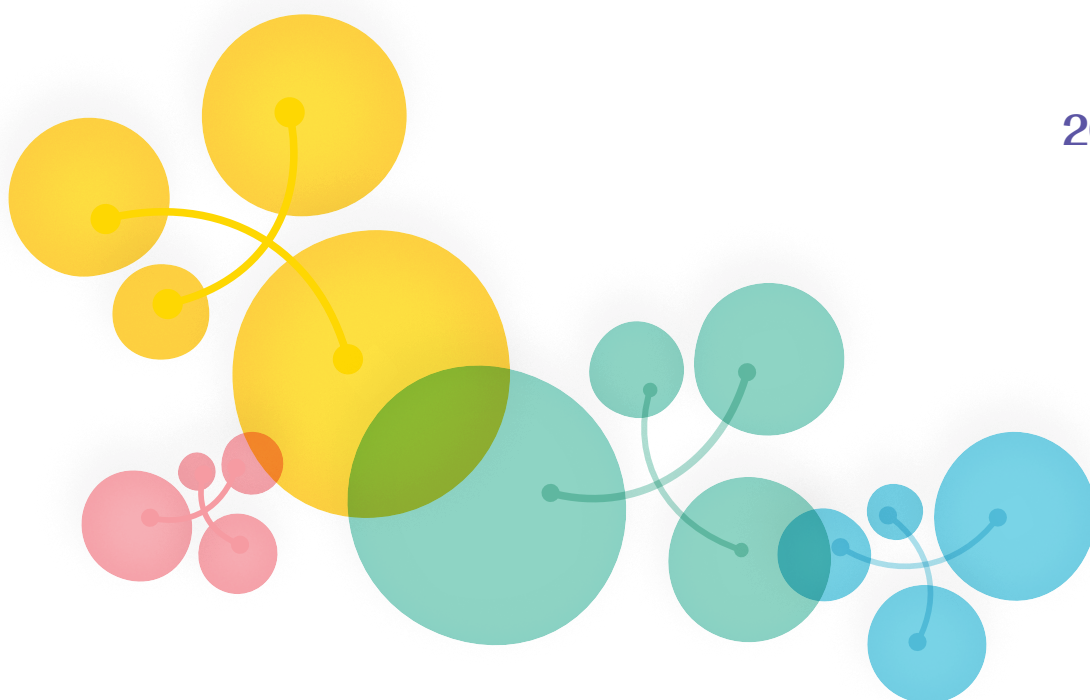


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The Influence of Course Type on Motivation in a Japanese University Context

MAHONEY, Jon

Abstract

In this research article, the author investigates the influence of course type—elective versus mandatory—on motivation, from both the learner and teacher perspectives in a Japanese University educational setting. The author utilizes a mixed methods study to draw on recent qualitative interview data from teachers, and both qualitative and quantitative data from student reflections. Survey data were collected from 279 students, and four adjunct lecturers were interviewed. The analysis explores how motivation fluctuates depending on the nature of the course. Referring to motivation theories such as self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), content-based instruction (Brinton et al., 1989) and Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (1978) the paper aims to illuminate how different course types contribute to or detract from intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, from the perspectives of both students and teachers. The basic findings were that teaching elective classes did have a motivating effect on them, however maintaining a sustainable balance in teacher workload is crucial to upholding motivation.

Keywords: *Motivation, Classes, Elective, Mandatory, CLIL*

Introduction

This research study was carried out at a university, in Tokyo, Japan. The university had recently implemented CLIL-style classes for students in the 2nd year and above, aiming to transfer from language skills courses to English-Medium Instruction (EMI) courses. These classes enable teachers to be creative in their lesson content and delivery. Conversely, first-year students still must complete mandatory classes, which all follow a unified curriculum. Therefore, teachers must still follow these guidelines more strictly. This change has prompted much discussion amongst the author’s peers. In this study, the author sought to investigate how these different course types affect motivation, from both the teachers’ and students’ perspectives, and analyse experiences in university-level courses.

Language education success depends heavily on motivation because it affects students’ work ethics, attitudes and future achievements (Lapădat & Lapădat, 2023; Seven, 2020;

Yue et al., 2022). Students and teachers experience changes in motivation, perception and satisfaction levels based on whether courses are elective or mandatory (Condrón et al., 2025; Wang, 2023).

Several motivational frameworks give credence to the adoption of elective language classes as a way of instilling motivation in learners. Self-determination theory (SDT) argues that competence, relatedness and autonomy are underlying psychological needs for achieving intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). The ability for students to select their courses in elective programs leads to higher autonomy satisfaction and better engagement compared to mandatory classes (Ryan & Deci, 2017). While intrinsic motivation may be a powerful motivating factor for students in elective classes, most of a person's learning is fuelled by extrinsic motivation. Ryan & Deci (2000) offer that most individuals lose the freedom to be internally motivated in early childhood, when they are then subjected to social demands that require the embracement of non-intrinsically appealing tasks. School and education are a prime example of this gradual weakening in intrinsic motivation. Take the case of a first-year university student who is studying to get a credit and passing to the next year, therefore getting closer to graduation and potentially getting a favourable job in the future. They may not be stimulated by the content of a mandatory class—just merely complying with societal pressure. Goal-setting theory presents the idea that learners achieve higher motivation through clear and specific challenging goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). Students in elective courses tend to establish personal learning objectives which become more effective when combined with rich teacher feedback to boost their persistence and achievement (Latham & Locke, 2007). Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) (1978) argues that tasks positioned slightly above students' second language skills become more effective when teachers offer support (scaffolding). If teachers can link these tasks directly to students' personal interests, it creates a motivating atmosphere for students who want to complete the tasks.

By the same token, content-based instruction (CBI) combines language learning in the classroom with authentic subject matter, such as newspaper articles - simultaneously boosting linguistic and cognitive growth (Brinton et al., 1989). CBI is closely linked to content and language integrated learning (CLIL), which Coyle et al. (2010, p. 1) define as

A dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. That is, in the teaching and learning process, there is a focus not only on the content and not only on the language. Each is interwoven, even if the emphasis is greater in one or the other at a given time.

It is a teaching concept that researchers and language educators have become accustomed to hearing about in recent times (Georgiou, 2012). Lorenzo (2007, p. 25) asserts that “CLIL is bilingual education at a time when teaching through one single language is seen as a second-rate education.” A typical example of a CLIL class and setting could be a classroom

in Spain taking a history lesson taught in French. The focus is simultaneously on content and language.

Even though CLIL may seem to be a new and innovative teaching method to many, Coyle (2007, p. 543) points out that “being educated in a language other than one’s mother tongue has been around for over 5000 years.” The Romans employed such a learning style when the aristocracy studied certain subjects in ancient Greek millennia ago (Van den Bergh, 2000). Latin was also the language of instruction in Europe for centuries in fields such as medicine, philosophy and science (Martínez Adrián, 2011). This arguably provides the underpinnings of CLIL philosophy, and obvious parallels can be drawn to today’s use of English as a medium for modern day education.

CLIL and CBI have been on the rise in Japanese higher education in recent times in a response to government policies promoting English-medium instruction, and to fall in line with global educational norms (Brown, 2014; Thompson & McKinley, 2018). In this setting, it has been reported that students harbored positive notions towards CLIL and that this teaching style also increased global awareness amongst students (Ohmori, 2014; Yoshihara et al., 2015). MacGregor (2016), in another university-based study indicated that teachers reported positive impressions of the CLIL approach but also suggested that if it is to succeed in Japan, there needs to be dialogue between teachers and administrators, with a clear direction decided upon. The CLIL approach presents some institutional challenges, such as undeveloped faculty training, inadequate content-language aims and curriculum development (Coyle et al., 2010) but has nevertheless established a foothold in the Japanese educational arena.

Methodology

Data were collected from all the author’s first year students (spring semester $n = 177$, fall semester $n = 99$), with the main intention of gathering their feelings about the six English mandatory classes they were required to take in the first year (five discussion classes, two reading and writing classes, two presentation, three debate classes and four e-Learning classes, which consisted primarily of online English study for students, together with three face-to-face communicative classes with large class sizes). A Google Form was issued at the end of each semester in the final class to gather this data. Data were also collected from the author’s one elective class, which was the subject “Health & Wellness” ($n = 3$) to retrieve the students’ feelings about this class. There were also two open-ended questions at the end of the surveys, providing qualitative data, which asked students to give examples of activities in which they found pleasure in their classes, and activities that they did not care for, to detect what students found motivating.

The author also carried out face-to-face interviews with four current adjunct lecturers. All these lecturers had been teaching at this university for at least four years, so they had plenty of experience teaching classes. Each of the lecturers taught different elective classes,

and each interview focussed on gathering the lecturers' perspectives on teaching their elective and mandatory classes. Each interview lasted about ten to fifteen minutes and had a total of eight questions (see Appendix 3) and was recorded and transcribed later. The data were then categorized into themes, with the aim of providing valuable insights into the teachers' perspectives. Dörnyei (2007) asserts that interviews work well as a flexible research instrument on the grounds that they are well-known as a communication routine. Given that the author planned to collect data from four individuals, this was a smaller-scale part of the study, which as Mackey and Gass (2012, p. 183) mention about qualitative research "tends to operate on a small scale, to provide a detailed and nuanced picture of individual settings, participants, or instances of interaction." The author wanted to use interviews to explore teachers' feelings and perceptions of teaching mandatory classes and elective (CLIL) classes, and to query what had been rewarding and challenging for them, and how these had impacted their teaching motivation. Since the author has been teaching at the university for 6 years, he felt that he had sufficient knowledge of the topic to develop pertinent questions during the interview, which has been deemed essential by Dörnyei (2007). The author employed semi-structured interviews since this style gave him the flexibility to delve deeper into any answers given from the original set of questions prepared and gave him the possibility to ask different follow-up questions to each interviewee (Mackey & Gass, 2012). The author knew the personalities of the teachers that he was planning to interview were quite different, so the semi-structured method allowed him to steer each interview in the appropriate way to gather pertinent detail. When constructing his main questions, the author was influenced by Evers and De Boer (2012), who proposed that researchers ought to concentrate on scope, steering and level of abstraction. Since the author strived to focus on teacher and student motivation in mandatory and elective classes, the questions were closely aligned to these topics. The author framed the interview according to work by Kvale (1996), by briefing the interviewee about the context prior to the interview, as well as debriefing post – interview, in which the main points learned from the interview were mentioned.

Richards (2003) refers to some important interview techniques that the author took on board and implemented in his interviews. Foremost points included listening carefully, offering supportive feedback and letting the interview take its own shape. Furthermore, question types such as opening, check/reflect, follow-up and probe as suggested by Richards (2003), were utilized in my interview. The author also bore in mind interview tips proposed by Robson (2002) including listening more than speaking, enjoying the interview, and phrasing questions in a clear way.

The interviews took place in a classroom within the university. The author made a schedule with all the teachers in advance to ensure that he could carry out the interviews at the most convenient times for each interviewee. The interviews all took place at the end of term in January, when all the teachers had fresh memories of their teaching experience from that academic year. All the dialogue was recorded and afterwards transcribed, while notes were

also made during the interviews to aid the data analysis procedure (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). Thematic analysis was the method chosen for analyzing the data, which Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 6) state is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data.” One of the reasons this method was chosen is its flexibility—the sample size was small, and this allowed the author to delve deeply into the data gathered.

Before the launch of the study, the author received ethical approval from the university to carry out the study. An application form was submitted to the journal committee that explained his research goals, the author’s Google Form surveys, and interview questions. All the students signed consent forms distributed by the author in lesson one of each class, which also contained a Japanese version on the reverse side. All the teachers also signed consent forms given to them in person by the author.

In summary, the author designed the instruments and procedures above with the following research questions in mind: (1) What factors contributed to student motivation and demotivation among first-year students enrolled in mandatory classes in the spring and fall semesters? (2) What factors influenced teacher motivation and the challenges faced when teaching both mandatory and elective classes? (3) What factors shaped the motivation and challenges encountered by students in elective classes?

Results

Mandatory Class Preferences

The first question of the survey asked students to indicate which mandatory classes were the most interesting for them in the spring and fall semesters. As can be seen in Figure 1 below, the discussion class was deemed to be the most interesting for the first-year students in spring. 71.9% (n = 127) chose this class as the most interesting. This result was anticipated, since discussion is a small class in which students get to know each other deeply, with a focus on oral communication. Each lesson follows an almost identical structure, with all students being taught the same language items (For more information on the course, see Hurling, 2012). Teachers are expected to teach the classes in a very similar way, although that is not an essential requirement. Discussion was followed by reading and writing with 24.9% (n = 44). This class is usually the most time-consuming for teachers and students alike, since students must write essays in various genres and teachers must grade them. Teachers have the latitude to teach this class in a manner that they feel most appropriate, allowing for more flexibility, with a textbook being optional. The e-Learning class scored lowest, with only 3.4% (n = 6) indicating that they enjoyed this class the most. This class requires students to complete online lessons to improve their English reading and grammar skills, with a primary goal of boosting TOEIC scores. The classes only have three face-to-face classes with their teacher, with large class sizes, so it is difficult for teachers and students alike to form meaningful bonds in class. This issue has been touched upon by Dörnyei (2009), who argues that the most significant factor in fostering class

member relationships is giving learners the opportunities to learn about each other as much as possible, which includes sharing meaningful personal information.

The results displayed less separation in the fall semester (see Figure 2). Debate was voted as the most interesting, with 40.4% (n = 40) indicating that they enjoyed this class the most. Reading and writing was again voted second, with 30.3 (n = 30) selecting this, with presentation class narrowly behind 29.3% (n = 29). The debate class has only been taught since 2020, but since it allows students to debate topics that they are interested in (Mahoney, 2022), this may account for these results. The author himself allows students to choose many topics and engage in plenty of group work to allow them to delve deeply into the topics, such as the environment, AI, and gender. The students seemingly appreciate the time given to work together on the topics, validating the 100-minute lesson time length of classes which enables them to immerse themselves in topics in detail and promotes greater interaction (Braine & Yorozu, 1998; Byrne, 2024). Since there are many types of individual differences between the students, the teachers need to take heed and attempt to group the students together in a harmonious way (Mahoney, 2020). It has been previously reported by Mahoney (2022) that facilitating asynchronous platforms to practice and broach their opinions led to students rapidly taking on board the nature of debate, refining their ideas and the enhancement of in-class discussions and debate.

Figure 1

Spring Semester (Which Mandatory Class was the most interesting?)

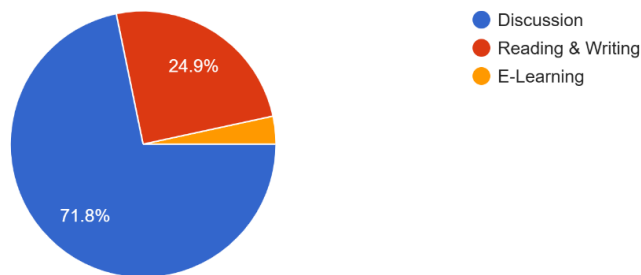
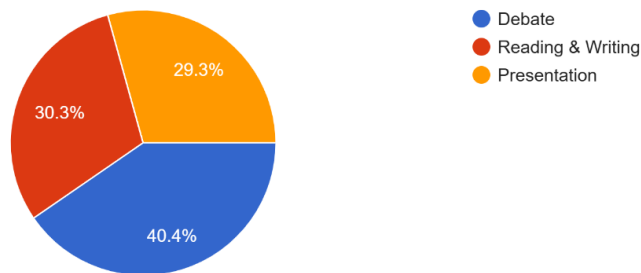


Figure 2

Fall Semester (Which Mandatory Class was the most interesting?)



The results of the two surveys (Figures 1 & 2) indicate that overall students were satisfied with the mandatory classes provided in the spring and fall. However, there was a marked difference between the semesters, with students perceiving the spring classes to be superior. Students indicated a preference for all spring classes in all four questions (see Table 1 below) with only the level of agreement of one question not decreasing more than ± 0.20 . Question one decreased in agreement by -0.03 , suggesting that students could learn about interesting topics in both spring and fall. The first to decrease significantly was item 2, which dropped from a mean of 4.18 to 3.95. Although students had indicated that the topics of the classes were interesting, the lessons themselves were deemed less interesting in the fall. Item 3 had a drop of -0.31 (4.06 to 3.75). This suggests that students were less motivated in the fall classes. Item 4 had the highest drop-off -0.40 , from 3.77 to 3.37. This indicated that students felt that the learning materials in the spring semester were superior, and therefore more engaging.

