing, and presentation skills.

In another study, Araki (2007) investigated Japanese primary school students through action research and deduced that educational drama motivates Japanese students' EFL learning by providing them with opportunities for deep engagement and participation in learning. In the study, students demonstrated improvement of communicative, linguistic, nonlinguistic, and problem-solving skills necessary for learning.

Donnery (2009) described how drama-based pedagogy in the English language curriculum of a Japanese university increased student motivation and enthusiasm toward the target language. Her students made role-plays in small groups to show their comprehension of a course textbook unit. These role-plays helped the students as actors and audience engage with course content, dynamically leading them to take control of their own learning. The findings of her study suggest that students emerged more confident in their oral communication abilities and developed more consciousness of cultural issues. Friendships were also improved between Japanese students and other international students in the same class.

Leong's (2014) study was to examine whether readers' theatre has any impact on Japanese students' writing skills. In a survey the author conducted on students reaction to readers' theatre, results showed that the students displayed a positive attitude towards readers' theatre and their writing skills indicating that it lowers affective filters of Japanese learners in the EFL classroom.

The aim of the current study was to add to the literature related to drama and EFL learning in Japan by examining the impact of readers' theatre on the reinforcement of reading, writing, and presentation skills following a semester of regular textbook-based education. The aim of the current study is to address the following research questions:

- How does participating in a readers' theatre project improve students' reading, writing, and presentation skills?
- Does participation in a readers' theatre project show a shift from teacher-centered to student-centred learning?

Description of the Project

Before the start of the study, the methodology and aims were explained to the school administration for administrative formalities, and the necessary permission to implement the study was obtained. On the first day of the project, the importance of drama and language learning was explained to the students, emphasizing the idea that the readers' theatre project was not aimed to train them to be actors but to be better language users. Students were instructed that, in readers' theatre, *process* was more important than the *product* (performance). In other words, the language skills they develop in the process of participating in the readers' theatre project is more important than a successful performance. The readers' theatre project was designed to meet the following objectives:

- prepare and perform a play to review presentation skills;
- read and discuss a play script to review reading skills;
- explore themes of a play to develop speaking skills;
- practice reading aloud and reading dramatically to communicate emotional intentions;
- develop creativity by appending a scene to a play and reviewing writing skills;
- perform in groups in front of peers to enhance oratory skills.

Following a review of the project objectives, the students were led through some language learning games to familiarize them with the concept of "acting," as well as to introduce them to the concept of "student-centered learning" and help them see the classroom as a place to play, explore, have fun, and learn. On the importance of games in language learning and as a lead up to introducing drama work, (Wright et al., 2008) state that games provide one way for the "learner to *experience* language rather than mere *study* it." The games used in the project were "ice breakers" and "warmers" to help learners feel comfortable with each other, confident in themselves, and focused on language while developing at the same time the notion of rhythm, group cohesion, and voice projection, all necessary for readers' theatre. These games introduced some "playfulness" into the classroom as a way of focusing the students minds on theatre as a medium of language learning.

A play by Walker (Walker, 2018) tilted *Her Own Worst Enemy-A Serious Comedy About Choosing a Career*, primarily written for EFL learning, was selected as the play for the project. The choice of this play was motivated by the fact that the protagonist Aida, 18, is preparing for university and struggling with the choice of what to study and what to do as a future career. The students, all of whom are 18 or 19, had recently finished selecting on their institution and major, and thus, would more likely identify with Aida, thereby increasing their enthusiasm to participate in the project. Working in groups, students spent some lesson time discussing the title of the play, considering its idiomatic nature and responding to questions leading up to the theme of the play. Because choosing a career was the central theme of the play, students were required to conduct research on career profiles by interviewing someone or watching a YouTube video of someone with an intriguing career profile and presenting about it in class. The prompt read as follows:

Interview a person with an interesting job or watch one on YouTube and take notes considering the following questions as a guide to develop your presentation:

- How did you get interested in this field?
- Who influenced you?
- How did you prepare for this career?
- How did you get your first opportunity in this field?
- What do you like best about your work?

- What skills do you have?
- What advice do you have for someone who wants to do this kind of work?
- Can you share a quote or person that shaped your thinking?

Students were guided through the process of preparing and presenting a slideshow about career profiles. Following these in-class presentations, geared toward developing presentation skills, the next task was to read the play script in groups. Students were placed in groups of seven, one person for each character in the play. They read the script in groups so as to get a general idea of the plot and themes in the play. The students then answered some comprehension questions to confirm their understanding of the script. By responding to comprehension questions, the essential reading skills of skimming, scanning, and inferencing were further developed. Students were then divided into debate teams and debated the choices that the main characters made in the play. The act of debating, making arguments, and responding with counter arguments is a useful exercise to develop speaking skills.

Next, the teacher led students in a dramatic reading exercise to help them develop vocabulary through the technique of subtext. Intonation, gesture, voice projection, and facial expressions were areas emphasized during the dramatic reading process. The teacher also facilitated the dramatic reading sessions by having students highlight their parts, add descriptions of action on their scripts, delete or add lines, practice motion, and noting emotions and intonations. Dramatic reading rehearsals enabled students to "feel the language from the inside" and reflect on how sentences, words, and phrases are used to attain communication goals. Dramatic reading rehearsals culminated in a readers' theatre performance. In this performance, the students dramatically read the scripts aloud and looked up from the script only half the time.