These results allow for tacit interpretations regarding the motivation of students in spring and fall. It is perhaps understandable that there is a drop-off in motivation in the fall. The students have completed their first semester, so the novelty of being at university has worn off somewhat. They have already made friends and joined their clubs, so excitement levels naturally fall. One hypothesis for this result is that the discussion module in spring is a long-established class, and the textbook has been refined over a couple of decades. The layout is easy to understand and follow. The focus is for students to communicate, with minimal writing activities. On the other hand, the debate class in the fall was only established in 2020. Class sizes vary from about 20–23 students, so members cannot get to know each other so well. The small size of the discussion class, with only ten members, could be the main reason for these findings. Additionally, debate requires students to research deeply, point out weaknesses, and make refutations against the other team's arguments. The core pedagogical principles are closely aligned, with CLIL and its four theoretical pillars: Culture (Community), Content, Communication, and Cognition, (Debate Committee, 2025), thereby laying a foundation for this learning style for the students in their future elective classes.

Furthermore, the debate textbook does not have versions for each students' levels; therefore, teachers are encouraged to pick and choose appropriate activities from it and provide suitable supplementary materials which may vary from teacher to teacher. The layout in each chapter in the textbook is different, which may sometimes be confusing for the students to comprehend. On the other hand, the discussion textbook has two different levels (Level 1, designed for students with a TOEIC score between 480–680 and over, and Level 2, designed for students with TOEIC scores 479 and below) and has a consistent layout in each chapter, with a unit chapter reading, two practice activities and two discussions. Having consistent unit layout has been linked with many benefits for learners, including coherent learning progression, improved comprehension and increased satisfaction and confidence (Keller, 1987; Mayer, 2009; Skela & Burazer, 2021) and may be why students signalled a preference for learning materials

in the spring semester.

The descriptive trends shown below suggest several possible relationships within the dataset, although no direct causal effects can be confirmed. As a result, the results should be treated tentatively. More detailed analysis will be required to confirm them.

Table 1

Results of the Spring and Fall Semester Questionnaires

<i>Item</i>	<i>Average Level of Agreement*</i>	
	<i>Spring Semester (n=177)</i>	<i>Fall Semester (n=99)</i>
1. I could learn about topics I was interested in the mandatory English classes	4.08	4.05
2. The mandatory English classes this semester were interesting	4.18	3.95
3. I was highly motivated in the mandatory English classes this semester	4.06	3.75
4. The materials and textbooks in the mandatory classes this semester were engaging	3.77	3.37

*Agreement was measured on a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree)

Student Enjoyment and Motivation in Fall Mandatory Classes

The final two questions of the survey were open-ended questions meant to elicit qualitative data, asking students what they found rewarding and, conversely, disapproved of in the spring semester (see Appendix 1). Student reflections from the spring semester revealed high levels of enjoyment connected to communicative and interpersonal elements. The three mandatory English classes students took were, discussion, reading and writing, and e-Learning. The most popular activity reported by students was discussion/ group discussion/ talking with classmates with 110 students indicating this was the most enjoyable activity they took part in. Second was speaking English/Using English actively (n = 28), and third was Making Friends/Building Relationships (n = 22). Since the discussion class is small and usually only contains 10–12 students, it gives them the perfect opportunity to participate in these activities, whilst also getting to know their classmates deeply. These findings show that students were heavily dependent on peer collaboration and social elements, lending credence to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1978), which claims that interactions with more knowledgeable peers and adults leads to improved cognitive development amongst learners.

On the other hand, the most popular answer for what students did not enjoy in the spring semester was nothing (n = 47), suggesting that most students were fulfilled by the semester’s activities. The next most common answer was homework/assignments/ tasks (n = 23), followed by tests (n = 13) and reading (n = 10). All these answers align with Self-Determination theory

(Deci & Ryan, 1985), where a lack of autonomy in tasks like homework and test preparation can reduce intrinsic motivation. A total of nine students also reported “early morning classes” as a challenge. This may be connected to students living far away from campus and having to commute early morning to make first-period classes.

Student Enjoyment and Motivation in Fall Mandatory Classes

Students’ reflections of the fall semester also indicated that enjoyment was connected to communicative and interpersonal elements. However, there was more variety and specific answers given than in the spring semester. The most popular activity was group work/discussion (n = 33), suggesting that allowing students to communicate in groups is valuable for them. This was followed by debate (n = 16), giving presentations (n = 11) and writing (n = 9). Since this was the second semester, some students may have become more accustomed to writing and therefore started to enjoy it more.

The students also reported more specific unenjoyable activities in the fall semester. The most common was homework/assignments (n = 19), followed by nothing (n = 15) and then giving presentations (n = 14). This number would suggest that some students really enjoy giving presentations but slightly more do not. Other findings included reading (n = 10) and class difficulty/ structure (n = 9). Since the debate class is more complex than the discussion class, it was understandable that students indicated this.

Student Fulfilment in Elective Classes

The three students in the author’s elective class all answered “strongly agree” to the five closed questions, suggesting that they enjoyed the class. In the two open qualitative questions, they mostly mentioned that they enjoyed having discussions with their classmates:

I enjoyed free discussion about topics.

The teacher was friendly, and because there were only a few students, we were able to talk a lot, and it was fun. He was also a fun and easy-going person who was open to light jokes.

Discussion with classmates.

Since there were only three students in this class, the sample size is too small for the data to be given serious consideration, but it is important to remember that qualitative analysis does not have the sample size dilemma that quantitative research seeking to make population inferences does (Vitta et al., 2025). This small size meant that the author had a lot of time to get to know the students and listen deeply to what they said. The author often took part in class activities, such as pair work. It has been reported that direct teacher involvement in class tasks and activities such as pair work fosters a collaborative environment, reducing barriers in which students are more likely to take risks in communicating in a second language

(Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). Since the topic was health and wellness, the author can say that because he listened carefully to students, and remembered things that they had said, even weeks later, the students grew to have confidence in him and respect him more, leading to them gradually sharing their worries and anxieties in confidence, with a collaborative and respectful environment being established in the classroom. The author contends, with a degree of confidence that the students had a meaningful and beneficial time in his class. Careful listening by ESL teachers plays an important role in creating supportive learning environments, as it certifies students' voices and fosters greater confidence in language use (Rost, 2011).

Teacher Findings

The four teachers were all interviewed in January, at the end of the academic year. The teachers had taught a variety of CLIL classes in the past academic year, including Health & Wellness, Film studies, International Business, Multimodal Communication, and IELTS. The teachers were all asked eight questions, to gauge their feelings on teaching elective and mandatory classes (see Appendix 2). Teachers were referred to L1–L4 (Lecturer 1–Lecturer 4), which was decided by the order in which they were interviewed. The most common themes will now be considered, discussed, and reflected upon.

Elective Classes

From a teacher's standpoint, the elective classes offered challenges and rewards. The most common challenge mentioned was the time-consuming preparation needed, especially when few pre-existing CLIL lesson materials were available. CLIL courses posed additional challenges due to the unfamiliarity of the content, and the need to make this content subject-specific (Coyle et al., 2010):

(L4) I didn't have any content knowledge when it comes to business. I researched what textbooks are highly recommended. Creating all the materials was so challenging because the textbook didn't have like slides or anything.

(L1) The hardest thing was making it all from scratch. Time consuming to make all the materials. And then after that, managing everything going on. Basically, you must do everything yourself. So, trying to figure out how to do CLIL was challenging.

On the other hand, teachers found the teaching electives personally fulfilling. They enjoyed aligning course content with their own academic interests. This opportunity for pedagogical creativity was reported as having a strong impact on motivation. These results give credence to findings by Pearson and Moomaw (2005), who argue that teacher effectiveness is elevated when they are granted autonomy and flexibility:

(L3) I spent a lot of time planning this course. I enjoyed the process of it because multimodal communication is something that I studied in university. So, I was happy to be able to use the stuff I learned. The topic area was something more personal than presentation or debate or whatever.

(L2) The film studies class, I studied it in my undergrad study. They do some practical work taking different camera angles and filming their own final film project. So that's fun to see them using English to work together in groups and get engaged with it.

Challenges in Mandatory Classes

All the teachers reported that mandatory classes were more difficult to manage. The main reasons given were behavioural problems such as lateness and inattentiveness. Since it was widely reported by first-year students that early morning classes were the most unenjoyable aspect of classes for them, this complaint is understandable. Uneven student motivation was also stated along with issues related to absenteeism. While some students displayed high motivation, many seemed to be doing the bare minimum, and attending only to get a credit for the class. This class was seen as suitable for higher-level students. Having lower-level students debate each other and scaffolding the content was seen as problematic:

(L4) Regarding debate class. I feel like sometimes I give them too much scaffolding. Then, sometimes too little scaffolding. Every semester, I've taught debate differently. And I don't know if I'm getting better at it. I would really like to like to watch other people's debate classes because mandatory debate is a hard subject to teach for me.

(L2) Debate, I feel is excellent for the higher-level students. But I feel that it's not the best content of lesson to teach to lower-level learners of English.

(L4) So what I find challenging about presentation is when students don't come to class and they don't learn the material that we learned during class. So, they obviously are not applying the same principles, and they get upset. That's what I get most upset about. That's challenging when students don't come to presentation because every class is important.

(L1) So, in this term, especially around November, they started being late all the time. And didn't seem to be paying attention anymore. There was like a big drop-off. I think they were prioritising other classes.

Scaffolding is seen by Pinner (2013, p. 51) as: "The interaction and negotiation of meaning between expert and less expert speakers." Scaffolding is relevant for CLIL and the

debate class, as it's the process of supporting students throughout their learning process and then gradually removing this support as students become more independent, when they can start to explore topics themselves. Since teachers are faced with various student English proficiency levels and motivation, teachers will need to utilize different types of scaffolding for each class. The point that some teachers reported debate as suitable for higher levels is telling, and the pace of learning in each class can vary greatly. Suitable scaffolding and careful management of groups, such as placing higher-level students with lower-level students, especially in a level 4 class, may enable teachers to navigate this class smoothly.

Class Size

Another common theme was the mention of class sizes. Discussion was singled out by one teacher, since the class size is 10–12 students, making it the smallest mandatory class in terms of size. Since the size of elective classes varies, this was understandable:

(L2) Discussion is fantastic. Hearing all the different opinions about the topics and seeing them use the different discussion skills to say their own ideas. The 10-student size of the classes is the right for teachers to be able to give them feedback and the attention that they need. They need attention, that's the thing.

(L4) I loved my students so much because there was only like six or seven and they're all upperclassmen and they were all very interested in the topic, so, like, it was better to make relationships with the students. Like, easier to go and talk to them about the content. And they're better at English.

(L2) In the past, when I taught e-Learning, the issue would be the large number of students in one class. I think it's too large.

(L2) I think there was over 30 students in the film studies class, and I initially designed the syllabus for 20 or less. And so, I've had to change and adapt the syllabus. So, take out writing assignments and change the presentations, at the beginning of class instead. And I can't focus on the students individually as much.

Small class sizes are particularly important in EFL contexts because they allow teachers to be able to provide more individualized attention and feedback, which supports learner autonomy and increases opportunities for meaningful interaction (Nunan, 2015). What's more, frequent targeted feedback has been shown to enhance learners' motivation and language development, especially when delivered in supportive, low-anxiety environments (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). The small class sizes are likely one of the main reasons why the discussion class was seen in such a favourable light by students. One of the teachers (L2) also mentioned:

“And I think even other universities I’ve heard say that they kind of respect Rikkyo’s discussion curriculum.”

Workload and Efficiency

Workload was a significant factor influencing motivation for teachers. Several teachers mentioned that repeated teaching of the same elective class would be more manageable and enjoyable due to familiarity and the refined content of their classes:

(L3) I spent all that time doing that preparation for the elective course last year and now it’s basically done. Although I will refine it. If I had like three elective courses this term, that wouldn’t be enjoyable because the preparation would be insane. Especially if it was in a topic area which I had no particular interest.

(L2) I especially enjoyed teaching the film studies class. I’d like to continue teaching that and keep trying to work on it and make it better and improve on it as much as possible.

(L4) I would like to be given the same course, because it’s just so much work preparing. I’ve already got a lot of work to do for my reading & writing classes too.

It was clear that all the teachers had spent a lot of time preparing their syllabi for the elective courses. This justifiably led to feelings of wanting to continue teaching the course and improving the content. It might be advisable for teachers of the same classes to meet and compare their syllabi and classes to achieve this.

Student Motivation and Course Structure

One of the most revelatory comparisons was in homework completion. Students in mandatory classes, though often less enthusiastic in class, were more likely to complete homework assignments. This trend could be put down to stronger grading policies and accountability structures. In contrast, electives often suffered from incomplete homework assignments, particularly in flipped learning models:

(L1) Next year, that’s something I’m going to change. I’m going to give them a quiz at the start of class.

This quote underscores the link between accountability and motivation and supports changes in assessment design to increase out-of-class engagement.

The teacher in this final excerpt highlights one of the realities of teaching—that not all classes are the same. It is only natural that some classes will be more difficult than others:

(L3) The biggest challenge is dealing with unmotivated students. You're inevitably going to get students who don't really want to be there, basically. When the students are motivated, just the flip side to that. It doesn't matter if it's mandatory or elective. They're there, they want to do well, they want to get a good grade.

Discussion

The CLIL program at the author's university is still a relatively new one. From the findings of this study, it can be argued that it is going smoothly and has the potential to be improved. This study affirms that elective and mandatory courses offer distinct motivational elements for students and teachers. It could be argued that the university's current policy of allocating teachers approximately 80% mandatory classes and the rest as electives is a fair and balanced one. Furthermore, matching teachers to suitable elective classes that they have prior knowledge of or an interest in would seem to be a very advantageous policy to continue.

Since some teachers mentioned that they were teaching topics that they had studied at the undergraduate level and that this was rewarding for them, this suggests that teachers enjoy preparing materials in subjects that they have prior knowledge of. It is feasible that this will have the ripple effect of teachers being more likely to create more meaningful and engaging materials for students in this environment. A flexible implementation, as asserted by Davies (2017), which grants the teachers a flexible environment in classes depending on the types of students they may have in a particular class, seems rational.

The observation that all teachers mentioned that creating materials for elective classes was time-consuming is understandable. Faculty training is a valuable way of supporting teachers to give them fresh ideas and perspectives on their lessons. Meeting with teachers who teach the same elective classes is also a possible way of providing peer-support. However, teachers may vary greatly in teaching styles and methods, and collaboration may be lacking in higher education settings (Pérez-Cañado, 2012), while the balance of faculty training and teacher autonomy is unclear. Granting teachers freedom over what and how they teach has been reported to produce more positive and supportive teachers, as well as creating more collaborative learning environments (Louis & Marks, 1998), which may have a positive impact on student engagement and success in the classroom (Keiser & Shen, 2000). Allocating teachers' autonomy may also benefit student learning, as this condition may increase teachers' commitment (Marks & Louis, 1999). Giving teachers the opportunities to observe their peers' lessons may be an advantageous tactic in improving and enlightening fellow teacher techniques and scaffolding.

The significance of class sizes was often mentioned as important. Both students and teachers reported that they enjoyed group work activities. Group work is especially important for Japanese learners of a second language, because it creates opportunities for authentic communication, peer-support, and collaborative problem-solving, which can reduce anxiety and increase confidence in speaking. Research has shown that cooperative learning fosters

both language acquisition and learner autonomy in EFL contexts (Dörnyei, 2007; Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006). By allowing group work in elective classes, such as project-based work, and giving individualized feedback and attention, a positive learning environment can be achieved, whereby students can engage in meaningful communication with each other (Mehisto et al., 2008). If students are given this opportunity, they may process the content in a deeper fashion, by ‘engaging in their own experience and previous knowledge in an interactive process’ (Light et al., 2009, p. 52). In addition, attentive teacher listening enhances classroom interaction, enabling learners to feel understood and resulting in heightened motivation and engagement (Brown, 2014). Smaller class sizes provide teachers with opportunities to offer individualized attention, thereby increasing the likelihood that students will display higher levels of motivation.

Conclusion

Teachers need to be mindful of different student levels and alter their classes and learning goals for mandatory classes. Ultimately, teachers need to be prepared and flexible because each class is unique, with different personalities and chemistry contained within them. Class sizes may be large or small, so altering materials and activities is commonly essential. As one teacher offered some philosophical reflection that classes are: “*hit and miss*,” which is only natural in this profession. Regardless of how much planning and preparation a teacher fashions, students will inevitably shift in and out of a Vygotskian state of readiness to study (Chaiklin, 2003). It is necessary for teachers to have a variety of activities in their 100-minute lessons to maintain student motivation at an optimal level. Listening carefully to what students say and giving rich feedback, together with the adoption of group work activities and careful group management, may have a positive impact on student motivation. The data from this study suggest that appropriately aligning teachers with elective subjects can exert a positive influence on learner motivation and learner outcomes; however, a larger sample size of elective students in any possible future research would be able to garner more salient conclusions in this realm.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Student Mandatory Classes Survey (Spring & Fall)

1. Which mandatory class was most interesting for you?
2. I could learn about topics I was interested in mandatory classes.
3. The mandatory classes this semester were interesting.
4. I was highly motivated in the mandatory classes this semester.
5. The materials and textbooks in the mandatory English classes this semester were engaging.
6. What was something you enjoyed in the mandatory classes?
7. What was something that you did not enjoy in the mandatory classes?

Appendix 2: Student Elective Classes Survey (Fall)

1. What elective classes did you take this year?
2. I could learn about topics I was interested in.
3. I was highly motivated in the elective English classes this year.
4. The materials in the elective English classes were engaging.
5. I was more motivated in my elective classes than in my first-year English mandatory classes.
6. What was something that you enjoyed in your elective classes?
7. What was something that you did not enjoy in your elective classes?

Appendix 3: Teacher Interview

1. What electives did you teach this academic year?
2. What was challenging for you?
3. What was enjoyable or rewarding?
4. What was challenging teaching mandatory classes?
5. What was enjoyable or rewarding teaching mandatory classes?
6. Do you prefer teaching elective or mandatory classes? Why?
7. What were some differences between teaching elective and mandatory classes?
8. Would you like to teach the same elective class next year? Why?

Cultivating Multimodal Literacy in a Japanese CLIL Context: An Action Research Study

ROOKS, Justin

Abstract

This study explores the design, implementation, and outcomes of a 14-week multimodal communication course conducted at a Japanese university, guided by an action research framework. Drawing on Burns's (2010) iterative cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection, the course sought to deepen students' understanding of social semiotics, visual communication, and other theoretical perspectives relevant to multimodality. A mixed methods approach, including pre- and post-course image analyses, student surveys, teacher interviews, and assessment of final presentations, provided comprehensive data on learners' progress and perceptions. Findings indicate that students demonstrated marked improvements in their ability to deconstruct and interpret diverse texts, applying concepts related to multimodality and semiotics more effectively by the end of the term. Surveys further revealed high levels of satisfaction, with many students reporting heightened awareness of how social and cultural narratives are embedded in everyday media. While challenges arose in addressing abstract theory and varying English proficiency levels, the action research process facilitated timely pedagogical adjustments, such as simplified readings, interactive tasks, and iterative feedback loops, that supported learners' evolving needs. The results suggest that practitioner-oriented, reflective practice can successfully integrate multimodal analysis into a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) context, fostering advanced literacy skills and cross-cultural awareness. This study thus contributes to ongoing discussions on how action research may enhance the teaching of complex theoretical frameworks, pointing to broader applications in global higher education.

Keywords: *Multimodal communication, Social semiotics, Action research, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)*

Introduction

As communication technologies continue to evolve at an unprecedented pace, the ability to convey and interpret meaning across multiple modes—text, visuals, gestures, and audio—has

become increasingly important. Gunther Kress (2010), a pioneer in the field of multimodality, has aptly observed that communication is always and inevitably multimodal, and highlighted the necessity of developing multimodal literacy to engage with the complex interplay of modes in contemporary communication. In language education, this shift pushes learners beyond traditional reading and writing to engage with layered, media-rich texts that mirror real-world contexts. For Japanese students of English, incorporating multimodal elements can be especially beneficial: it not only develops language skills through authentic tasks but also introduces cultural and disciplinary content in a more engaging way.

Against this backdrop, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has gained traction as a framework that allows educators to integrate subject matter and language learning simultaneously. In their pivotal book, *CLIL: Content and language integrated learning*, Coyle et al. (2010) define CLIL as “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (p. 1). They develop this framework further by considering how this methodology enriches both subject knowledge and linguistic competence through their 4Cs Framework, which encompasses Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. In this approach, content refers to the disciplinary knowledge or subject matter forming the basis of instruction, and communication is the active use of language to articulate and engage with that content. Cognition involves developing students’ critical thinking and problem-solving abilities so they can analyze and reflect upon new information, while culture highlights intercultural awareness and global citizenship. Together, these elements ensure balanced goals in CLIL, promote thorough scaffolding, and encourage active learning through collaborative, project-based methods. By integrating subject content with language development, CLIL provides an immersive environment where students engage with academic and professional materials while simultaneously honing their linguistic skills. This dual-focus approach encourages higher-order thinking, cultural awareness, and a more natural development of communication skills.

Within this CLIL framework, a course on multimodal communication aligns naturally with the 4Cs by integrating content mastery in tandem with English language development. By emphasizing *content*, the course focuses on core principles of multimodality and social semiotic theory. Through *communication*, students actively discuss and analyze these abstract ideas in English, thereby gaining familiarity with disciplinary terminology and functional language use. Higher-level *cognition* is cultivated as students critically examine how textual and visual components interact in various media, such as advertisements, news reports, or digital content, challenging them to synthesize ideas and explore deeper meanings. Finally, *culture* remains central, as the course examines how the production and interpretation of texts can differ across societies, preparing learners to engage in culturally diverse contexts. Weaving these elements into a cohesive curriculum highlights how CLIL fosters both subject mastery and language proficiency, demonstrating its relevance to multimodal literacy and broader educational contexts.

At Rikkyo University, and in Japan more broadly, the implementation of CLIL-based curricula in higher education is still evolving. Studies (Ikeda, 2013; Ikeda et al., 2022) have indicated that within the Japanese education system, CLIL shows significant promise for fostering both language proficiency and deeper engagement with subject content, but they also highlight the practical challenges of materials selection, language support, and teacher training. In line with this evolving focus, the curriculum at Rikkyo University has shifted toward a CLIL-based model with the intention of equipping students with the skills to engage deeply with content in English, while also introducing them to collaborative learning methods and various presentation formats (Ueno, 2024). Furthermore, it has been argued that a CLIL-based curriculum can help to cultivate multidimensional competencies that enable Rikkyo's students to navigate today's complex society with integrated knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Yamamoto & Niita, 2021). Although these changes represent a meaningful step in merging content and language skills, the integration of multimodality into such a curriculum remains largely underexplored. Limited research exists on how CLIL-based courses might be adapted to incorporate a multimodal focus that develops students' practical communication skills and multimodal competence. This gap underscores the need for a carefully designed course that addresses both linguistic competence and the ability to produce and interpret multimodal texts.

Literature Review

Multimodal Communication

Multimodal communication and social semiotics emphasize that meaning is constructed not only through language but also through various modes, including images, gestures, layout, and design. Halliday's (1978) concept of language as a social semiotic system emphasizes that language cannot be fully understood apart from the social and cultural contexts in which it is produced. Expanding on this idea, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that visual design follows structured "grammars" akin to verbal syntax, shaping relationships, emphasis, and hierarchy across multiple modes of communication. By extending Halliday's focus on context beyond language, they argue that the formal features of images, layouts, and other multimodal elements serve as resources that are designed to convey specific meanings. In addition, Jewitt (2009) highlights the growing prevalence of multimodal texts, from advertisements to educational resources, in everyday life and emphasizes the corresponding need for individuals to develop more sophisticated interpretive skills. Marcel Danesi (2019) also offers an insight into the nuances of multimodality and semiotics in a modern setting, by illustrating how metaphors and analogies underpin everyday cognition and communication, from the use of emojis to the elaboration of pop culture references. Multimodal texts often draw on well-known film scenes, celebrity personas, or iconic cultural symbols to evoke shared associations and emotional responses. This pragmatic orientation can serve as a helpful bridge in the classroom, showing students the real-world relevance of social semiotic and multimodal concepts. This is

particularly salient in second-language settings, where students must increasingly navigate not only the linguistic features of a text, but also the multimodal conventions of texts on a variety of diverse media platforms.

Social Semiotics

In addition to the aforementioned theories, much of the groundwork of social semiotics can be traced to linguists and semioticians like Ferdinand de Saussure (1983), Roman Jakobson (1960), and Roland Barthes (1972, 1977) whose collective work introduced foundational concepts. Saussure’s signifier-signified framework and his emphasis on “signs,” laid the basis for understanding the symbolic nature of language, while Jakobson’s communication model highlighted the interplay of factors such as context and contact in shaping messages. Additionally, Barthes’s insights into myth and connotation revealed how cultural ideologies are naturalized in everyday signs and he highlighted how consumer goods, photographs, and advertisements reflect and perpetuate broader cultural narratives. Taken together, these theories offer a vital analytical lens for a course on multimodal communication by enabling students to interpret and produce texts that blend visual, linguistic, and cultural elements in meaningful ways. The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies provides an additional suite of useful concepts, particularly the work of Stuart Hall (1980) and John Fiske (1987). Hall’s encoding-decoding model highlights how audiences bring their own experiences and social positions to interpreting media, which can lead to negotiated or oppositional readings of texts. Fiske, similarly, frames media consumption as an active process of meaning-making, reinforcing the concept that students are not just passive recipients of information but rather co-creators of meaning. Incorporating these ideas into a multimodal course helps students develop a critical awareness of how cultural context shapes both the production and reception of texts.

Digital Contexts

Extending the study of multimodality into modern, digital contexts adds a further layer of theory to those already considered. Because students now interact with an array of digital texts—ranging from short-form social media posts on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram to fully multimodal environments like YouTube and TikTok—it is crucial for educators and students to consider how these texts differ in structure and function from traditional print-based forms. Central to understanding these forms is the concept of “affordances,” which Hutchby (2001) describes as the ways technology both enables and constrains user actions: for instance, X’s character limit promotes succinct communication, whereas longer, more nuanced discussion is less feasible. Papacharissi (2014) expands this perspective by illustrating how design features influence emotional connections and identity construction on platforms like Instagram or Facebook. At the same time, the content that circulates—be it memes, viral videos, or remix culture—also plays a defining role in shaping meaning. Shifman’s (2014) analysis of memes, for instance, illustrates how humor, cultural

references, and visual remixing allow these digital artifacts to spread rapidly and influence public discourse. The synergy between technological affordances and the multimodal content itself fosters distinct online cultures, where emotional resonance, interactivity, and visual appeal are integral to how messages are produced, circulated, and interpreted. This underscores the powerful interplay between platform design and the evolving forms of digital communication.

Multimodal Communication and CLIL

Despite the robust theoretical landscape, relatively few published studies focus on teaching social semiotics and multimodal communication within a CLIL or second-language learning environment. Much of the existing literature on multimodality addresses native-speaker contexts, presupposing advanced proficiency in English and often neglecting the added linguistic challenges faced by international students for whom English is a second or foreign language. Where studies do exist, for example in *Multimodal teaching and learning: The rhetorics of the science classroom* (Kress et al., 2014), they tend to discuss broad instructional strategies for multimodal literacy, rather than detailed accounts of sequential, action-research-based interventions. This gap in the literature highlights the unique nature of the present project: it aims not only to introduce core semiotic concepts but also to do so within a Japanese university course taught in English, accounting for the dual challenge of language acquisition and conceptual understanding. As a result, this research has the potential to inform future curriculum design in similar multilingual and multicultural contexts, providing examples of how and when to scaffold complex theories through carefully selected and adapted materials and activities.

Methodology

Research Questions

This paper details the design, implementation, and evaluation of a 14-week multimodal communication course for Japanese undergraduates studying in English, grounded in CLIL principles and guided by an action research framework. The course was designed to enhance the students' ability to critically analyze a range of multimodal texts—such as advertisements, news reports, and public service announcements—by examining the interplay of text, visuals, and design. To investigate the effectiveness of this approach, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How can a CLIL-based multimodal communication course foster the development of multimodal competence and literacy among Japanese university students studying in English?
2. Which teaching materials, scaffolding strategies, and classroom tasks are most

effective in supporting students' multimodal analysis skills within this context?

3. How do students perceive and experience the course content, activities, and multimodal frameworks introduced throughout the 14 weeks?

Employing a mixed-methods strategy that includes pre- and post-course tests, surveys, teacher interviews, and reflective journaling, the paper offers a comprehensive perspective on both course design and its impact on student learning. Ultimately, the findings provide practical insights for developing multimodal communication curricula that integrate social semiotics and multimodal analysis with language instruction, thereby equipping students with the critical skills and cultural awareness necessary to navigate diverse cultural and social environments.

Research Design

This study follows an action research methodology guided by Anne Burns's (2010) framework in *Doing action research in English language teaching*. According to Burns, action research entails "a self-reflective, systematic, and critical approach to investigating one's own teaching context" (2010, p. 2). Its cyclical nature—planning, action, observation, and reflection—encourages educators to continually refine their practice based on firsthand classroom data. As Burns explains, "teachers become active participants in the research process, identifying problems, implementing changes, and documenting the outcomes" (2010, p. 5). This practitioner-oriented model is especially apt for exploring innovative pedagogies, such as a course on multimodal communication, because it allows for real-time adjustments that respond to immediate classroom needs. By actively engaging in data collection and analysis, the teacher-researcher can assess the effectiveness of teaching strategies, materials, and theoretical frameworks in a more organic and iterative manner.

Setting and Participants

The research took place at Rikkyo University's Ikebukuro campus, where a 14-week elective course on multimodal communication was offered to a mixed cohort of undergraduate students. The class met once a week, for 100 minutes, throughout the fall semester. The study included 25 undergraduate students from second, third, and fourth years, representing a range of English proficiency levels, with a minimum CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) A2 standard recommended for enrollment. All students had previously completed mandatory English courses focusing on discussion, debate, presentation, and writing skills in their first year at the university. For this reason, they had some familiarity with university-level classes being conducted entirely in English. The students' majors spanned the humanities, providing a diverse range of academic and cultural perspectives. The classroom dynamic was positive, fostering thoughtful discussions around multimodal texts and how they function in various cultural contexts.

Research Instruments

Four primary methods of data collection were used to capture both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of student learning and course effectiveness.

Teacher Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers who had previously taught the course. This step aimed to confirm or challenge my own approach to teaching the course and to gather further insight into effective strategies, and identify common pitfalls. Their feedback informed subsequent refinements to lesson plans and materials.

Classroom Observation

After each session, as a teacher-researcher, I maintained a reflective journal, documenting observations of student group work, engagement levels, and emergent questions or difficulties. This reflective process is central to Burns's (2010) action research framework, as it enables ongoing modification of teaching strategies based on immediate classroom realities.

Student Work Analysis

Throughout the semester, students completed assignments in which they analyzed multimodal texts—such as advertisements, news reports, and public service announcements—focusing on how text, image, layout, and other design features interact to create meaning. I devised rubrics anchored in the course content, emphasizing key concepts like Halliday's metafunctions, Kress's visual grammar, and other semiotics-related concepts. These rubrics measured the students' ability to apply theoretical frameworks to their analyses and offered a standardized measure of progress over time. Furthermore, I had students do pre- and post-course tasks that I also used to examine their understanding of multimodal concepts and texts.

Surveys

At the end of the course, students completed surveys regarding their engagement, comprehension of multimodal principles, perceived usefulness of course materials, and overall preferences. This survey provided valuable feedback on what aspects of the course most effectively facilitated learning and which areas required refinement.