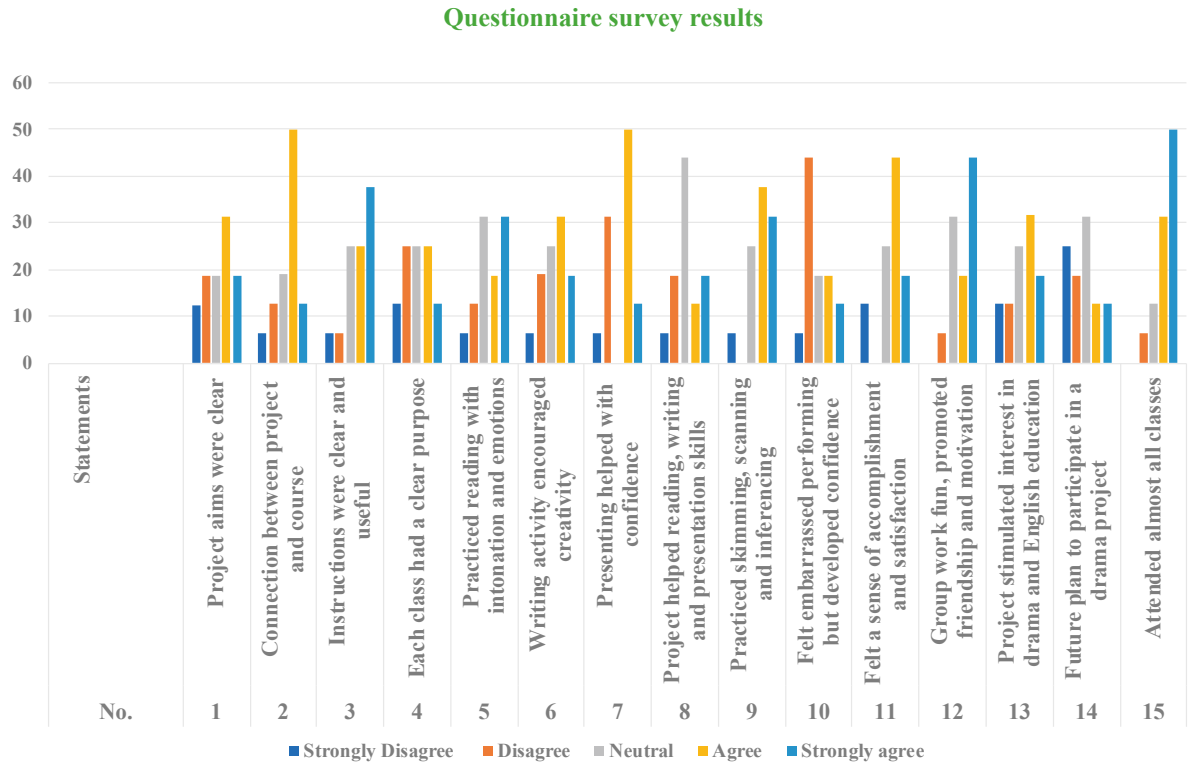
The next task involved the students, again working in groups, to append a new scene to the play. The students had to be creative to extend the story in an interesting and unique way. This task was designed to help with students' writing, specifically writing that involves cause and effect essays. As cause and effect development of plot is key to play writing, it proved an effective and creative way of improving students' cause and effect essay-writing skills. The teacher assisted the students in developing the plot of their new scenes during the writing process, ensuring that the ideas were structured properly and logically. In addition, the teacher made sure students included transition words to clarify the cause-and-effect relationships and encouraged students to provide supporting information based on their personal observations, reflections, and common sense. After completion of the writing process, the students rehearsed and performed their appended scenes as skits.

Results and Discussion

A questionnaire survey was conducted at the end of the course to gauge students' enthusiasm and analyze their self-assessment. The questionnaire items asked students to rate on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree) the level of agreement they had with statements regarding how they felt about the project; if they thought they had improved their reading, writing, and presentation skills; and if they would like to try the same learning method in the near future. The questionnaire items were selected to glean useful insights toward the study's research questions and were based on an overview of the wider Japanese English education context so as to build a more comprehensive study (Rasinger, 2010) with readers' theatre. Feedback from students provided an emic perspective to add to the etic view to provide a more comprehensive reflection on the project's outcomes.

Figure 1

shows the result of questionnaire survey conducted at the end of the readers' theatre project



The data provided by the sample of 21 students through the questionnaire survey suggest that there was a significant increase in self-perceived improvement in English communication skills so as to determine the efficacy of the outcome of readers' theatre. Potential patterns of the students' changed self-perceptions regarding their language skills following the readers' theatre project could be identified from questionnaire responses.

In response to the research question "*Does readers theatre improve students reading, writing, and presentation skills?*" 31% agreed and 18% strongly agreed that they could practice reading with intonation and emotions (statement 5, whereas 37% agreed and 31% strongly agreed that the project was useful for practicing skimming, scanning, and inferencing skills (statement 9), both important techniques to enhance reading skills.

It can thus be inferred that students' development of fluency. in reading correlates with the theory of automaticity in reading (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). Rasinski et al. (2009) define automaticity as, "the ability of proficient readers to read the words in a text correctly and effortlessly so that they may use their finite cognitive resources to attend the meaning while reading" (p. 4). Reading correctly and effortlessly can be attributed to repeated reading rehearsal as is the case with readers' theatre, which increases reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension. Repeated reading has been acknowledged by the National Reading Panel (2000) as a widely used instructional approach for building reading fluency, while Dowhower (1991) witnesses repeated readings as effective to improve reading fluency among both adult learners and primary school-age children. By spending time to read the same play repeatedly during the 14 week-long period, Advanced English course students not only made sense of different vocabulary words in the playscript but also understood the plot of the play and read it enjoyably.

Although the formality of paper formatting and word choice were not stressed in the writing

challenge, cause and effect essays were prioritized in terms of form and content. At the end of the project, 31% of students agreed and 18% strongly agreed appending a new scene to the play in groups, which in turn, stimulated their creativity and logical presentation of ideas. This can be attributed to the fact that cause and effect development of plot was central in writing an alternative ending of the play (statement 6).

Half (50%) of the students agreed and 12.5% strongly agreed that conducting slideshow presentations on career profiles, the central theme of the play, was helpful to enhance confidence while delivering presentations. (statement 7). Although 43% of students were neutral about the impact of readers' theatre in helping with the three core skills of reading, writing, and presentation, central to the Advanced English course, 12.5% agreed and 18% strongly agreed that the course impacted the course objectives positively (statement 8). Regarding the second research question, "*participation in a readers theatre project as a shift from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning*," 43% of students strongly agreed and 18% agreed that working in groups was fun, which in turn, promoted friendship and enhanced motivation. In addition, 43% agreed and 18% strongly agreed that they felt a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction completing a project in groups (statement 11). About working in groups as part of student-centered learning, Wright et al. (2008) asserted that while working together in English, students talk more, share their ideas, learn from each other, feel more secure and less anxious, and use English in a meaningful manner.

From the instructor's perspective, this readers' theatre project reduced teacher talk-time and dramatically empowered students to develop as self-motivated learners through peer-to-peer interactions and training. In response to statement 13, 31% agreed and 18% strongly agreed that readers' theatre stimulated their interest in drama and language learning. This project employed only one playscript and exploited various language skills for student learning. However, 14 weeks was a long time to spend on a single script. Echoing this sentiment, one student gave the following reaction*: "I think we could try one or two more stories because we kind of wasted a time for practicing the same one again and again."* Therefore, in future, multiple scripts could be used to break the monotony, which is necessary for keeping student motivation high and would also allow for experimenting with varying language skills and engaging with a vast body of literature.

Limitations and Future Pedagogical Directions

This study reported on a readers' theatre project in a 14-week *Advanced English course* held at Rikkyo University. Taken together, the results of the survey add weight to the argument that readers' theatre can be an effective pedagogical method for improving students' reading, writing, and presentation skills. There are a number of limitations.