By employing this multifaceted approach, the study aligns with Burns's emphasis on teacher-led inquiry, ensuring that each cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection was firmly grounded in empirical classroom data. This methodology supports the iterative development of a multimodal communication curriculum tailored to the unique context of Japanese university students studying in English.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the university's ethics review

committee prior to data collection. All participants were fully informed, both verbally and in writing, of the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without academic penalty. Students signed a formal consent form allowing their anonymized work, survey responses, and classroom participation data to be used for research purposes. No personal information was disclosed in any publications or presentations arising from the study. These procedures ensured that the research was conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines and widely accepted ethical standards for educational research.

Implementation

Action research enables educators to investigate, evaluate, and improve their classroom practice in an iterative, evidence-based manner. Its emphasis on continual inquiry and adaptability makes it especially valuable for ensuring that lessons align with broader pedagogical goals while remaining responsive to student needs. In this project, action research underpinned the design and implementation of the 14-week course, guiding the iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection that shaped the syllabus, materials, and assessments. The following sections detail each phase of this action research process, illustrating how it provided a structured yet flexible framework for delivering a learner-centered, multimodal curriculum.

Planning

Identifying Goals and Choosing Framework and Concepts

The first step in planning this 14-week course involved clarifying the specific goals and outcomes students would be expected to achieve. In keeping with CLIL principles, I wanted them to refine their English language skills while developing a deeper understanding of multimodality, social semiotics, and cultural analysis. Establishing these clear objectives aligns with Nation and Macalister's (2010) emphasis on having well-defined learning goals that guide both content selection and classroom activities, thereby providing learners with a sense of direction and measurable milestones. Once these aims were set—such as recognizing key principles of multimodal communication, applying theoretical frameworks to real-world texts, and critically examining how culture shapes meaning—I evaluated numerous theoretical approaches to determine which would best serve these ends. To avoid overwhelming students with too many complex ideas at once, I then organized the material into a schedule that incrementally introduced more challenging concepts in a logical progression. According to Nation and Macalister (2010), one core principle of curriculum design is to structure the material in a systematic, incremental manner so that learners remain motivated and are not overwhelmed by overly difficult material. Ultimately, I decided to break the curriculum down into three sequential units, each building upon the previous one to maintain coherence and

student engagement and to balance increasing conceptual complexity with practical application.

In the first unit, students explored essential multimodality through key ideas drawn from Halliday's (1978) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design, supplemented by Barthes's (1977) insights on the interplay of image and text. In the second unit, we shifted focus to foundational semiotics, examining Barthes's (1972) further discussions of myth, alongside concepts inherited from Saussure—such as the signifier-signified distinction—as well as incorporating genre, intertextuality, and both synchronic and diachronic modes of analysis. Finally, in the third unit, students turned to digital texts, including narrative structures, and online phenomena like memes, drawing on Danesi (2019) and Shifman's (2014) explorations of popular culture to understand how these multimodal artifacts circulate in contemporary media. This three-tiered framework enabled learners to build gradually on their interpretive skills, transitioning from core understandings of multimodal principles to more advanced semiotic theories, and ultimately applying these insights to the dynamic and often participatory world of digital communication.

Preparing Adapted Materials

I knew that many of the primary texts would pose challenges for Japanese students studying in English. Their complex terminology and culturally specific references would necessitate pedagogical grading or adaptation, ensuring that the students would be able to engage with the core ideas without being overwhelmed by difficult syntax or unfamiliar cultural allusions. Therefore, during the preparation phase, I created simplified primers—400 to 500-word summaries—of complex theories like Halliday's SFL or Barthes's mythologies. These primers were designed to maintain conceptual accuracy while reducing linguistic complexity, ensuring that learners at around the CEFR A2 level could follow the core ideas without excessive frustration. As Burns observes, “action research encourages teachers to be responsive to the unique linguistic and cultural environment of their learners” (2010, p. 15). In total, ten weekly readings were created, and I decided that it would be most beneficial to give them to students as homework and preparation for the following lesson. This meant they had a full week to read and consider the material and would be more prepared to discuss the material in the following lesson.

Additionally, I designed PowerPoint presentations that would build upon each reading and address each weekly topic. The presentations were designed to be as multimodal as possible, integrating diagrams, images, and concise bullet points. These presentations illustrated key theoretical concepts using real-world examples, including familiar images from advertising and social media. The rationale was to give students a visual point of reference, showing them how semiotic principles manifest in everyday texts. This approach also reflected an important element of action research: “making learning visible” (Burns, 2010, p. 36) by demonstrating theoretical principles in a format that resonated with students' own communicative experiences.

Teacher Interviews

In the first few weeks of the course, I interviewed two teachers who had taught the Multimodal Communication course in the previous semester at Rikkyo, including the professor who had created and designed the original program. The teacher interviews provided valuable insights into the challenges and successes of teaching multimodal communication in a second-language teaching context. Both teachers had structured their courses around similar theoretical frameworks: rhetorical analysis and social semiotics. One had organized the course through the analysis of podcasting and advertisements while the other had adopted a project-based approach, prioritizing collaborative learning and real-world multimodal materials. Both teachers suggested that their goal was to help students understand the complexity of modern, multimodal communication by providing a structured framework through which the students would be able to approach the material.

One of the biggest challenges both teachers faced was helping students move beyond their previous learning experiences to critical analysis. According to one teacher, this involved “getting students to break out of that culturally normative process” through which they typically processed and analyzed written and visual material, to thinking more analytically about the process of meaning creation. Both teachers also emphasized the need for careful scaffolding, which for one teacher sometimes involved some Japanese-language support for rhetorical concepts, and for the other teacher this meant simplifying assignments after realizing students struggled with theoretical complexity. He reported that rhetorical analysis, for example, needed a lot of scaffolding. It was suggested that introducing it too early in the course had left students confused. By emphasizing the practical elements over the theoretical supporting material, it was noted that “thinking about how to include elements of the theories we had studied, helped them to cement their knowledge.” As these interviews were conducted either at or near the start of term, I was able to utilize these insights and corroborate them with my own early observations.

The most important insights gleaned from these interviews were the importance of gradually introducing theoretical concepts, incorporating visual aids, balancing theory and practice, and fostering collaboration. These points directly informed several adjustments to the course design. In Week 1, students understood “multi” but struggled with “mode,” prompting the addition of a brief presentation using images and layout diagrams to clarify the concept. Advice on balancing abstraction with modelling guided a Week 4 demonstration in which I deconstructed a digital image into setting, participants, and symbolic elements, helping students translate concepts like modality and salience into concrete analytical steps. Further recommendations about guided practice led to a Week 5 genre-analysis session using annotated advertisements and news stories to connect theoretical constructs to everyday texts. Collectively, these targeted revisions transformed interview insights into practical, actionable strategies that supported students’ interpretive development across proficiency levels.

Action

According to Burns (2010), the action stage of an action research cycle involves implementing planned strategies in the classroom to address the identified objectives and challenges, thereby moving beyond theoretical deliberation and into concrete practice. For this project, action entailed delivering lessons organized around the three previously established course units, while employing a consistent instructional structure that balanced reading review, targeted presentations, and practical application tasks. Each class followed a predictable sequence designed to foster both conceptual clarity and student engagement.

Homework Review

Students began by discussing the prior week's reading in small groups, guided by pre-set prompts. This arrangement allowed them to clarify any confusing points and support peers who struggled with the material—an approach particularly beneficial in mixed-level settings. Group interactions also helped students feel more at ease than they might in a whole-class plenary, enabling them to explore and compare interpretations in a collaborative atmosphere.

Presentation

Following the group discussion, I delivered a concise presentation—typically 10–15 minutes—that consolidated the homework material and illustrated how theoretical concepts operate in authentic contexts. For instance, I would examine a magazine advertisement using Kress and van Leeuwen's framework of modality and salience, thereby demonstrating how abstract ideas manifest in real texts. This segment aimed to deepen their understanding before transitioning to hands-on activities.

Applied Analysis

In pairs or groups of three, students selected and deconstructed multimodal texts—advertisements, social media posts, or other relevant materials—applying each lesson's core concepts to their analysis. To facilitate this process, I set up a discussion forum on the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS). This enabled me to monitor their progress and provide targeted feedback both in real time during class and online. The collaborative element of this task was designed not only to foster peer-to-peer learning but also to encourage students to relate theoretical principles directly to the digital and print media they encounter in daily life.

Group Reflection and Discussion

The lesson concluded with a brief reflection period or whole-class discussion, during which students offered insights, highlighted difficulties, or inquired about finer points of the material. Concurrently, I recorded my observations in a reflective journal, reported below, so that any difficulties or recurring themes could be addressed in subsequent lessons. This closing step further exemplified the cyclical nature of action research, ensuring that classroom

experiences and student feedback consistently informed the next phase of instruction.

At the end of each unit—lessons 5, 9, and 12—the standard lesson flow was slightly modified to provide time for introducing and discussing the upcoming assessments. For the first two units, students were required to submit written reports in which they analyzed images using the conceptual tools covered in that unit. In the third and final unit, however, they prepared group presentations. Additionally, the first unit served as a pilot of sorts, allowing for systematic observation and subsequent adjustments in keeping with the cyclical nature of the action research framework.

Observation

While the observation and reflection sections appear here in consecutive format, it is important to note that in action research the process is recursive, meaning you begin to examine and interpret in a dynamic way from the outset (Burns, 2010). This study followed that principle by documenting observations and initial analyses simultaneously, yet each section is separated to maintain clarity of the process. In practice, data collection and interpretation evolved in a fluid, overlapping manner. My reflective journal formed the core of these observations, supplemented by student questions, small-group discussions, and interaction data from Canvas LMS. By focusing first on what was recorded, this section illustrates how systematic note-taking and thematic categorization helped organize key insights. Qualitative data in action research involves inductive coding, meaning that categories of study emerge from the data (Burns, 2010). Applying this approach, the central themes that emerged were language use and terminology, mixed-level engagement, and task structure and clarity.

Language Use and Terminology

Many students demonstrated intermediate to high English proficiency but encountered difficulties with certain theoretical phrases, including “multimodal” itself. Learners easily recognized “multi” but struggled with “modal.” Similar terminology issues arose as the course progressed. Moreover, toward the end of the first teaching unit, recurring errors emerged in describing the layout and placement of items in images using prepositional phrases— “*in* the left” instead of “*on* the left,” for example—as well as expressing appropriate degrees of certainty in terms of what meanings emerged during their analysis— “it means” instead of “it *could* mean.”

Mixed-Level Challenges

Data from Weeks 2 and 3 indicated that students spent between 5 and 20 minutes on the weekly readings, reflecting considerable variation in reading fluency within the same class. Some students understood the readings quite easily, while others needed to make extensive notes—often writing Japanese translations to fully grasp the text—and yet others found the material too dense or time-consuming to fully understand. Such discrepancies highlight the

complexity of catering to multiple proficiency levels. Several journal entries further underscored the tension between challenging more advanced students and supporting those who struggled with foundational concepts. These issues became particularly pronounced when tasks demanded higher-level thinking, such as when analyzing images with minimal guidance or applying theoretical constructs without concrete examples.

Task Structure and Clarity

By Week 4, the data showed that an unstructured image-search assignment overwhelmed certain students who lacked clear search terms or parameters, undermining both engagement and motivation. This underscored the importance of providing well-defined instructions, especially when students had to analyze multimodal elements like modality in unfamiliar contexts. In Week 5, a similar obstacle arose with genre distinctions: students had difficulty differentiating the features of advertisements, news stories, and public service announcements, suggesting that explicit instruction on genre features was needed. Both of these observations point to the value of scaffolding complex tasks, clarifying key definitions, and offering concrete examples. These are strategies that can help students navigate a wide range of multimodal texts more confidently.

Overall, the categorized data highlighted a range of challenges in teaching advanced multimodal and semiotic concepts in a linguistically diverse environment. While enthusiasm for the material was generally high, issues surfaced around language usage, reading comprehension, mixed-level engagement, task clarity, and genre recognition. These observations provided a critical foundation for the reflective and adaptive processes that would guide subsequent instructional decisions in the action research cycle.

Reflection

Based on these ongoing insights, I implemented several targeted interventions to address challenges around language use, varied reading proficiency, task clarity, and genre-related misunderstandings.

Language Use and Terminology

As mentioned, one recurring issue was students' difficulty in describing images accurately, especially in using prepositional phrases to describe features in a layout, and clarifying levels of speculation or certainty. Observations drawn from class discussions and online posts also showed that many learners struggled with the vocabulary needed to articulate meaning, layout, and symbolism. In response, I created a detailed booklet (Appendix A) that included illustrative sample images and model sentences demonstrating how to comment on visual elements and interpret their significance. After distributing this resource via Canvas and reviewing it in class, learners who required further practice and benefited from structured guidance were able to consult the guide. On the other hand, more advanced students could opt out if they felt sufficiently confident, thereby maintaining an appropriate degree of challenge

for everyone.

Mixed-Level Challenges

Reflective notes from Weeks 2 and 3 highlighted the tension between challenging more advanced learners and ensuring lower-level students were not overwhelmed by technical concepts. To address this, I differentiated tasks by incorporating multiple difficulty tiers in class activities, enabling students to complete the number of tasks most suited to their level of confidence and ability. As mentioned in the previous section, the optional supplementary materials I provided, such as simplified examples of language use, offered further support for those who needed it. In addition, I adapted the assigned weekly readings by substituting technical terms like *paradigm* and *syntagm* with *semiotic choice* and *semiotic combination* respectively. This preserved core conceptual meaning while lowering the linguistic barrier. Beyond vocabulary adjustments, I simplified sentence structures and general word choices, thereby reducing the cognitive load for lower-level learners. This multifaceted approach, informed by my early reflections, aimed to keep higher-level students engaged while ensuring those who struggled received adequate scaffolding.

Task Structure and Clarity

Observations also indicated that unstructured activities, like the Week 4 image-search exercise, posed significant barriers to student engagement. By making search parameters clearer—suggesting that they find images related to “university life,” “favorite products,” or “sports teams”—students found it easier to locate relevant images and apply course concepts. In a similar vein, the Week 5 confusion over identifying advertisements, news stories, and public service announcements led me to introduce explicit genre overviews. Devoting a portion of class to clarifying each genre’s defining features, and providing concrete examples for comparison, helped students feel more confident in their analyses. These modifications reflect Burns’s notion that “the reality of classroom life” (2010, p. 135) should guide ongoing curricular adjustments.

Taken together, these interventions illustrate how the cyclical nature of action research facilitated dynamic, context-aware decision-making. By systematically observing and categorizing student challenges, I could tailor strategies that balanced theoretical rigor with practical accessibility, ensuring the course remained responsive to learners’ evolving needs. These insights subsequently led to a new cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection reinforcing the iterative nature of the action research framework.

Findings from Student Work and Course Data

This section synthesizes multiple data sources to evaluate student performance during the 14-week course. These sources include: an analysis of the students’ final presentations, a comparative pre- and post-course image analysis, and a student survey. Together, they provide

a comprehensive view of how students applied theoretical concepts, their evolving multimodal literacy skills, and their subjective assessments of the course's efficacy.

Student Assessment

In the final weeks of the semester, students collaborated on group-based final presentation projects. They were required to apply a suite of multimodal and social semiotic theories to a variety of texts connected by a topic of their choosing. I evaluated each project in relation to the following three criteria: the depth of their analysis and their ability to deploy concepts learned during the course, their ability to identify and evaluate the societal attitudes, ideas, and beliefs present in their chosen texts, and their skill in communicating these ideas.

A key strength observed across many submissions was the ability to contextualize the chosen topic—whether it was Japanese train culture, the role of idols in Japanese pop culture, or evolving gender norms in toy advertisements—within broader socio-cultural frameworks. In several high-scoring presentations, students were able to articulate how textual and visual elements interact to convey ideological or cultural messages. For example, one high-scoring group compared Japanese and American New Year's advertisements. They explained how the handwritten font and warm color palette in the Japanese ads evoked family intimacy, while the sharp gold-and-black contrasts in the American ads signaled luxury and celebration. They linked these design choices to broader cultural values, demonstrating an ability to connect multimodal features to societal meanings.