In the current study, the sample, 21 students, is too small to extrapolate the results. Furthermore, data were gathered only through a questionnaire survey and relied on subjective self-reported measures; thus, the data collection was limited and did not allow for triangulation (Angouri, 2010). A larger study, involving a lager sample size and conducted over an extended period of time could provide stronger evidence. The current study used classroom research conducted in 14 weeks; however, a longitudinal design would be useful to provide more analytical evidence through control and experimental groups.

Limited information was found in the literature regarding readers' theatre and EFL learning in Japan. This area needs to be explored in further studies; however, the findings of this study highlight the potential of readers' theatre-based teaching method for motivating students' to study English and

build their confidence as English communicators , in addition to enhancing reading, writing, speaking, and presentation skills. The readers' theatre project, like other drama-based teaching methods, could be a leverage to raise student interest in language study; however, it has a distinct advantage over other forms of drama wherein it allows the actors (students) to read from a script and is not focused on memorization of lines. This not only makes it more accessible and less intimidating for language learners of all levels but also has the potential to open access to a bigger corpus of scripts, thereby allowing students to encounter different playwrights and learn more about the fascinating world of theater.

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【Teaching Practice Report】

Quick and Effective Feedback on Writing During Online and Classroom Lessons

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Abstract

Feedback on writing is an essential part of process writing that supports drafting and revision. Yet some teachers might have difficulty incorporating feedback into the writing course syllabus for various reasons, such as time limitations or difficulties with changing online and classroom settings. The following is a report on a five-step feedback process or activity I developed during the COVID-19 pandemic for providing both peer and teacher feedback on student writing quickly and during classroom time. With a few minor adjustments, the process can be used in both online and offline classes. The goals of this feedback process were to provide both peer and teacher feedback regardless of the lesson setting, alleviate overtime work for the teacher outside the lessons, and promote the development of good writing skills through collaboration. The key to success is to create and follow a rubric that focuses on key elements of effective writing and reflects what has been taught during the lessons leading to feedback sessions. First, I provide theoretical explanations to support my decisions, and later I offer a detailed description of the five-step feedback process. After describing a few observations, I conclude by offering troubleshooting tips and adjustments that can be implemented to suit different circumstances.

Keywords: feedback, writing, rubric, online, classroom

Introduction

Teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges, including a need to adjust reliable teaching practices. One such practice is providing feedback on student writing. This feedback can come in the form of suggestions from teachers, peers, or both.

Some teachers might forego the feedback step of writing altogether. A few possible reasons for this decision might be time limitations during lessons because of a need to adhere strictly to a syllabus, excessive teacher workload outside of working hours (Gibson et al., 2015), problems with teacher and student feedback literacy (Carless, 2020), and difficulties adjusting to new settings, such as online lessons (Cox et al., 2015).

However, feedback is a vital step in process writing that supports drafting and redrafting (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), and has numerous benefits, such as the promotion of learning through collaboration (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lin & Yang, 2011), strengthening of classroom relationships (Diab, 2011; Zhao et al., 2014), and improvement of writing (Diab, 2011; Ge, 2011; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). With a few adjustments to teaching practices, such as increasing student feedback literacy and opportunities for feedback uptake (Ducasse & Hill, 2019), students can benefit from feedback on their writing. Therefore, it is worth considering devoting time to providing feedback on writing when developing a writing course syllabus.

The following is a report on how I have been providing quick and effective feedback on writing during lessons since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. I will begin by explaining my five-step process. I will include tips on how to use this activity in online or face-to-face lessons to help alleviate the burden of working overtime, and how office hour consultations can be used to support major problems with student writing that require more time and attention. The paper is concluded with

observations from my classes, and suggestions for making adjustments.

Procedure

In order to provide students with effective feedback on their writing in a timely manner, preparation is required. The first three steps of this feedback activity will lay the groundwork for the success of steps four and five, the feedback steps.

Step 1 – Decide on the Type of Feedback

The first step in this feedback activity is to determine what sort of feedback can be offered in the time permitted and with the available resources. Along with self-checking, the two sources of feedback are from peers and the teacher. Therefore, the teacher must decide whether they will have students provide peer feedback, and whether they will provide teacher feedback on the students' writing. This step will depend on how much time can be made available on the syllabus for feedback.

Step 2 – The Syllabus

After the type of feedback has been decided, the teacher should develop, if possible, a syllabus that allows enough time for their choice. Of course, this step might be impossible if a teacher is given a fixed syllabus that must be strictly followed. If that is the case, and if the existing syllabus does not provide in-class time for feedback, review the syllabus to determine if there are activities that can be shortened to free up the necessary time required for providing feedback. Fortunately, I have been granted the luxury of creating a syllabus that will suit my students' needs. As providing feedback is a vital part of process writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), I personally prefer providing both peer and teacher feedback, and thus, I devote two full lessons per essay for feedback. After the students have completed their first drafts, I ask them to check their own essays. In the same lesson, they provide

Figure 1
Example syllabus from an Academic Skills Writing course

Week	Topic	Homework Due
1	Course Intro; Paragraph Writing (sentences, unity, coherence)	
2	Paragraph & Essay Writing; Essay 1 Intro; Topic Choices	**Paragraph Assignment**
3	Thesis Statement; Writing an Outline	Essay 1 Topic
4	Finding & Evaluating Sources	Essay 1 Outline 1 (with ideas)
5	Cause & Effect Structures; APA Formatting; Common errors	Essay 1 Outline 2 (with sources)
6	Peer Feedback	Essay 1 Draft 1
7	Revising and editing; Teacher consultations	Essay 1 Draft 2
8	Intro to Argumentation; Compare & contrast; Persuasion	**Essay 1 Final Draft**
9	Reading Academic Journal Articles	Essay 2 Topic
10	Avoiding Plagiarism (paraphrasing, citations, reference)	Essay 2 Outline Part 1 (with ideas)
11	Academic Vocabulary and Tone	Outline Part 2 (with sources)
12	Peer Feedback	Essay 2 Draft 1
13	Revising and editing; Teacher consultations	Essay 2 Draft 2
14	Essay 2 Group Discussions	**Essay 2 Final Draft**

peer feedback. After revisions are made to the second draft, in the following lesson, I provide teacher feedback they can use to revise their final draft. Figure 1 shows an example of a 14-week syllabus I developed for an Academic Skills Writing course.

Step 3 – The Rubric

Using rubrics as teaching tools for formative purposes is highly contested in the world of education. Some researchers claim that asking students to learn from a rubric promotes instrumental learning and criteria compliance (Sadler, 2014), or that using a rubric narrows the type of peer feedback provided (Bouwer et al., 2018). However, an analysis of 27 articles discussing the use of rubrics revealed that there was limited empirical support for the negative claims made against the use of rubrics; most of these claims were based on theoretical speculations and anecdotal evidence (Panadero & Jonsson, 2020). If designed and implemented correctly, rubrics have been shown to help students improve their performance (Turgut & Kayaoğlu, 2015), take responsibility of their own learning, and identify what should be done and how it should be executed. Despite the debate over whether rubrics help or hinder student learning, and the need for more studies on whether the use of rubrics promotes long-term retention (Panadero & Jonsson, 2020), I have chosen to use rubrics as writing tools in my writing courses to profit from some of the aforementioned benefits, in addition to providing transparency to the students about what I expect in their writing and consistency while I am grading their papers.

Therefore, the third step in the feedback process I am explaining is to develop a bespoke rubric that incorporates and clearly indicates the aspects of good writing that will be graded for the written assignment. Each descriptor on the rubric reflects a skill taught in the lessons leading to the first feedback lesson (compare Figures 1 and 2). Because I am asking my students to use the rubric as a tool for checking their own writing and that of their peers, I avoided overly complicated descriptors, as clarity and ease of use of the rubric is preferred by students while using it as a peer feedback tool

Figure 2.
Cause and effect essay rubric

Does Your Essay Have:	No (0)	Some (1)	Yes (2)
4 paragraphs describing causes and/or effects			
a hook & background information about the event, situation, or action in the introduction			
a clear thesis statement (stating the cause & effect and your opinion) at the end of the introduction			
topic sentences (topic + controlling idea) for P2, P3, and P4			
logical structure and organization of the C&Es			
3 supporting ideas (evidence) in the supporting paragraphs			
3 matching details (explanations) in the supporting paragraphs			
a summary & a prediction or advice in the conclusion			
paragraph unity (1 topic) & coherence (transitions; keywords)			
in-text citations from at least 3 sources			
an APA-formatted Reference List of at least 3 sources			
no common academic writing errors (from checklist)			
correct essay formatting (e.g., font, indents, titles...)			
		Total:	/25

(Wang, 2014). Therefore, I opted for the clear question form of "Does your essay have…?" instructing them to focus on and revise any questions from the rubric that were answered with a "No" or "Some." Figure 2 shows a rubric I developed for a cause and effect essay in the previously mentioned Academic Skills Writing course.

Incidentally, as the grades are included on the rubric, this particular tool could also be used for self- and peer-assessment of writing. These types of assessment, if shared with the teacher, can be used as a formal and collaborative approach between the teacher and students to provide the students with a grade, or as a possibly insightful suggestion to the teacher while they are grading.

Step 4 – Peer Feedback (optional, but recommended)

In the first of my two scheduled feedback lessons, students focus on self-checking the first draft of their own papers and providing peer feedback while using the rubric. I introduce the rubric to my students simultaneously with the introduction of the writing assignment so they can become familiarized with what they will be learning and what will be graded as they write their first draft. During the peer feedback lesson, I explain that the rubric can be used as a tool for checking their own papers, and for collaboratively working together to provide suggestions that might help improve each other's essays. During the scheduled peer feedback lesson, I demonstrate and model how to use the rubric and provide appropriately polite comments by checking an example essay and thinking aloud during the demonstration (Chang, 2015; Lam, 2010), which also help promote student feedback literacy (Ducasse & Hill, 2019) by offering them possible feedback phrases and what they mean. I then ask them to practice using the rubric by checking their own work to become accustomed to using the rubric as a checking tool and strengthening their skills in identifying problems (Lam, 2010). Self-checking also promotes the necessity of proofreading your own work and helps lighten the load on the next person checking their paper. The peer feedback lesson ends with a few rounds of checking papers of different partners, writing comments, and explaining the comments that are not understood by the feedback receiver to promote collaboration, clarification, and comment uptake (Ducasse & Hill, 2019; Zhao et al., 2014). To help facilitate easy access to each other's work, my students write their assignments on Google Docs and set the share settings to "anyone with the link can comment." By asking my students to check the first draft, it is my hope that, at minimum, minor problems will be eliminated during their revision homework, thus making teacher feedback on the second draft manageable in the available time.

Step 5 – Teacher Feedback

The lesson following the initial peer feedback lesson is the teacher feedback lesson. Before I begin the consultations, I review the rubric to help focus my attention on what needs to be checked. For teachers who are uncomfortable with examining students' work rapidly, provided they have enough time, I recommend a brief review of the students' written assignments, making notes on the major issues that will affect their grade. These prepared comments can be used by the teacher during the actual individual consultations with the students. Please note that prior access to the students' assignments is required if pre-checking is to be performed. My students write their assignments on Google Docs and add me as an editor in the share settings of their document.

During teacher consultations, I adhere strictly to the rubric when offering advice, as consultation times are limited. I place the rubric adjacent to their writing, once again modeling by thinking aloud

to help further their feedback and paper checking training. The key to quick feedback is to focus solely on the problems that will affect the student's grade. If the rubric reflects aspects of good writing, the students will be receiving feedback that will help improve their essays, not just their grades, and help bolster their writing skills. I always remind the students that I will not be proofreading their papers; I will only be indicating major problems that will affect their grade, as indicated on the rubric. Should there be other minor problems such as spelling and grammar errors, I inform the student of their existence in general, and either offer them more time for consultation during my office hours or recommend other tools (e.g., grammar and spelling checkers) to help them find the minor problems. I provide further support after class or during my office hours to students who have clearly misunderstood important aspects of the skill building courses leading to the feedback sessions and display serious issues in their writing.

Different preparations will be required depending on the setting of the teacher consultation lesson. If the lesson is being conducted online, I would recommend a tool such as Zoom that allows for easy separation of the students into private breakout rooms. During the lesson before teacher consultations, I explain the procedure so as to save time during the following feedback lesson. Moreover, I provide a detailed written description of teacher consultation procedures so that students can review them prior to their lesson (see Figure 3). On the day of the consultation, I offer students the option of joining whatever room they like and encourage them to switch rooms if their purpose changes. I then create five or six breakout rooms, labeling each room with a different purpose. The purposes I choose are peer feedback (to give the students a chance to consult with each other for additional collaborative assistance), silent writing (for students who want to use their feedback in revisions immediately), chat (to promote a much-needed chance for socialization that some of our

Figure 3.
Teacher consultation instructions.