Despite these positive outcomes, some presentations demonstrated only minimal integration of course concepts. While these students occasionally referenced relevant theoretical terminology, they often did not connect it systematically to the visual or textual evidence. For example, one lower-scoring group analyzed a public service announcement about distracted driving but relied largely on literal description. The students stated that the image used “high modality” and “strong salience,” but did not explain how: they described “a man looking at his phone” without discussing the significance of the dim background, or the contrast between the bright screen and the darkened environment. Nevertheless, most students displayed greater textual awareness and cultural sensitivity than they had at the start of the course, though some still needed explicit guidance in applying multimodal theories more thoroughly.

Pre- and Post-Course Image Analysis

To gauge progression in the students' analytical abilities, I administered a pre-course image analysis in Week 1—a Dior advertisement featuring Johnny Depp—and a post-course image analysis in the final week—a Chanel advertisement featuring the actor Gaspard Ulliel (Appendix B). A comparative review of these analyses revealed concrete improvements in theoretical application and level of detail.

Early responses in the pre-course image analysis revealed broad, class-wide patterns: most students focused primarily on surface-level attributes such as celebrity presence, product

placement, or general mood, offering descriptors like “masculine,” “cool,” or “strong.” While a few students referenced elements such as the desert setting or Johnny Depp’s persona, the majority lacked a coherent framework for linking these observations to broader semiotic processes. Students also rarely attended to textual features, including the Dior logo, font, or tagline, indicating limited awareness of how different modes combine to produce meaning.

In contrast, the post-course analysis showed a clear overall shift across the class. Students more frequently identified specific visual cues—color, lighting, composition—and explained how these elements contributed to meanings such as “luxury,” “exclusivity,” or “sophistication.” Many also began integrating references to textual modes, including logo placement and background selection, to argue how Chanel constructs brand identity through multimodal choices. Although a small number of students did not consistently use the full range of terminology taught in the course, the class as a whole demonstrated a more structured and theoretically informed approach to analysis.

An illustrative example of one student’s progress demonstrates the shift many students made from basic description to informed multimodal analysis. In the pre-course task, this student’s comments on the Dior advertisement focused largely on naming visible components—“There is a man in desert... Next to him, there is a perfume”—and offering general impressions such as “braveness are present,” with little explanation of how any element produced these effects. By contrast, the same student’s post-course analysis of the Chanel advertisement showed more attention to multimodal features and textual analysis. She observed that the “tone of color... is very dark and not bright,” allowing her to “catch the feeling of braveness,” and she linked the model’s pose and suit to ideas of “confidence and strength.” She also identified the brand’s messaging, explaining that Chanel “wants to tell how men will be able to get confidence by putting perfume.” This illustrates how instruction in concepts related to multimodality enabled her to develop a more coherent interpretation grounded in theory.

Student Surveys

To supplement these performance-based measures, a mixed-methods survey (Appendix C) was conducted in the final week of the course. A total of 19 students participated, providing both quantitative Likert-scale ratings and qualitative feedback through open-ended questions. The instrument aimed to assess overall satisfaction, engagement, perceived comprehension of multimodal theories, and recommendations for course enhancement.

Overall Satisfaction and Engagement

On a five-point Likert scale—ranging from 1 = “Poor” to 5 = “Excellent”—a majority of respondents (N = 19) rated the course experience as either “Very Good” (4) or “Excellent” (5), representing 68.4% of the class. A large majority of students—84.2% of respondents—rated the course content as either “Somewhat Engaging” (42.1%) or “Very Engaging” (42.1%). This suggests that most learners found the material stimulating and relevant. However, a small

minority (10.5%) selected “Neutral,” and one respondent rated the content as “Not Engaging,” indicating some variability in individual interest and learning preferences. Additional feedback implied that group discussions and applied activities contributed to sustained engagement, whereas exclusively lecture-based segments were perceived as less stimulating.

Confidence in Understanding Multimodal Concepts

Students’ self-assessments of their mastery of core concepts showed a clear upward shift over the semester (Figures 1 and 2). Before instruction, 53% of students rated their understanding of multimodality as “Poor,” 47% rated visual communication as “Poor,” and 58% rated semiotics as “Poor,” with very few selecting “Very Good” or “Excellent.” After the 14-week course, these distributions changed substantially: for multimodality, 53% rated their skills as “Very Good” and 11% as “Excellent”; for visual communication, 63% selected “Very Good” and 16% “Excellent”; and for semiotics, 47% chose “Very Good” and 5% “Excellent,” with no “Poor” ratings remaining in any category. These gains suggest that the combination of theoretical instruction and applied analytical tasks significantly strengthened students’ perceived mastery. A small minority, however, still reported difficulty with abstract concepts such as myth and metonymy. This indicates the continued importance of scaffolding and concrete examples when teaching complex theories in a second-language environment.

Figure 1

Students’ Self-Assessed Understanding of Content and Concepts Before Instruction.



Figure 2

Students’ Self-Assessed Understanding of Content and Concepts After Instruction.



Effectiveness of Course Structure and Activities

When asked to evaluate the course structure—which combined lectures, discussions, and practical analysis—83% of respondents rated it “Effective” (4) or “Very Effective” (5). Open-ended comments reinforced the value of group-based tasks in promoting critical engagement and language practice. For example, one student said, “I think the group discussion at the beginning of the class was very useful because I was able to understand the contents which I could not understand by myself by talking with classmates.” Several respondents advocated for even more collaborative opportunities, suggesting that repeated interactions with diverse peers facilitated deeper exploration of ideas.

Impact on Media Literacy and Critical Thinking

The survey further revealed that most participants experienced a notable shift in how they interpret daily media like advertisements and content on social media. One respondent said, “I became consciously aware of things I normally don’t look at,” while another said, “Up until now, when I saw an advertisement, I would just think, “It’s attractive and catchy,” but now I’ve started to look for the reason behind it, thinking, “It’s catchy because the composition of this part is well thought out.” This qualitative finding aligns with the overarching course objective of fostering a more nuanced and critical perspective on everyday multimodal texts. Such self-reported transformations suggest that, despite occasional difficulties, students did internalize key analytical frameworks to a degree sufficient for practical application beyond academic tasks.

Suggestions for Future Course Enhancements

Open-ended survey responses spotlighted potential areas for refinement. While most students found the course material engaging and beneficial—71% rated these as “Effective” (4) or “Very Effective” (5)—a subset expressed an interest in having more time to focus on elements that were only covered in passing. They requested more time to look at videos, for example, and to think more about the construction of narratives. Likewise, some suggested that not enough time was devoted to affordances, especially as they apply to social media platforms. This reflected their interest and engagement in communication in more contemporary, digital contexts. These recommendations are consistent with my observation that concrete exemplars related to the students’ real-world experiences and interests improve comprehension and maintain learner motivation.

By combining the final presentation assessment, comparative image analyses, and survey data, a comprehensive picture emerges of students’ development in multimodal literacy. The evidence indicates that learners made substantial progress in dissecting and critiquing texts through a semiotic lens, transitioning from initial, largely descriptive observations to more rigorous, evidence-based observations. The majority of respondents reported high overall satisfaction and described increased media literacy. This suggested that the course successfully promoted critical thinking skills relevant to a variety of real-world communicative contexts.

Discussion

The findings from this study indicate that an action research approach, following Burns's (2010) cyclical methodology, can be highly effective in designing and implementing a course on multimodal communication for Japanese university students studying in English. Over the 14-week term, participants demonstrated growth in analyzing, interpreting, and critiquing a variety of cultural texts through a multimodal lens, and the systematic process of planning, teaching, observing, and reflecting proved central to this development. Regular use of reflective journals, coursework analysis, and classroom observations allowed for timely pedagogical shifts, from simplifying theoretical readings to providing structured search prompts for image analysis. Such interventions successfully addressed specific challenges—mixed proficiency levels, difficulties with abstract concepts, and gaps in task clarity—and contributed to demonstrable improvements in students' analytical depth and cultural insight.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings validate the view that social semiotics and multimodal discourse analysis provide an effective blueprint for helping learners interpret visual, textual, and design features in a more systematic manner. By progressing through three distinct units—beginning with fundamental multimodality, moving into foundational semiotics, and concluding with digital texts—students advanced from mostly surface-level observations to increasingly nuanced critiques. Explicit instruction in these theoretical frameworks sharpened their interpretive skills, revealing how cultural and ideological factors shape meaning across a range of communication modes. Moreover, by engaging with a diverse array of multimodal texts, students reevaluated their everyday interactions with media and emerged with a more analytical, critical approach to understanding how meaning is constructed and conveyed.

The study further suggests that multimodal approaches enrich the language-learning experience, particularly within a CLIL framework. While many existing studies focus primarily on making teaching materials more visually engaging, fewer detail explicit strategies for teaching social semiotics and multimodality to second-language learners. The data presented here underline the potential of tasks that merge theory with iterative, hands-on practice—such as image analyses, reflective writing, and guided discussions—enabling learners to decode and produce meaning across multiple genres of texts.

Several pedagogical implications emerge from these findings. First, targeted scaffolding is crucial when introducing abstract theories, particularly for mixed-level classes. Adapting high-level texts or developing concise primers can offer a more manageable entry point, ensuring that students grasp the conceptual core without becoming discouraged by overly technical language. Second, collaborative tasks—like group discussions and peer-review exercises—are vital for fostering critical engagement and confidence, enabling learners to share insights and support one another's interpretive efforts. Third, the effectiveness of frequent feedback loops—including immediate commentary, smaller checkpoints, and reflective journaling—underlines the value of cycling information back into subsequent lessons. This

helps students internalize theoretical concepts as part of an ongoing process rather than merely memorizing them for discrete assessments. Finally, diverse text selection can keep motivation high and appeal to a range of cultural interests, demonstrating how multimodal principles function across different contexts and genres.

Collectively, these observations highlight how an action research model enables educators to remain adaptive, systematically evaluating and refining their methods in response to real-time classroom data. In doing so, teachers can align theoretical rigor with practical accessibility, guiding students toward a fuller understanding of multimodal communication and ensuring that their evolving needs remain at the forefront of pedagogical decision-making.

Conclusion

This study set out to develop and implement a multimodal communication course at a Japanese university, drawing on Burns's (2010) action research model to equip students with analytical tools for dissecting multimodal texts while simultaneously refining their English-language skills. By merging theories about multimodality, social semiotics, and visual communication, the course facilitated a more holistic understanding of how meaning is constructed across multiple modes. While implementation challenges included mixed proficiency levels and the abstract nature of key theoretical concepts, empirical evidence, spanning final presentations, image analyses, and survey data, demonstrated that students evolved into critical, reflective interpreters of complex cultural texts. These findings hold promise for broader implementations of multimodal pedagogy within CLIL contexts, particularly where teachers seek to cultivate advanced literacy skills and cross-cultural awareness through iterative, practitioner-oriented approaches.

The data revealed notable improvements in students' abilities to identify cultural and ideological meanings, articulate nuanced interpretations, and apply specialized terminology related to this field of study. Survey responses corroborated these gains, showing high levels of satisfaction with the course design and emphasizing students' heightened awareness of how social and cultural narratives embed themselves in everyday media. Crucially, the action research process proved instrumental in balancing the theoretical complexity of multimodal frameworks with the practicalities of classroom engagement: by iterating instruction based on data-driven insights, the course remained responsive to student needs while meeting its academic objectives. Ultimately, the resulting gains in analytical sophistication suggest that students can thrive in settings where cultural, linguistic, and semiotic dimensions intersect—a conclusion that highlights the transformative potential of reflective, theory-informed teaching in global higher education.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Page from Booklet for Describing Images

1. Image Layout: Prepositions of Place

Looking at the Image

On the left / right: There is a tree on the left side of the picture.

In the middle/center: A large building is in the center of the image.

At the top / bottom: At the top of the picture, we see the sky.

In the foreground / background: There is a bottle in the background.

People and objects in relation to each other

Next to: The man is standing next to a car.

Behind: Behind the building, there is a mountain.

In front of: There is a woman standing in front of the house.

Between: The lamp is between two chairs.

Above: Above the mountains, we can see clouds.

Below: Below the table, there is a cat.



Untitled (Chicago) by Vivian Maier (1975)

In the center of this urban street scene, two men and one woman, all wearing yellow clothing, stand out against the grey sidewalk and background buildings. **On the left**, one man leans forward toward a board; **on the right**, the woman walks towards the camera, holding a tan handbag. It seems this image captures a candid, everyday moment, yet the colors feel coordinated or staged. The repetition of yellow might symbolize conformity, coincidence, or even absurdity. This photo suggests how random patterns in public life can appear humorous, strange, or strangely beautiful.

Appendix B: Images for Pre- and Post-Course Analysis

The images were selected for their formal similarities. Both are advertisements for men's fragrance and have four predominant features: model, setting, product image, brand.

Pre-Course Image: "Savage" advertisement by Dior (Dior, 2015). Reproduced under fair use for educational purposes.



Post-Course Image: "Bleu" advertisement by Chanel (Chanel, 2010). Reproduced under fair use for educational purposes.



Appendix C: Student Survey

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Student Year
2. How would you describe your English level?

Section 2: Course Experience

3. Overall, how would you rate your experience on this course?
4. Which concepts, if any, did you find difficult to understand? (Select all that apply)
5. Please explain why you found the above concepts difficult to understand. [Open-ended response]
6. Which materials were most useful for developing an understanding of the concepts? (Select all that apply)
7. How confident are you that your understanding of multimodal communication improved during the course?

Section 3: Understanding of Key Concepts

8. Rate your understanding of the following concepts before the course.
9. Rate your understanding of the following concepts after the course.
10. How helpful were the following materials in enhancing your understanding of multimodal communication?
11. What additional resources or materials would have helped you better understand the course concepts? [Open-ended response]

Section 4: Course Feedback

12. How engaging did you find the course content?
13. How effective was the course structure (lectures, activities, discussions) in helping you learn?
14. How effective was the class assessment (assignment, presentation, portfolio) in helping you learn?
15. Were there any parts of the course you think could be removed or shortened? [Open-ended response]
16. Were there any parts of the course you wish had more time or focus? [Open-ended response]
17. Did this course change the way you think about media, images, or advertisements? If so, how? [Open-ended response]
18. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions for improving the course. [Open-ended response]

大学における内容言語統合型学習 (CLIL) 授業の ファシリテーション：日本人学生と国際学生の 視点に基づく考察

上野 育子

要旨

近年注目されている内容言語統合型学習 (Content and Language Integrated Learning : CLIL) の効果的な実践において、ファシリテーションは極めて重要な要素である。本研究は、多様な言語的背景をもつ学生が参加する大学における CLIL 授業を対象に、ファシリテーションとエンゲージメントに関する学習者の視点を明らかにすることを目的とする。2つの CLIL 授業に在籍する国際学生 14 名と日本人学生 12 名を対象に、自由記述式質問紙調査を行い、質的分析を実施した。その結果、効果的なファシリテーションに関して多様な視点が示された。両グループに共通して重視されたのは、学習者間の良好な関係を促進する支援的でインタラクティブな教室環境と、事前学習を含めた適切な課題設計であった。さらに、日本人学生は特に言語的スキヤフォールディングの提供を重視していた。これらの知見は、多様な言語的・文化的背景をもつ学生が在籍する CLIL 授業において、学習者の視点を踏まえたファシリテーションを検討することの重要性を示しており、授業設計と実践に有益な示唆を提供する。

キーワード：内容言語統合型学習 (CLIL)、ファシリテーション、心理的安全性、言語的スキヤフォールディング、エンゲージメント

1. 序論

日本の言語教育の分野において、複言語・複文化主義は重要な教育理念として次第に確立されつつある。これは『ヨーロッパ言語共通参照枠—学習・教授・評価』(CEFR) の影響を強く受けているが、複言語・複文化主義の理念は、言語や文化の多様性を「個人」の経験や言語レパートリーに根ざして捉えるものであり、多様性を「社会」の属性として位置づける多言語・多文化主義とは異なる (山川, 2010)。ここでいう「言語レパートリー」とは、個人が生活や学習を通じて身につけ、状況に応じて使い分けることのできる言語や表現の総体を指す。この複言語・複文化主義の理念は、異なる背景を持つ人々が互いに理解し、交流し合うことを促進するものである

(Council of Europe, 2001)。本学でも、こうした理念は大学全体の言語カリキュラムに組み込まれており、2024年度より自由科目コースとしてCLIL (内容言語統合型学習) カリキュラムが導入され、異なる文化的背景を持つ学生が協働しながら学べる学習環境の構築を目指している。

CLIL (内容言語統合型学習) の授業では、学習者の文化背景や言語能力がさまざまであり、多様性が自然に授業内で表出する機会が多くなる。CLIL領域の研究においては、4Cs フレームワーク (内容、認知、コミュニケーション、文化) (Coyle, 1999; Ikeda, 2013) と呼ばれる概念を重視するが、この4つの要素は、日本においてもCLIL研究の基盤となってきた。しかし、その一つである「文化：culture」の要素は、日本の言語教育におけるCLIL実践の場合、国や民族の境界を超えて捉える必要がある。ここでいう文化は、国籍や母語といった目に見える差異に限られず、個人の価値観や規範、ならびにコミュニケーションのスタイルといった、より詳細な差異も含むことを前提としている。これらの違いは、同一国内に暮らしていても、学習者が所属する社会的・教育的・地域的なコミュニティによって左右されることが多い。そのため、文化的多様性は国籍の異なる学生同士の間だけでなく、同じ国籍の学生同士の間でも、違いが生じうる。CLILの教室では、まさにこのような多層的な文化を認識し受容する場に適している。CLIL自体が、本来、教科学習と言語学習や異文化理解を結びつけることを目的として設計された教育的アプローチだからである。

もっとも、このような利点にもかかわらず、CLILのような複言語・複文化的環境において学習者一人一人の積極的なエンゲージメントを促すことは教員にとって、大きな課題である。この文脈でのエンゲージメントとは、学習者が学習過程に積極的かつ情意的に関与している動的な状態を意味する (Fredricks et al., 2004; Mercer, 2019)。学習者のエンゲージメントは言語学習の成功に不可欠な要素として認識されつつあるが (Mercer, 2019)、その実現には教員による綿密に設計されたファシリテーションが必要である。重要なのは、エンゲージメントが自然発生的に生じるものではなく、学習環境の条件によって促進され、また阻害され得るという点である。自己決定理論 (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 2000) によれば、内発的動機づけや持続的な関与は、有能感・自律性・関係性という基本的心理欲求の充足に支えられる。Mercer (2019) もこの観点を踏まえ、仲間や教師に支えられ、緊張や不安が過度に高まらない教室環境が学習者の積極的な関与を支えると述べ、エンゲージメントを教室環境や他者との関わりも含めて捉える必要性を示唆している。したがって、これらの欲求を満たし得る学習環境を整えることは、教員が効果的にファシリテーションを行い、深いエンゲージメントを維持するための基盤となる。

教師のファシリテーションの重要性は繰り返し指摘されてきたものの (Fredricks et al., 2004; Mercer, 2019; Reeve, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Skinner & Belmont, 1993)、とくにCLIL領域における、複文化的な教室において学習者がこれをどのように認識しているかについては十分に検討されているとは言い難い。多様な文化的・言語的背景を持つ学習者の視点は、より柔軟なファシリテーションを構築するための貴重な知見を提供する。そこで本研究では、日本人学生を含む複言語・複文化的な学生集団

によって構成される大学レベルの2つのCLIL授業を対象に、学習者の視点からファシリテーションとエンゲージメントを探究した。外国人留学生(以下、国際学生)と日本人学生の振り返りを比較することで、効果的なCLIL実践に資するファシリテーションのあり方を明らかにすることを目的とした。さらに本研究は、複言語・複文化の理念に基づく大学教育におけるCLIL授業の教室ファシリテーションと学習者エンゲージメントの探究に新たな理論的・実証的知見を提供する。

2. 文献レビューと理論的枠組み

2.1 CLIL文脈におけるファシリテーションの定義

教育分野において「ファシリテーション」という用語は広く用いられているが、本研究ではこれを研究課題の中心に据えるため、本研究の文脈に即した作業的定義 (working definition) を設定する必要がある。これは、本研究の理論的枠組みを明確にし、その後の分析を位置づけるための準備段階である。ファシリテーションの捉え方を学際的に検討するために、奥本他 (2022) が示した6つの学問分野 (社会学、国際開発学、平和学、心理学、経営学、英語教育学) におけるファシリテーション概念を比較検討したレビューを参照する。

まずは、社会学において、ファシリテーションは集団を一定の方向に統制する手段ではなく、個人が可能性を発揮できるよう「場を保持する」こととして理解される (井上・牧野, 2021)。これは、参加者同士が協働的に関わり合いながら時間と空間を共に作り上げていくプロセスであることを示している。次に国際開発学では、Chambers (2004) がファシリテーション概念の起源とされ、謙虚さ、尊重、先入観の保留といったファシリテーターの姿勢や態度が重視される。一方でKapoor (2002) は、ファシリテーターにのみ裁量権が集中すると参加者の主体性を損なう危険があると警告する。こうした議論は、ファシリテーションが一様に合意された概念ではなく、建設的介入とみなされる場合もあれば、統制と受け止められる場合もあることを示しており、その理解は参加者とファシリテーターの関係性や権力構造に左右される。

さらに、平和学や心理学といった領域においても、それぞれ独自の視点からファシリテーションが捉えられている。平和学においては、理論的にも実践的にも多様なファシリテーションの手法が発展しており、心理学においては、とりわけ人間性心理学では、グループ・ファシリテーションは「集団の相互作用を促す関わり方や態度」とされ、安全で信頼できる雰囲気をつくることが重視される (高橋, 2012)。この文脈では、ファシリテーターは時に共同参加者として関わり、人間関係を育み、情緒的支援や心理的安全を保障する責任を担うと示され、金子他 (2021) は、ファシリテーションにおいて技術よりもむしろマインドセットや姿勢そのものが中心的であると論じている。

一方、経営学では異なる捉え方がなされる。経営学では、ファシリテーターは中立的かつ距離を置いた立場から議論に介入し、グループが独自にアイデアや成果を生み出すことを可能にする役割を担う (堀, 2003) と報告されている。最後に、英語教育

学の分野では、教師をファシリテーターとして位置づけ、協働学習の領域では多くの研究が行われているが、定義として、たとえばBritish Council (n.d.) は、英語教育におけるファシリテーションを、教員が「教える」ことに主眼を置くのではなく、学習者が言語活動を遂行するために必要な教材・情報・支援を提供する役割として位置づけている。この定義は言語学習に特化した定義となっており、本研究の文脈ではそのまま適用することはできない。

以上を総合すると、ファシリテーションは学際的にも、文脈依存的かつ議論の余地がある概念であることが分かる。ある文脈では参加者の主体性を高める働きと結びつけられ、別の文脈では統制と見なされる可能性もある。この曖昧さを踏まえ、本研究はCLILに基づく言語教育における作業定義を提示する。すなわち、CLILにおけるファシリテーションとは、統制ではなく支援と協働を軸に、学習者が複言語・複文化的な学びに主体的に関与できる心理的に安全な学習環境を整えるための教育的方略として位置づけられる。

2.2 学習者エンゲージメント

学習者エンゲージメントは、本研究の理論的枠組みにおいて重要な構成概念である。Fredricks et al. (2004) は、エンゲージメントを行動的・情緒的・認知的次元からなる多次元構造として定義している。行動的エンゲージメントは授業活動への参加、情緒的エンゲージメントは関心や楽しさなどの感情的反応、認知的エンゲージメントは複雑な概念を理解しようとする際の知的努力を意味する。これらは、母語による通常の内容科目や語学授業と異なり、内容理解と第二言語での運用という二重の課題に直面するCLIL授業においては特に重要である。

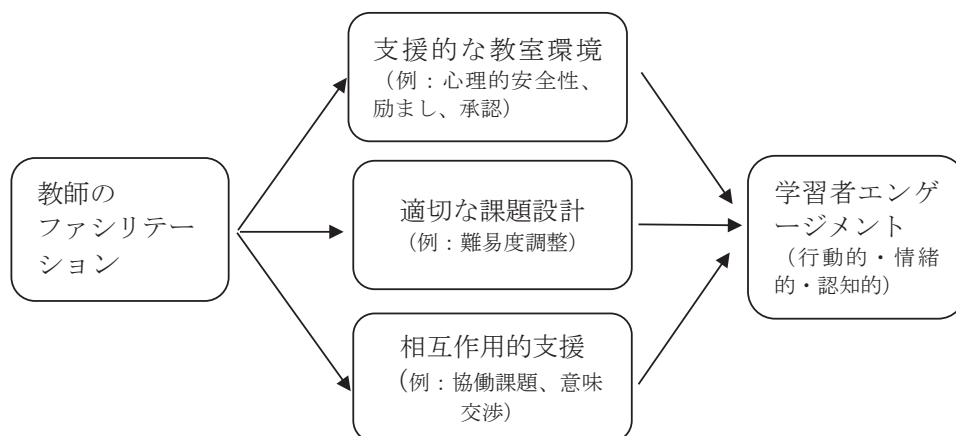
また、近年の研究は、エンゲージメントの前提条件としての心理的安全性の重要性を強調している。心理的安全性とは、学習者が『対人リスクを伴う発言や表現を安心して行える』と感じられる状態である (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Newman et al., 2017)。これが確保されると、学習者は誤りを恐れずに意見を伝えることができ、言語能力を高めるための学習が促される。逆に、この安全性が欠如する場合、特に第二言語で複雑な内容に取り組む場面では、学習者は萎縮しやすい。したがって、心理的安全性を育むことは周辺の課題ではなく、エンゲージメントを直接支える中心的な教育的責務である。

第二言語習得研究において、Svalberg (2009) は「言語への関与 (Engagement with Language: EWL)」という概念を提示し、エンゲージメントが認知的・情意的・社会的側面から捉えられることを論じている。これらはCLILの目標である「深い学び」を促進する上で重要な要素である。さらに、グループディスカッションやポスタープレゼンテーションといった協働的課題は、とくに複言語・複文化的な教室で、学習者のエンゲージメントを強く引き出す。Mercer & Dörnyei (2020) が述べるように、エンゲージメントは学習者の動機づけや自己効力感といった個人的要因に加えて、教室における参加機会や対人関係、学級風土、そして教師の働きかけによっても形成され得るものであり、教師が情意的・対人関係的な能力を示すことが、特に言語的に多様な環境

において学習者のエンゲージメント意欲を高めると論じている。また、Walsh (2011) は「相互行為能力 (interactional competence)」の重要性を指摘し、教師が談話を方略的に調整することで有意義なやり取りの機会が創出されると述べている。

以上を踏まえ、本研究では、CLIL授業における国際学生と日本人学生のエンゲージメントの捉え方を比較し、文化的・言語的背景がどのように影響するかを検討する。図1に示す理論的枠組みは、自己決定理論 (Ryan & Deci, 2000) の心理的欲求 (有能感・自律性・関係性) と、Fredricks et al. (2004) の多次元エンゲージメントモデルに依拠している。本研究は、教師のファシリテーションが支援的な環境の構築、課題設計の工夫、学習者間の相互作用の促進を通じて、学習者の行動的・情緒的・認知的エンゲージメントを高めると捉えるとともに、自己決定理論の観点から、学習者が「自分にもできそうだ」という主観的な有能感を持つことがそのエンゲージメントを喚起する重要な要因であると位置づけ、このような理論的枠組みに基づいて学習者エンゲージメントを検討する立場をとる。

図1 本研究の理論的枠組み



3. 研究方法

3.1 研究課題

本研究は、筆者が担当した2つの選択科目「Introduction to Global Studies: Natural Science (グローバル・スタディーズ入門：自然科学)」および「Peace and Human Rights (平和と人権)」を履修した学生を対象とし、質問紙調査の回答を分析した。本研究の目的は、大学のCLIL授業において、国際学生と日本人学生の振り返りを比較し、効果的なファシリテーションを探求することである。この目的に基づき、以下の3つの研究課題を設定した。

1. 学習者は、CLIL授業においてどのようなファシリテーションを自らのエンゲージメントに効果的と認識しているか。
2. 日本人学習者は、CLIL授業で直面する困難や支援をどのように経験し、それ

らをエンゲージメントとどのように結びつけているか。

3. 国際学生と日本人学生の視点を比較することで、日本人学習者のエンゲージメントを支えるファシリテーション方略にどのような示唆が得られるか。

3.2 参加者

本研究の参加者は、全学部の学生が履修可能な自由選択科目「Introduction to Global Studies: Natural Science (グローバル・スタディーズ入門：自然科学)」および「Peace and Human Rights (平和と人権)」を受講した学生のうち、調査に同意し、回答を提出した者である。合計26名が回答に協力し、その内訳は国際学生14名、日本人学生12名で、国籍は多様である(表1参照)。学年は、2年生から4年生までの学生が対象であった。

「Introduction to Global Studies: Natural Science (グローバル・スタディーズ入門：自然科学)」はCEFR B1以上の英語力を持つ学生を対象としたCLIL科目であり、「Peace and Human Rights (平和と人権)」は全学共通教育科目F科目として提供されている。なお、この「Peace and Human Rights (平和と人権)」クラスは厳密にはCLIL科目として分類されていないが、履修者の多様性を考慮し、シラバスはHard CLIL寄りで設計されている。特に例年日本人学生の人数が国際学生の人数よりも多いため、日本人学生の内容理解とディスカッションへの参加を支援するために、本来であれば必要とされていない言語的スキヤフォールディング (language scaffolding) も提供されている。いずれの授業も履修者数は20名前後である。

表1 参加者の国籍内訳 (N = 26)

国籍	人数 (n)
オランダ	2
米国	3
英国	1
シンガポール	3
ウクライナ	1
イタリア	1
オーストラリア	1
カナダ (ケベック)	1
マレーシア	1
日本	12
合計	26

3.3 データ収集および分析の方法

本研究では、自由記述形式の半構造化質問紙を用い、学期末にオンラインでデータを収集した。質問紙は、国際学生用と日本人学生用に英語版と日本語版の2種類を作

成し、設問内容も若干の違いをもたせた。両者は使用言語や英語習熟度が異なるため、設問の表現や焦点を調整し、それぞれの学生が自らの経験をできるだけ具体的かつ回答しやすい形で記述できるよう配慮したためである。また、国際学生の視点は日本の大学における授業ファシリテーションを比較検討するうえで重要であるため、日本人学生への設問とは一部異なる質問を含めた。質問紙は主に授業での経験に関する10問で構成されている。（付録参照）。

両グループから収集した回答は NVivo 15 (Version 15.3.1; Lumivero, 2025) を用いて整理・コード化し、Braun & Clarke (2006) のテーマ分析の枠組みに基づいて分析した。まず各回答を丁寧に読み込み、帰納的な質的コーディングを行って、意味のある情報単位を抽出した。分析は二つのレベルで行った。顕在的レベルでは、参加者の明示的な記述をそのままコード化し、意見を直接反映するテーマに分類した。潜在的レベルでは、記述に含まれる背後の意味や含意を考慮し、より広い解釈的なテーマを導いた。最終的にカテゴリーごとの国際学生と日本人学生の回答を比較し、共通点と相違点を明らかにした。特に、教員のファシリテーションや学習者エンゲージメントに関連する心理的要因に焦点を当てた。なお、本稿では、紙幅の制約および分析の焦点を明確にする目的から、NVivoの詳細なコード体系や個別データ出力は省略し、主要テーマとその解釈に絞って報告する。

3.4 倫理的配慮

データ収集に先立ち、すべての参加者に研究の目的と内容について説明を行った。研究目的および手続きを十分に理解したうえで同意した学生のみを対象に質問紙調査を実施した。参加者には、回答内容は匿名で扱われ、研究成果の公表や発表において個人が特定されることはない旨を伝えて確認した。収集データは安全に管理され、当該研究者のみがアクセスできる体制を整えた。本研究は、研究計画・データ管理方法等を明記した研究倫理申請書に基づき、所属センターの研究倫理委員会による承認を得ている（2025年5月承認）。