1. I will set up several Breakout rooms (online) or groups (classroom) with different purposes (e.g., peer feedback, writing room, chat, and teacher consultation).
2. You can change rooms or groups throughout this lesson, so choose the group matching the purpose that you would like to devote your time to.
3. One by one, I will meet each of you privately in the teacher consultation room (online) or at my desk (classroom).
4. To save time, I will automatically move you to my room (online) or call you to my desk (classroom). I apologize in advance for interrupting your conversation with your group members.
5. (online only) Because this room change will happen suddenly, you must please remain at your computer during this lesson.
6. (online only) If you are not at your computer when I move you to the consultation room, I will bring someone else to the room and you might lose your chance to talk to me about your essay during the lesson. However, help will always be given during my office hours if you send me an email to arrange a meeting.
7. I will create a column next to your names on a Google Doc and mark an "O" next to your name when I talk to you, so if you want to follow my progress and possibly know when you will be moved to the consultation room, you can watch the Google Doc.
8. When you are in the consultation room, I will speak very quickly. To save time, I will not write comments.
9. You can record our conversation if you want (using Zoom or your smartphone's audio recording function).
10. You can also take written notes.
11. I will be checking your essay for any major/serious problems you might have. I will not have time to proofread and check all your grammar and small problems.
12. If you are in a peer feedback room or group, please help each other by giving advice on your essays.
13. If you are in the writing room or group, please work on your paper quietly.
14. If you do not need to work on your paper, or if you are feeling social and just want to get to know each other, please join the Chat room or group, and take the opportunity to talk to your classmates.

first- and second-year students have been deprived of during the COVID-19 pandemic), and teacher consultation (the room I use for individual feedback sessions). After creating the breakout rooms and setting the timer of the rooms to close at the end of the lesson, I tell the students to join the room with their desired purpose, and I begin the consultation process. I forewarn the students that I will be pulling them out of their respective rooms and dropping them directly in the teacher consultation room when it is their turn. I apologize in advance for any conversations I might interrupt during this process. I also share a Google Doc with a list of their names, and I move down the list while placing an "O" next to the students' names that I have consulted with, so they know approximately when they will be moved into the teacher consultation room next. Please note, in addition to the three semesters that were conducted online during 2020 and spring 2021, I have used the same process in the fall 2021 semester while conducting face-to-face interaction in the classroom. The only difference between an online and classroom setting is that in the classroom, I ask the students to break up into groups according to their desired purpose, rather than "join a breakout room." The full set of teacher consultation instructions offered to students has been included in Figure 3.

Observations and Recommendations

Regarding the rooms with different purposes, I have seen varying results. One class used the different rooms fairly equally. Another group of students remained mostly in the silent writing room. The final outcome was an online class where all the students eventually joined the same "chat" breakout room, evidently enjoying the time to interact. At the end of the teacher consultations, I joined that room and was relieved to find that they were actually talking to each other instead of silently waiting for the lesson to end.

Concerning class size, I have successfully performed the teacher consultation step with a class of 18 Advanced English students during a 100-minute lesson. I generally allocate four to five minutes per student. Time is often saved with students whose writing exhibits a few problems, and thus, some students with more serious issues can occasionally be given more than five minutes. However, please note that I have several years of experience checking student writing in a fast-paced environment, so it is definitely a skill that needs to be developed over time. I would also not recommend this feedback activity with a large number of students who have written papers longer than five paragraphs. Should four to five minutes per student seem too daunting, an alternative to the method I described above would be to conduct teacher consultations and peer feedback simultaneously during the two feedback lessons, allowing the teacher to meet with half of the students during the first lesson and the remaining students during the second.

Further Troubleshooting and Adjustments

There are a few tricks that I learned while developing my skills checking student writing in a fast-paced situation. To begin with, I encourage the student to voice record their feedback session. Nowadays, most students have smartphones with built-in voice recording apps. If in a Zoom room, I enable the participant record function in the settings prior to the lesson and encourage the students to record their session. Recording the session saves the teacher from writing individual comments that will only slow down the consultation. With a voice recording, the students can listen to the comments they received at their own pace.

Second, be aware of the role of a teacher. When I first started teaching writing, I acted like a

proof reader, marking every problem, large or small, that I could find. After reading articles that focused on the negative effects of providing excessive corrective feedback resulting in the dread of the red pen (Semke, 1984; Truscott & Yi-ping Hu, 2008), I found that this method might be more harmful than helpful for some students, possibly leading to being discouraged and overwhelmed. Now, I have a few personal rules that often guide me as I check student writing: 1) if it seems like I am putting more time into checking their writing than they spent actually writing, I stop checking, and 2) I focus solely on the big issues (those that affect the comprehensibility of the piece and that should be, if possible, reflected by the descriptors in the rubric), and remind my students that I am available for further consultation. Students eager to learn will seek out their teacher, whether it is after class or during office hours.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the key to offering feedback quickly and effectively, as explained earlier, is limiting comments to those covered by the rubric. A carefully constructed rubric will allow students to understand important requirements for academic writing, and free teachers from feeling like they are only helping students "get a good grade." Having their writing and the rubric side-by-side during the consultation will show, through modeling, the importance of using the rubric as a writing tool. Additionally, limiting comments will save time and help students avoid the dread of the red pen. Many students will tune out if the teacher goes into too much detail because they just want to improve their grade. Therefore, by constructing the rubric so that it reflects key writing aspects that have already been taught, it is hoped that the students will improve their grade and learn how to write.

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Exploring the effectiveness of project-based learning: Teacher reflections on a student-led seminar project

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Abstract

Research on project-based learning in second language acquisition has shown that this approach to teaching can have benefits in terms of promoting 21st-century skills. This paper details a student-led seminar project which was implemented by three instructors during the Fall semester of the Advanced English course at Rikkyo University. After providing a complete description of each stage of the project, each instructor reports on unique aspects of how the project was conducted in their class, the positive outcomes of the project, and ways in which the project could be improved. In particular, this paper reflects on outcomes of the student-led seminar project in terms of learner autonomy, motivation, group dynamics, and the development of academic skills.

Keywords: Project-based learning; Collaborative learning; Learner autonomy, 21st century skills

Background to Project-based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) has long been lauded as a way to promote more meaningful learning in language programs (Peterson & Myer, 1995; Skehan, 1998; Thomas, 2000; Beckett, 2002). PBL has many similarities to other approaches to language learning, such as task-based learning, problem-based learning, also often confusingly abbreviated as PBL, action-based learning, etc. However, PBL distinguishes itself in a number of ways. Firstly, under PBL, the projects should be the focal point of the curriculum and not ancillary (Thomas, 2000). The projects should be complex, take place over many class periods, and result in a final tangible product (Stoller, 2006). Additionally projects should also be process-oriented and consist of many integrated, dynamic tasks that require learners to use real-life skills, such as, investigating real-life problems, utilizing authentic materials, and reflection activities (Stoller, 2006). Finally, central to PBL is a shift away from teacher-centeredness to a learner-centered, constructivist approach, where students work collaboratively and autonomously to complete their tasks (Kassem, 2018).

A multitude of research has suggested that the PBL approach has several benefits for helping students to develop 21st-century skills that are valuable to functioning in the modern globalized world. Firstly, through engaging with complex, real-life tasks, it has been noted that PBL stimulates students to develop higher-order creative and critical thinking skills, such as; brainstorming ideas; resourcefulness in finding materials; evaluating authentic sources of information; and showing initiative in how to complete tasks (Roessingh & Chambers, 2011). Moreover, by working collaboratively and autonomously in groups, students are encouraged to develop team-working and self-management skills, such as; assigning roles and jobs; resolving conflicts and reaching compromises; and sharing and assimilating knowledge from each other's research (Thuan, 2018). Finally, completing these tasks in English requires students to develop many integrated language skills. Students need to develop reading skills to deal with authentic sources through their research, as well as writing skills by writing up the results of their projects in a report. Students also develop practical listening and speaking skills through purposeful discussion and negotiation with their group

mates, as well as presenting their reports (Kavlu, 2017).

Despite the abovementioned benefits, there are several considerations that need to be taken into account when attempting to implement PBL. Firstly, if the project does not provide adequate opportunities for the students to assign jobs for each other or engage in meaningful discussions, the students may face demotivation (Kavlu, 2017). Additionally, students who are not accustomed to working in groups might face difficulties in negotiating tasks and reaching compromises with their group mates, which can lead to breakdowns in communication and conflict (Grant, 2002). Furthermore, as students are working autonomously, it can be a challenge for teachers to monitor how much each group member is contributing to the project, and it can be easy for a small number of members of the group to do the majority of the work with other members being pushed to the periphery (Kavlu, 2017).

In order to alleviate some of the aforementioned issues, teachers must take a great deal of care prior to the start of the project-based learning program to prepare a framework for the project(s) that will allow students to utilize the skills outlined in earlier (Kassem, 2018). It is also important for teachers to make the goals and expectations of the project explicit to the students, and teachers may also need to provide extensive training and scaffolding to facilitate the process of learning and allow students to develop their skills (Roessingh & Chambers, 2011). Moreover, teachers need to incorporate systems to monitor each project group's progress and be prepared to provide feedback and assistance where necessary (Roessingh & Chambers, 2011). In fact, despite PBL's focus on learner autonomy, it has been reported that managing PBL programs often requires more effort on the part of the teacher than traditional teaching methods (Fang & Warschauer, 2004). However, with the right preparation and implementation, PBL can offer a rewarding experience for both students and instructors.

Background to Rikkyo's Advanced English Programme

The Advanced English (AE) program at Rikkyo University is a first-year student advanced skills-based course that prepares students for transition into an international academic environment (Rikkyo ELP, 2021). To qualify for this course, students need to have achieved a TOEIC score greater than 680. As this is the only criterion for entry to the course, the advanced program often consists of students with a mixture of communication skill levels.

The AE program is split into two courses; one in the spring semester, focusing on academic reading and writing; and one in the fall semester, focusing on project-based learning. Each course consists of 28, 100-minute classes held twice a week over 14 weeks. In the first semester of AE, students are expected to become familiar with the process of writing an academic research paper and write at least one expository report. Students are also expected to learn skills to make basic presentations of their reports in this semester (Rikkyo ELP, 2021). In addition to their AE classes, all first-year student take a discussion class where they learn how to hold clear and balanced discussions on a range of academic topics, as well as critical thinking skills to consider those topics from a range of different perspectives. As a result, students come into the second semester with some skills, which will be useful for the projects they will engage with.

In the second semester of AE, students use the academic skills from the first semester practically though PBL. Teachers have a great deal of flexibility in designing the projects for their classes. However, the projects should be designed so that students gain knowledge of academic content in English to become confident and proactive in communication with people of other countries and

cultures. In addition, the projects should aim to develop independent learning skills so that students can become more autonomous, collaborative, and creative (Rikkyo ELP, 2021).

This report will focus on a student-led seminar project which the three authors worked on collaboratively in the second semester of their AE classes in the academic year of 2020/2021. First, the procedure and rationale of the project as it relates to the literature outlined above will be presented. Then, each author will share reflections of their experiences and thoughts on the project.

Procedure of the Student-led Seminar Project

The student-led seminar project was the first of two projects conducted by the authors during the course, and took place over the first 15 of the 28 lessons in the semester. In line with the objectives of the AE syllabus, the students work collaboratively in groups of 3 or 4 to create an informative lecture on a controversial world topic. The purpose of the lecture is to inform the audience about the most common arguments given for and against their chosen topic. To give an example, if a group chose to conduct a seminar on the death penalty, the students would present the most powerful arguments for having the death penalty and for abolishing it. After the lecture, the group members lead group discussions on the arguments raised in the lectures which are recorded. After completing the seminar, the students qualitatively analyze the group discussions and write up a summary of their lectures and the results of their analyses in an academic report. Below, you can find an outline of the content of each period in the project:

Table 1
Student-led seminar project lesson schedules

Period	Focus
1	Introduction to project work and the student-led seminar project
2	Researching and plan lecture
3	Creating the lecture slideshow
4	Presentation delivery advice
5	Leading a discussion and summarizing a discussion
6	Final preparations and seminar practice
7, 8 & 9	Seminars
10	Qualitative analysis of the group discussions
11	Writing up the lecture
12	Writing the method & conclusion sections
13	Peer review
14	Feedback and Writing the second draft
15	Wrap-up and Mini presentations

As mentioned in the literature review, it is very important that learners clearly understand what will be expected of them in the project. Therefore, the first period focuses on introducing the students to PBL. The students are first given a thorough outline of the project. They are informed that they must prepare a 40-minute seminar on a controversial world issue. The first 15-minute of the seminar consist of a lecture informing their audience (their other classmates) of the background and the common arguments given for and against their chosen issue. The remainder of the seminar is dedicated to having the project groups discuss the ideas raised in the lecture with their audience.

The details of each part of the seminar will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. After introducing the seminar project, the students discuss the possible challenges they might face when working autonomously. The teacher then leads a discussion with the class, adding to the students' ideas and providing advice about how to deal with issues, such as, resolving disputes, reaching consensus, assigning jobs, ensuring that all group members participate equally, and how to communicate effectively with the teacher when they have questions. The students then form project groups and choose a topic for their seminar. To help students find a suitably interesting and controversial topic for their seminars, and to provide a start to their research, the students are advised to access the procon.org website. This website is a useful resource providing information on a wide variety of current world issues, ranging from the regulation of social media to space colonization. For each issue, the website provides background information and a summary of some of the common arguments for and against the issue. After agreeing on a topic, the students review the information on procon.org for homework ready to discuss the ideas in the next class.