4. 結果

本節では、学習者アンケートの結果のうち、本研究の目的に直接関わる部分を抜粋して示す。特に、授業におけるファシリテーションおよび学習者エンゲージメントに関連する設問6、7、8、10に焦点を当てて分析を行う。

設問6: あなたの考えでは、CLIL授業でポジティブな学習経験と主体的な参加を促す要因は何だと思いますか。

設問7: 教員がCLIL授業をより前向きで主体的に取り組める学習経験にするためには、どのような工夫や取り組みが必要だと考えますか。

設問8: この授業で実際に行われたファシリテーションについて率直に評価してください（教材選定、テーマ設定、スライド作成、シラバス、ワークシート、授

業運営を含む)。

設問10: CLIL授業の重要な目標の一つは「深い学び」を促進することです。あなたがこの授業で経験したことに基づき、「深い学び」とは何を意味すると考えますか。

これら4問を主たる分析対象としたのは、心理的安全性を前提とした本研究の理論的枠組み、すなわちファシリテーションに支えられた学習環境における行動的・情緒的・認知的エンゲージメントの3次元構成と密接に対応していたためである(表2)。

表2 調査設問項目と理論的枠組みの対応

項目	質問文	関連する理論的構成概念	エンゲージメントの次元*	ファシリテーション要素
Q6	CLIL授業においてポジティブで主体的な学習経験をもたらす要因(内容学習と言語学習)	有能感の認知、心理的安全性、内容と言語の統合	認知的エンゲージメント、情緒的エンゲージメント	教室環境、課題設計、意味のある相互作用(実質的なやりとり)
Q7	学習者のポジティブで主体的な経験を実現するために教員が行うべき取り組み	ファシリテーション方略、動機づけ支援	行動的エンゲージメント、情緒的エンゲージメント	授業設計、相互作用の支援、スキャフォールディング
Q8	教材、テーマ、スライド、シラバス、ワークシート、授業運営を含む授業ファシリテーションの評価	フィードバックと形成的評価、課題の取り組みやすさ	行動的エンゲージメント、認知的エンゲージメント	教材選定、教授の明確さ、授業運営
Q10	本授業で経験した「深い学び(deeper learning)」の意味	高次思考、批判的思考、知識の応用	認知的エンゲージメント	深い学びを促す課題設計、マルチモーダル統合(例:スライド+動画+ディスカッション)、発展的学習

*エンゲージメントの次元はFredricks et al. (2004)に基づく。

具体的には、設問6は、内容と言語の統合を通じて認知的エンゲージメントと有能感の認識に結びつく。設問7と8は、教員のファシリテーション・スタイル、フィードバックのあり方、授業運営を問うものであり、心理的安全性と関連しつつ、行動的・情緒的・認知的な3次元の構成エンゲージメント全てを網羅する。設問10は、CLIL授業の目標である「深い学び」の概念を直接問うものである。その記述には、高次の認知的エンゲージメント、批判的思考、知識の応用といった要素が示されている。これらは、いずれもファシリテーションや授業環境と密接に関係しており、参加者の記述は多くの場合、設問6~8で扱われた条件や実践と強く結びついていた。そ

のため、本研究では設問10の回答も設問6～8とあわせて分析し、ファシリテーションがエンゲージメントおよび深い学びの達成にどのように影響するかについて、より統合的に理解することを試みた。結果は、3つの研究課題に沿って提示する。

4.1 研究課題1（学習者は、CLIL授業においてどのようなファシリテーションを自らのエンゲージメントに効果的と認識しているか）

最初の研究課題を検討するにあたり、質問紙項目設問6、7、8を中心に、深い学びの概念を扱う設問10も分析対象に含め、学習者がエンゲージメントを促す上で効果的と認識したファシリテーションの要素を明らかにした。

設問6. ポジティブかつ主体的な経験を生み出す要因

国際学生は、CLIL教室におけるポジティブな経験について、いくつかの重要な要素を回答したが、その中でも、クラスメートとの関係構築は、ポジティブなエンゲージメントを支えるうえで最も重要な要因の一つとされた。初回授業の導入セッションで、全員が各グループに分かれて自己紹介を行い、その後グループの組み合わせを入れ替えることで、ほぼ全員と短時間ながら会話する機会が設けられたことが、個人的なつながりを築き、より深い議論への動機づけを高める契機になったと捉えられていた。

抜粋1: 国際学生A

「前向きに取り組めた理由としては、他の学生のことを個人的なレベルで知る機会があったことです。初回授業で、全員が順に自己紹介し、ほとんどの学生と話す機会がありました。私はこの活動がとても気に入りました。なぜなら皆のことを、より個人的に知ることができたからです。最終的に私はクラスで日本人の友人を二人つくることができ、そのおかげで日本の生活について多くの個人的な質問をしたり、授業で扱ったトピックについてより深い議論ができました。」

さらに、国際学生のグループは、自由度の高いディスカッションの柔軟性を高く評価していた。このようなディスカッション活動は学習者の自発的な発話を促し、アイデアが自然に生まれ、トピックについて自ら興味をもち、さらに学びたいという気持ちになったと報告している。たとえば「Introduction to Global Studies: Natural Science (グローバル・スタディーズ入門：自然科学)」で扱ったテーマの一つBiomimicryについては多くの国際学生が興味を持ったと言及しており、テーマに沿ってペアやグループで話し合い、他の学生の発表を聞くことで、新しい発見や知識が蓄積されていた。また、比較的小規模なクラス構成やグループ活動は、お互いに尊重しあえる雰囲気積極的な授業参加を促し、自由な意見交換が実践しやすかったとしている。一方で、一部の国際学生は、日本人学生の中には自由なディスカッションに不安を感じる様子があると指摘した。より多くの学生が参加できるようにするため、グループをさらに小規模にすることや、トピックを明確にした上で事前に問いかけの質問を提示す

るなどのファシリテーションを提案した。こうした工夫は、自由度を維持しつつ、発言に自信を持ちにくい日本人学生を支援できると考えていた。国際学生の多くは言語的スキヤフォールディングを必要としなかったため、授業を自分自身の学びにとどまらず、教室全体のダイナミクスやファシリテーションの包摂性といった広い視点から評価できている点は注目に値する。結果、彼らは自由なディスカッションスタイルとテーマの興味深さや事前の問いかけの提示、小グループ化など、目的に即したファシリテーションが、学習者にとって主体的な参加を促す学習環境をつくる上で重要であると認識していた。

これに対し、日本人学生の振り返りは、クラス全体の運営や、全てを受け入れて参加する包摂性といった視点よりも、自らの成長や個人の関与に重点を置く傾向があった。彼らがCLIL授業でのポジティブかつ主体的な経験の要因として挙げたのは、以下のように整理できる。まずは、多くの学生は自由に自己表現できる環境を評価しており、特に自ら選択したテーマに基づく発表を通じて、クラスメートから新しい視点を得られることを有意義だと感じていた。また、授業内外で国際学生と意義ある交流を持てたことを大きな強みと捉え、国際学生と個人的に話せた機会が、学習における自信構築に役立ったとする声もあった。日本人学生は日常生活で英語をコミュニケーションの手段として使う機会が限られているため、CLILの授業は英語を実際のコミュニケーションに用いる経験を与えてくれると考えていた。さらに、CLIL授業では「読む・聞く・話す・書く」の4技能をバランスよく扱っていることを評価し、英語で内容を学ぶことが本当の意味で4技能を使用した学習につながっていると回答した。グループによるポスタープレゼンテーションは、クラスメート同士の対話を活性化し、授業テーマの深い理解を促す活動の一つとして高く評価された。表3には、両グループの回答から抽出されたテーマ的カテゴリーを示す。

表3 国際学生と日本人学生に共通するカテゴリーと代表的コード

共通カテゴリー	国際学生：代表的コード	日本人学生：代表的コード
相互作用とピア・サポート	仲間との相互作用と関係構築、インタラクティブな活動、ピア・サポート、小グループ討論・ディベート	国際学生との交流とコミュニケーションの機会、仲間との関わりとグループ活動
主体的参加・構造・自律性	主体的参加と多様な構造、構造化されたファシリテーションの必要性、柔軟性をもつ構造化されたディスカッション、自律性	自信と主体的参加、学習における自由と自律性
内容と言語の統合	興味ある内容に基づく学習	内容言語統合型学習、その効果、スキル発達（四技能）、言語的スキュフォールディング
心理的安全性と包摂的雰囲気	少人数クラスと心理的安全性、自由な表現とセンシティブ・論争的テーマ	リスペクトと包摂的な教室環境

設問7. ポジティブでエンゲージングなCLIL授業への提案

この設問で、国際学生は、学習体験を持続・向上させるためのさまざまな取り組みを提案した。具体的には、アイスブレイク活動や明確なトピックの提示、クラス全体でのディスカッションなどを推奨した。彼らは、あらかじめ枠組みを設定したクラス全体でのディスカッション活動を重視していたが、実際の授業では主に3～4名の小グループでのディスカッション活動が頻繁に行われていた。これは日本人学生の不安や緊張を軽減し、より安心して交流できる場をつくることを目的に、教員が意図的に導入していたものである。国際学生の中には、事前にプロジェクトのガイドラインやディベートのテーマを提示し、十分な準備時間を確保することで、より質の高い発言が可能になると推奨する者もいた。さらに、インタラクティブな要素（クイズやゲームなど。ただし従来型の筆記クイズではなく、授業内容に基づくチーム対抗形式のもの）の導入や、ディスカッション形式の多様化、日本人学生に対しては困難なテーマや論争的な話題にも積極的に発言を促すことなどが提案された。あわせて、小規模なクラス維持や多様な視点を尊重することなど、包摂的な学習環境づくりに向けた提案も示された。

一方で、本設問の日本人学習者にとって重要なファシリテーションの優先事項は、言語的スキュフォールディングの提供であった。これには、難解な語彙や概念をわかりやすく説明すること、手順を明確にした事前課題を用意すること、そして発話への不安を和らげる情意的な支援などが含まれている。彼らは読解課題などの事前準備を評価しており、加えて、日本人学生の特徴としてみられる「完璧に話さなければならない」という心理的負担を和らげるような情意的な支援を望んでいた。また、国際学生と同様に、異なる文化的背景をもつクラスメートとの交流の機会を重んじ、誰もが

安心して参加できる包摂的で主体的な学びを支える教室環境の構築が求められていた。ただし、国際学生が困難なテーマや論争的な話題を扱うことを提案したのに対し、日本人学生は、事前に背景情報が提供された理解しやすいテーマを好む傾向があった。こうした日本人学生の傾向には、適切に工夫された事前準備を行うことで対応することができるが、これは、まさに教員のファシリテーション能力が発揮されるべき領域であることを示している。具体的には、単にテーマの難易度を下げるのではなく、関連する背景資料の提供や事前タスクの設定、視点を広げる補助的な問いかけを行うことで、学習者が新たなテーマや視座に積極的に関与できるようにすることが求められる。とりわけ、異なる言語能力をもつ学生が混在し、ニーズが異なる場合のファシリテーションにおいては、特に留意すべき側面である。

設問8. 現行のファシリテーションに対する評価

設問8では、現行のファシリテーションに対する評価を直接的に尋ねた。学習者のフィードバックからは、授業設計や教室環境について、おおむね肯定的な評価が寄せられた。多くの学生が、シラバスや教材が明確に整理されていたこと、小規模クラスであったことが支援的な学習雰囲気形成につながったと述べている。また、思考を促すトピックの導入、たとえば「Peace and Human Rights (平和と人権)」コースの初回での正義の意味を深く考える trolley problem のトピックなどは多くの学生が回答内で言及しており、内容と言語の統合型学習についての学生のモチベーションを高めるきっかけになったことが示されていた。

一方で、多様な改善提案も示された。そこには、より構造化されたディスカッションの機会や問いの明確化、授業冒頭でのインタラクティブな復習活動を設けることなどが含まれていた。さらに、授業時間内でより深い議論を行うためには、長めの映像教材は課題として提示し、それに基づく課題を課すことなど具体的な提案をする学習者もいた。加えて、各プロジェクトの締切をより明確にすること、授業内使用メディアの多様化、特定のテーマにおける理論的な掘り下げ、ディスカッション時間配分の柔軟な調整など、細部にわたって幅広い提案が寄せられた。こうした詳細な提案は、CLILクラスを履修している学生の学習への高い関与や主体性を反映しているだけでなく、学習者が教師のファシリテーションの多様な観点を意識していたことを示している。実際、その指摘の細やかさは、教員の想定を超えるほど具体的であった。

設問10. 「深い学び」の捉え方

設問10は、CLIL授業におけるファシリテーションとエンゲージメントの延長線上にある「深い学び」に焦点を当てている。国際学生は、CLIL授業における「深い学び」を、単に知識や語学力を積み重ねることとしてではなく、教科内容の理解を深めながら言語を運用し、その過程で自己の成長にもつながる学習経験として捉えていた。多くの回答では、自分の価値観を問い直し、異なる視点を取り入れ、学んだ内容を多様な文脈で応用することが深い学びにつながると述べられており、回答全体に自己省察の姿勢や批判的思考がうかがえた。知識を暗記するだけでなく、学んだ内容を異なる

領域に応用して、それを他者に伝える力が重要であると指摘する回答は「深い学び」の特徴をよくあらわしている。加えて、読解や映像資料に加えて、討論やプロジェクトといった多様な活動の組み合わせや、発表のための自主的な調査や論文の活用を通して学びを深め、学習意欲を維持できたと答えていた。総じて、国際学生にとっての深い学びは、学習内容と言語の習得を結び付け、関連性をもち、異なる場面でも応用できる、自分にとって意義のある学びとして認識されていた。

これに対し、日本人学生は、深い学びを、未知の課題に出会い、それまで意識していなかった問題に気づき視野を広げる機会として捉え、社会に何が求められているのか、また自分にどのような行動ができるのかを批判的に考える契機と述べており、国際学生との違いが対照的に表れていた。個人発表の経験を通じて、一つのテーマをじっくりと掘り下げることができた点を「深い学び」として挙げる学生もいた。さらに、自然科学分野のような自分にとって馴染みのないテーマを英語で学ぶことで、英語学習がより実りあるものとなり、学習意欲を高める効果があったと答える学生も多かった。中には、海外大学の講義など、本格的な英語の学術的コンテンツに触れることで学びをさらに発展させたいと述べる学生もいた。日本人学生にとっての「深い学び」は、国際学生が示したような自己省察や多様な応用の深さというよりも、未知の知識や新しい内容に出会うことで学びの幅が広がっていく感覚として語られていた。

4.2 研究課題2（日本人学習者は、CLIL授業で直面する困難や支援をどのように経験し、それらをエンゲージメントとどのように結びつけているか）

研究課題2を検討するにあたり、本節では日本人学習者が授業で直面した困難や、それに関連する支援の経験に焦点を当てる。その手がかりとして、困難の内容を直接尋ねた設問3「国際学生と協働作業を行う中で、問題や困難を感じたことがあれば教えてください」に対する回答を取り上げる。以下に日本人学生の回答の一部を示す。

抜粋2: 日本人学生B

「心の中では発言したいと思っけていても、うまく表現するのが難しかった。」

抜粋3: 日本人学生C

「英語力の違いによって授業（の進行）が速く感じられ、時々理解に差があった。」

予想通り、言語の壁は最も主要な課題として浮かび上がったが、これはCLIL授業において中級レベルの英語力で難しいテーマについて議論することが求められるためである。ある学生は、1年次に経験したディスカッションの授業と比べて議論の難易度が増していたことを具体的に述べている。

抜粋4: 日本人学生D

「1年生のときにもディスカッションをしましたが、今回はそれよりもずっと高度に感じました。当時は扱うテーマがそれほど難しくなかったので難しさは感じ

ませんでした。けれど今回は自然科学の分野だったので、専門用語を使いながら自分の意見を明確に英語で話す必要があり、少し大変でした。」

このことから、CLIL授業は日本人学生にとって高い言語的ハードルとなる一方で、目標言語を実際のディスカッションで使用できる貴重な機会も提供しているといえる。こうした経験は有益であるが、専門的内容にかかわる英語の使用が求められる場合には、依然として大きな挑戦となる。