From the second class onwards, each period follows a similar pattern. The first 15-20-minutes are spent introducing a new aspect of the project and the tasks the groups are expected to complete. After this initial scaffolding period, the remainder of the class is given to the students to work autonomously in their groups where they discuss and complete their tasks. To help the teacher monitor progress, each group should give a short report on the tasks they have completed and the tasks that each member has been assigned at the end of each class. Additionally, the teacher creates a Google Drive folder for each group where the students work on their assignments using Google Docs and Google Slides. This not only helps the group members to work collaboratively on their tasks, it also allows the teacher to easily monitor the progress of each group and what each individual member has contributed to the project.

In period 2, the students discuss the arguments they read for homework and collaboratively decide the 3 arguments for and 3 arguments against their chosen topic. The groups are required to research detailed examples, statistics, and human stories to supplement the information they find on Procon.org. In addition to researching the arguments for and against, the group is also expected to research background information, such as a definition of their topic, a basic history of the issue, and an outline of the current state of the issue.

In period 3, the students start working on designing the slide show for their lectures. In order for all the groups to have the time to conduct their seminars, the students are instructed that their lectures should be no more than 15-minutes long. The students are also given a Google Slides document with a suggested slide structure and advice on how to find powerful images to support the examples from their research.

The next three periods focus on giving the students time to complete the research and slideshows for their lectures. However, as each group member is expected to present equally, in period 4, the students are given advice and useful phrases to deliver their lectures and transition smoothly between speakers. In period 5, advice is given about how to conduct the post-lecture discussions. The students are instructed to ensure that they focus on the discussions on the ideas presented in the lecture and that each member of their discussion group has an equal amount of time to express their thoughts and opinions. To help them gain an understanding of this, the students watch and discuss two video examples of a 'bad' discussion and 'good' discussion prepared by the authors. Period 6 is for the groups to make final touches to their lectures and practice before the seminars.

Periods 7, 8 and 9 are dedicated to the groups conducting their seminars. The seminars are

conducted using an adapted version of the Think-Pair-Share collaborative discussion strategy (Lyman, et al., 1981). In the lecture phase, the audience members are encouraged to listen to the arguments for and against the topic with an open mind and *think* carefully about how strong or weak they feel the arguments are. To help the audience do this, the seminar members of each project group prepare a simple hand out, outlining the main arguments given in the lecture, which the audience is expected to study before the seminar. After the lecture is completed, the audience is split into *pairs* to freely discuss the ideas in the lecture for 5-minutes. This is to allow the audience to organize their thoughts so that they may better express their ideas in the group discussion. During this time, the teacher can give some feedback to the project group on their lecture and remind the members of the key points they should focus on in the group discussion. After the *pair* phase, the audience is split into 3 or 4 larger discussion groups each led by a member of that seminar's project group for about 10-15-minutes. The leaders first encourage their audience to *share* their feelings on the topic and which arguments they found strongest. After this, the discussion leaders guide their groups to talk about the other ideas from the lecture that have yet to be discussed. These discussions are recorded so that they can be qualitatively analyzed in the post seminar report. Finally, at the end of the seminar, the class rejoins as one group and the discussion leaders give a short summary of the ideas from their discussions. This allows the class to see whether there were similarities or differences in thinking among the groups.

After the seminars are completed, the next three periods are dedicated to having the students write up their seminars. Each group must produce a 2000-3000 word academic report with a background, method, results and discussion, conclusion, and a list of references. In period 10, the groups perform a qualitative analysis of the discussions from their seminar. Each member listens to the recording of their discussion and identifies the main themes, as well as any other interesting ideas, with supporting quotes. Then, each member writes a paragraph reporting the results of their analyses (200-300 words each). In period 11, the students write up the background section of their report (800-1200 words), which consists of a summary of their lecture. In period 12, they write an academic method section (200-300 words) where they describe their project group and outline the processes and procedures they used for designing their seminar and analyzing the discussions. They also write a conclusion paragraph where they summarize their issue and summarize the results from the discussions of the audience as a whole (200-300 words).

In period 13, the groups do a peer review of their report with their other group members, where they check each other's paragraphs for structure, content and language using a checklist, and then collaboratively discuss any possible improvements to complete their first draft. The teacher checks their completed drafts, and in period 14, provides feedback and suggestions for their final draft to each group. While the teacher is providing feedback, the other students prepare a simple presentation on the results of the discussions from their reports. In the final period, the students share their presentations with members of the other project groups and reflect on their experiences during the project. The teacher can also use this opportunity to help the students appreciate the myriad of complex tasks they have completed collaboratively with their group mates and reinforce the key principles of PBL.

Reflections

(Ian) This was my fourth time to do this project with an AE class, so I had already had some experience with student-led seminars. Based on experience, I did not give my students a free choice of topics. I sometimes wonder whether it would be better to give the students a freer choice. However, due to time constraints, I have found that it is better to give the students a limited choice of selected topics that; 1) are major world controversies the they could learn more about; and 2) had effective arguments on both sides that the students could research and generate good discussions.

Overall, the students worked very well together. They could assign jobs effectively, created informative presentations, led their discussions well and could generate a 2000-3000 word report collaboratively. It is always interesting to me that when I introduce what the students will be doing over effectively seven weeks of classes, the students often seem to feel that it will be an enormous task. For example, there is often an audible gasp when I introduce the report and tell them that they will have to complete it within 3 weeks. However, when they realize that 2-3000 words split between 4 students is effectively 500-750 words each, they understand that the task is manageable if they work together as a team. This for me is the greatest strength of this project. The project necessitates that they divide the work up between the members, set goals and collaborate; and when the students look back at what they have accomplished at the end of project, the students often comment that they have gained a good appreciation of the power of collaborative learning.

The biggest issue is that the time-frame for completing the project over 7 weeks is quite tight. Therefore, one thing I have considered is expanding the project over all 14 weeks of the semester. This would allow the groups to research the topics more thoroughly and create more informative lectures. Each group could also have a whole class period for each of their seminars, which would allow more time for things like, pre-lecture schema activation activities, post-lecture discussion activities, and a more meaningful summary at the end of the seminar. Finally, a longer time-frame would give more opportunities for project work training activities. The downsides to this idea are that students would not have the opportunity to work with other students in the class throughout the semester, and they would also not be able to do the second project, where students have the chance to develop quantitative analysis skills. However, this is something that I might consider doing in the future.

(Travis) In my context, the group seminar project was conducted in a class with 19 students, all of whom were Business majors. One aspect that sets this class apart from the other classes included in this paper is that it was the highest level Advanced English class in the Business Department. This meant that a large percentage of the students were returnees, i.e., had near native-level English proficiency. This allowed for a more advanced level of difficulty in the implementation of the group seminar project, and a larger affordance for autonomous learning. One example of this was topic selection. Groups were given the opportunity to choose any topic from procon.org, which resulted in some groups selecting more challenging topics, such as Abortion, Universal Basic Income, and Animal Testing. Students were also instructed to conduct thorough background research on their topics, and were required to include many references in their project write-up (at least 10). This increase in autonomy and required background research resulted in project write-ups that varied in their level of complexity and thoroughness.

A number of positive outcomes were observed while conducting the student-led seminar project with the higher-level business students. The most salient outcome was the development of academic skills. As Kavlu (2017) specifies, one goal of PBL is to foster the development of listening and

speaking skills through presentations and group discussions. Students clearly improved their ability to absorb and interpret information while listening to group lectures, as well as increasing their ability to convey both factual information and opinions during the group discussions. Students also built upon the collaborative team-working skills developed in the Spring semester. I could observe, as discussed in Thuan (2018), that the seminar project allowed students to develop these skills while sharing and assimilating knowledge from each other's research. In fact, I believe that the completely student-led nature of the seminars resulted in student interactions that were more purposeful and authentic, and this further facilitated learner collaboration. Finally, students were able to use authentic sources and real-world examples to contextualize seminar topics more skillfully than in the Spring semester.

Although the outcomes of the seminar project were mostly positive, a few issues arose which may be considered typical in PBL. As discussed in Kavlu (2017), some students felt that the workload was not balanced evenly between group members. This was particularly the case with one student who wrote in the seminar reflection that the other members of this group conducted far less research than was fair. This particular group consisted of only three students, while all of the other groups had four, which brings up another issue - unbalanced group sizes. The workload had to be distributed between a smaller number of students, and this likely contributed to the reported feelings of unfairness. Finally, many students reported that the most difficult aspect of the seminar project was being a discussion leader. In future iterations of this project, I would devote more time to developing skills for leading group discussions.

(Anna) Learning environment in my case could be considered favorable for project-based learning due to student number, their major, and educational background. As for the number of participants, the total number of 13 students was divided into 4 seminar groups: 2 groups of 4 and 2 groups of 3. The concise number allowed a more effective distribution of the instructor's attention. Students' major- Liberal Arts-was another beneficial condition. It appeared that along with the mandatory courses, the Liberal Arts students were offered additional electives in Japanese on some of the controversial topics featured in procon.org and appeared to have prior knowledge. As for the nature and educational background of the student population: around 50 percent of the students either had experience of residing and studying overseas or were international students. In that way, the majority of the seminar participants came with a certain number of communicative and academic skills and a high level of language proficiency. That said, in order to guarantee equal conditions for another 50 percent of the class with a lower level of communicative skills, the final choices of topics and group mates was left to the instructor.

As for the learning outcomes, the major part can be confidentially determined as positive and beneficial in terms of academic skills enhancement, collaboration, and autonomy. As for the academic skills, I have noticed that seminar structure provided a rare opportunity for the students to gain an authentic academic experience of a full research cycle starting with the preparation stages that involved critical thinking of the for and against arguments, presenting, leading seminars' discussions, and more advanced stages of data collection, analysis, and a full-length research paper as an outcome. On a different note, producing a 3000 words-long academic paper can be considered an intellectual challenge and bring a sense of accomplishment. As for the social and equally valuable aspect of collaboration, student-centered autonomous group work served as a motivation enhancer. The students demonstrated a more positive attitude compared to the spring semester that was conducted in a teacher-centered way. Demotivated by the online classes during the spring semester, the participants demonstrated more willingness to communicate by actively resolving any communicative

issues: addressing the instructor for support, openly reflecting on the working process, and negotiating the workload with the group.

Although most of the feedback appeared to be generally satisfying, some considerations should be made for the future projects. Difficulties of time management and inefficient communication arose due to the fact that the class was offered online. As for the communication and collaboration, some participants were not as technically efficient and cooperative as a result. That led to falling behind the schedule of submissions, time constraints and extra pressure on more skilled group members to meet the deadlines. In spite of an abundant amount of time dedicated in every session for group assignments and planning, the online factor appears as a certain obstacle. Even if the course would not be offered in an online format, group dynamics and communication should be closely monitored.

Conclusion and suggestions for future improvement

Project-based learning is a progressing development in education that suggests tremendous benefits in terms of learner development: mastering 21st-century academic skills, autonomy, collaboration is a valuable learning experience an educator can only dream of. In this paper, the authors determined to investigate the accuracy of the statements above in an attempt to weigh up the effectiveness of the project -based learning in our distinguished contexts using a student-led seminar format. We observed that overall student-led seminars followed by a full-length research paper had conspicuous benefits: sensible and autonomous development of public speaking, academic writing, critical listening and thinking, which also led to more inconspicuous enhancement of linguistic competence and confidence and team building skills. On the other hand, the students were forced to cooperate under unusual circumstances and some demonstrated a slight lack of social skills such as negotiation and problem-solving. Another aspect for future improvement is a more balanced time frame that might relieve the pressure of meeting relatively short deadlines and allow leeway for problem-shooting if any group dynamic issues arise. We hope to continue this reflective practice by examining and providing practical solutions for the issues above to make project-based learning more meaningful and accessible in a wider range of elective and mandatory courses.

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多言語教育実践ジャーナル投稿規定

概要：センター内の言語科目における実践報告を年 1 回出版

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Submissions begin at the beginning of every fall semester. The deadline for submission is the last day of November.

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Submissions to the journal will not undergo peer review. However, the Journal & Research Committee will check the basic contents and appearance and determine whether to accept it for publication.

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多言語教育実践ジャーナル　第２巻

（JOURNAL OF MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE, Vol. 2）

発行日　2022年3月1日

発行者　立教大学 外国語教育研究センター
(Center for Foreign Language Education and Research, Rikkyo University)
〒171-8501　東京都豊島区西池袋３－34 －1

製　作　株式会社 遊文舎
〒101-0061　東京都千代田区神田三崎町２－20 －7　水道橋西口会館 8F

ISSN 2436-2204

JOURNAL OF MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

Vol.2

MARCH 2022

RIKKYO UNIVERSITY
Center for Foreign Language Education and Research
FLER