言語的課題に加えて、学生は心理的な不安も抱えていた。この点を把握する上で、設問9「自身の経験に基づき、授業内でのコミュニケーションにおいて心理的に不安を感じたのはどのようなときですか」も参考となる。本設問は主要な分析対象ではないが、日本人学習者の情緒的エンゲージメントに影響を及ぼす要因を考察する上で有用な手がかりを提供した。彼らの回答から明らかになったのは、英語で人前に立って話すとき、誰も話していない場面で自ら発言するとき、理解が不十分な質問に答えるときに心理的不安を感じるという点であった。自分の限られた英語力が誤解や他者の不満につながるのではないかと心配する学生もいれば、間違いを指摘されることを恐れる学生もいた。また、英語で人前に立って話す経験の不足が、こうした不安を強めているとの言及もあった。

それでも、一部の学生は発表やディスカッションの機会を増やし、誤りを恐れずに話すことを目標にしたいと答えており、不安を克服しようとする意欲も見られた。一方で、学部内で頻繁に英語ディスカッションを行っていた学生は、本授業では心理的不安を感じなかったと述べていた。この結果は、英語使用の頻度と学習者の言語不安が直接的に関連している可能性を示唆している。注目すべきは、多くの日本人学習者が英語使用の必要性を認識しつつも、同時に自分の不十分な英語力がクラスメートから否定的に受け止められるのではないかと懸念していた点である。これは、認知的理解（英語使用の必要性）と情意的抵抗（不安や恐れ）との間に矛盾が存在することを示しており、これらの日本人学習者の傾向といえる。

このような難しさを抱えながらも、日本人学生は、自らのエンゲージメントを支えた複数の要因を挙げており、その多くはすでに検討した研究課題1の設問6～10で述べられた点と重なっている。日本人学生は、言語的課題や心理的不安を抱えながらも、国際学生との交流や協働活動、内容や手順が明確に示された教材や課題によって自らのエンゲージメントが支えられたと述べていた。これらのエンゲージメントを支えた要因は、不安を和らげながら主体的な参加を促し、CLILにおける深い学びへとつなげる役割を果たしていることが示された。また、学生の英語使用経験の頻度や性質の違いが、エンゲージメントを促進する要因に対する認識に影響を及ぼす可能性があることも示唆された。

4.3 研究課題3 日本人学習者のエンゲージメントを支えるファシリテーション方略の比較分析（国際学生と日本人学生の視点を比較することで、日本人学習者のエンゲージメントを支えるファシリテーション方略にどのような示唆が得られるか）

設問6～10の回答を比較分析した結果、国際学生と日本人学生のファシリテーションおよびエンゲージメントに関する認識の共通点と相違点が明らかになった。分析は本研究の理論的枠組みに基づいており、すなわち、心理的安全性と、ファシリテーションに支えられた学習環境における行動的・情緒的・認知的エンゲージメントの三つの次元である。

まず、両グループに共通して重視されていたのは、支援的な教室雰囲気や学生主体の積極的なインタラクションの機会であった。小規模クラスや、構造化されつつ柔軟性を保ったディスカッション、授業内のインタラクションを高める事前教材は、いずれもエンゲージメントを促進する要因として広く認められていた。

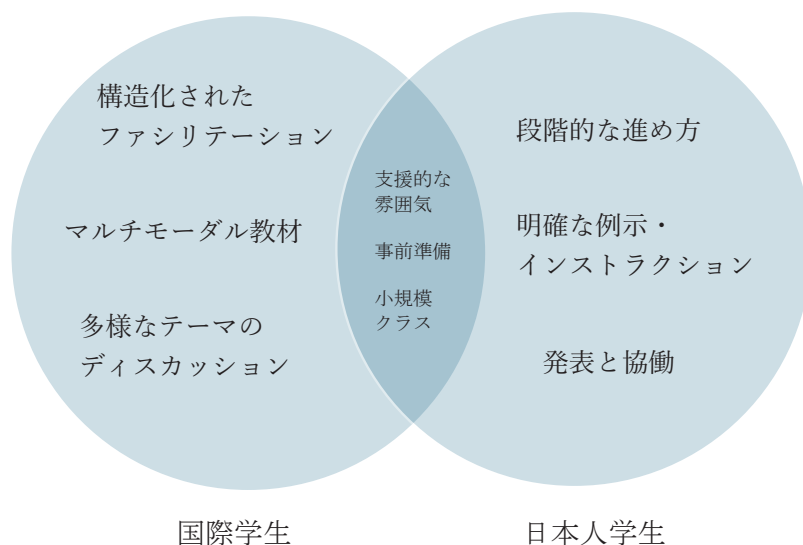
その一方で、国際学生は特に、ディスカッションを持続させるための構造化されたファシリテーション、プロジェクト準備の事前化、マルチモーダルな教材の導入を強調していた。また、日本人学生がより積極的に参加できるよう促すこと、とくに繊細なテーマに取り組むことを通じて、自信の構築と批判的思考力の育成を図ることの重要性も指摘していた。

抜粋5: 国際学生E

答えが決まっていない質問とか、少し意見が分かれるテーマについてディベートすると、みんなが深く考えたり、いろんな視点を出し合えたりすると思う。」

一方で、日本人学生は、友好的な交流を通じて自信を少しずつ育んでいくこと、発表や協働プロジェクトがエンゲージメントを高める役割を持つこと、さらに不慣れた課題に取り組む際には具体例や明確な指示が必要であることを強調した。とくに学術的な場面で英語を使った経験が限られている学生にとって、この点は重要であった（図2参照）。これらの結果は、CLIL授業におけるファシリテーション方略として、国際学生が強調した「構造化・マルチモーダル・多様なテーマのディスカッション重視」のアプローチと、日本人学生が重視した段階的な進め方をはじめとする「自信を育む支援的環境」の双方を組み合わせる必要があることを示している。そのような方略は、言語的な障壁と心理的な障壁の双方に対応し、異なる学習者集団全体のエンゲージメントを高めることにつながる。

図2 国際学生と日本人学生におけるファシリテーションとエンゲージメント認識の比較



5. 考察

本研究では、大学レベルの2つのCLIL授業を対象に、学習者のファシリテーションとエンゲージメントに関する認識を、国際学生と日本人学生の回答分析を通じて検討した。3つの研究課題に取り組むことで、複言語・複文化的な学習環境におけるCLIL授業での学習者の積極的なエンゲージメントを促進し、異なる学習者集団の特定のニーズに応えるためのファシリテーション方略の改善点が明らかになった。

RQ1とRQ2の分析からは、両グループに共通して、支援的な教室環境ならびに協働学習の機会でもある学習者同士の積極的なインタラクションの機会が重視されていることが分かった。これらの結果は、CLIL授業の教育設計の理論的枠組みとして、Content, Cognition, Communication, Cultureの相互関連を重視するCoyle et al. (2010)の「4Cs」フレームワークに照らして理解できる。さらに、このような学習環境が学習者の積極的参加を支える心理的条件となり得るというMercer & Dörnyei (2020)の議論とも整合している。

同時に、明確な相違点も見られた。国際学生は「深い学び」を自己省察や多様な視点の受容、知識の応用を通じて発展させる「深さ」として捉えていたのに対し、日本人学生は未知の課題や新しい知識との出会いを通じて学びを広げる「広がり」として捉えていた。RQ3で確認されたように、この違いは矛盾ではなく互いを補い合う関係にあり、すなわち、深さを重視する学習と広がり重視する学習をいずれか一方に偏らせるのではなく、両者をつなぎ合わせることで、ファシリテーションの設計をより豊かなものにできる。さらに、学生が高く評価した要素と、改善を求めた要素が重なっていた点は注目に値する。これは、学習者のレベルやニーズによって「効果的」とされる側面と「改善が必要」とされる側面が変化することを示唆する。Fredricks et al. (2004)の多次元モデルに照らせば、行動的・情緒的・認知的エンゲージメント

が相互に依存しており、一側面の強化が他の側面の向上につながることを反映していると考えられる。また、本研究で示された深さと広がりとの対比も、この枠組みで理解できる。深さは認知的エンゲージメントの深化、広がりには新しい関心や情意的エンゲージメントの拡張として位置付けられる。この視点から見れば、ある活動や教材が肯定的に評価されると、それがより高度な参加や学びへの「足がかり」となり、次なる改善要求を生み出す。この繰り返しは、持続的エンゲージメントが強化される過程を示しており、CLILの授業設計において継続的な改善が必要であることを示しており、そのことは教員のファシリテーションを考える際に極めて重要な意味を持つ。学生のエンゲージメントをどの次元で捉えるにしても、教員のファシリテーションは常に見直され、更新されていくことが不可欠であることを本研究の結果は示唆している。

最後に、日本人学生の回答から、英語使用の頻度が高いほど心理的不安が低い傾向にあることが示唆された。これは、言語使用経験の蓄積が情意面の安定化に關与する可能性を示す結果である。さらに、本研究で特筆すべき点の一つは、日本人学習者がCLIL授業で直面するジレンマである。すなわち、英語をより多く使う必要性を認知的には理解していても、否定的評価への恐れに基づく情意的抵抗が積極的参加を妨げているという点である。このジレンマは、外国語不安の研究とも呼応し、恥の回避や調和志向といった日本のEFL環境に特有の文化的要因を反映している。Mercer & Dörnyei (2020) が強調するように、このような情意的障壁を取り除くことは、学習者が心理的に安全であると感じ、コミュニケーション上のリスクを取る意欲を高めるために不可欠である。自己決定理論 (Deci & Ryan, 2000) の観点からも、有能感が満たされないことは内発的動機づけを損なう可能性がある。したがって、学習者がCLIL授業で深い学びを経験するためには、情意的障壁を和らげ、誤りを学びの機会として扱う教室環境を整えることが、教師にとって重要な役割となる。最終的に、そのような実践こそが、認識と行動の間のギャップを埋め、より大きなエンゲージメントを育む鍵となる。

6. 本研究の限界と今後の課題

本研究は、大学における2つのCLIL授業の学習者集団を対象に質的分析を行ったが、サンプル数が限られているため、CLIL履修者全体の傾向として一般化することは難しい。今回得られた知見は、学習者がCLIL授業をどのように認識しているかを理解するうえで一つの示唆を提供するものであるが、その適用範囲には制約がある。今後の研究では、本研究の参加者も含めたより大規模な量的調査を組み合わせ、質的・量的両面からの検討を行うことが課題として残されている。このような混合的アプローチは、CLILにおけるファシリテーションとエンゲージメントをより多角的かつ包括的に理解し、個々の学習者の声と多様な教育文脈に広がるパターンとを結びつけることに寄与し得る。

7. 結論

本研究は、大学のCLIL授業において、日本人学生と国際学生がファシリテーション方略をどのように認識しているかを検討し、両者に共通する優先事項と、それぞれの集団に特有のニーズを明らかにした。両者に共通して重視されたのは、支援的な教室雰囲気と積極的なインタラクションの機会であった。一方で、日本人学生は、言語的・情意的なスキヤフォールディング、理解しやすいトピック、自信を育むための手立てを重視し、とくに不慣れな内容に取り組む際には、明確な例示や段階的な指導が不安を和らげることを指摘していた。これに対し、国際学生は、自由度の高いディスカッション、多様な視点、仲間の包摂性を評価し、社会的に敏感な話題や賛否が分かれるようなテーマを扱うことで深い思考と広範な参加が促されると述べていた。

こうした知見は、言語能力が多様な学生を対象とする授業において、クラス全体の包摂性を保ちながら、異なるニーズをもつ学習者を支援するためのファシリテーションの在り方を示唆している。本研究の結果は、学習者の持続的なエンゲージメントを支えるうえで、言語的・情意的な要素を含む文脈に根ざした柔軟なファシリテーションの重要性を明確にするとともに、「深さ」を重視する国際学生と「広がり」を重視する日本人学生の双方の学びを支えることが、複言語・複文化的なCLIL授業におけるファシリテーションの核心的課題の一つであることを示した。

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Introducing Song into the Language Classroom: Authentic Materials for Developing Intercultural Competence

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Abstract

This article examines the integration of Francophone songs as an authentic document in the teaching of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) in Japan, a context still largely marked by the traditional grammar-translation method. Based on the recommendations of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the works of Cuq, Puren, and Gourvennec, the study analyzes the linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural potential of songs, as well as the didactic conditions that enable their optimal use without altering their original discursive logic. The article first defines the song as an authentic document and as a vector of sociocultural competence, before specifying selection criteria based on learners' profiles, educational objectives, and institutional constraints. Building on teaching experiences with Japanese high school and university students, four songs are presented as case studies: *On brûlera* (Pomme), *Comme un homme / Sois un homme* (Disney, Mulan), *Lettre à la République* (Kery James), and *Saint-Denis* (Grand Corps Malade). Each teaching sequence highlights the contributions of songs in terms of learner motivation, cultural contextualization, and the development of language skills, while also underlining the limitations arising from spatio-temporal and sociocultural gaps between the context of production and that of reception. The findings indicate that songs, when integrated within an action-oriented approach and accompanied by appropriate cultural mediation, can serve as an effective pedagogical lever for enhancing FFL learning in Japan, both linguistically and interculturally.

Keywords: *Authentic Documents, Song-based Pedagogy, French as a Foreign Language (FLE), Intercultural Competence, Language Didactics, Japanese Context*

Introduction

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developed by the Council of Europe in 2001, constitutes an international standard. However, paradoxically,

the textbooks used for teaching French as a Foreign Language (FFL) in Japan remain largely rooted in traditional approaches, closely aligned with grammar-translation methods. While these methods may have played a relevant pedagogical role in the past, they tend to overlook the integration of authentic materials. Such materials are nonetheless essential to a communicative and action-oriented approach, as recommended by the CEFR.

From this perspective, the use of authentic resources such as films or songs represents a valuable didactic alternative, as it fosters both linguistic and cultural immersion beyond the scope of purely grammatical drills. It can also facilitate the anchoring of learning within more meaningful social communication practices for learners.

In the Japanese context, Francophone popular music generally remains unfamiliar to students. Most learners primarily listen to K-pop, J-pop, or Anglo-American music, and the use of French songs as a pedagogical resource is often perceived as an unconventional learning tool.

Japan is indeed a country where FFL teaching remains strongly shaped by a traditional didactic framework. This raises the following question: in what ways can the use of French songs serve as a relevant teaching aid in Japan?

This article aims to explore this question by showing how songs, when integrated into a coherent didactic approach, can become an effective lever for both linguistic and cultural acquisition. The selection of a song in an FFL classroom, however, cannot be left to chance: it must consider several factors, including the learners' linguistic level, their interests, and the intended pedagogical objectives.

In the first part, we highlight the relevance of using songs in FFL courses as both linguistic and cultural resources. We will focus specifically on their contributions from an action-oriented perspective and on the criteria that enable their effective didactic exploitation. In the second part, we present a reflective analysis of concrete implementations, based on several pedagogical experiments conducted with Japanese learners (high school and university students). These sequences are built around contemporary Francophone songs such as *On brûlera* ("We will burn") by Pomme¹, *Comme un homme* ("As a man")² and *Sois un homme* ("Be a man")³ from the Disney animated film *Mulan*, *Lettre à la République* ("Letter to the Republic")⁴ by Kery James, and *Saint-Denis*⁵ by Grand Corps Malade. They serve to illustrate both the potential and the limitations of didactic exploitation of songs in the Japanese context.

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- 1 PommeOfficialVEVO. (2017, September 22). Pomme - On brûlera [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 24, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jabih9mV6RQ>.
 - 2 WaltDisneyMusics. (2011, September 12). Mulan - Comme un Homme [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 24, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iPXNr2o1X8>.
 - 3 La Canadienne. (2014, February 10). Mulan - I'll Make a Man Out of You - Canadian French [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 24, 2025, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msUKf_cEKo0.
 - 4 Kery James. (2012, February 27). Kery James - Lettre à la République (Clip officiel) [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 24, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gp3XZDK7Lw4>.
 - 5 raffproduction. (2013, September 13). Grand Corps Malade - Saint denis (Clip officiel) [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 24, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ap8zzR69tJg>.

Why Use Songs in the Language Classroom?

The Song: An Authentic Document?

The CEFR recommends the use of “authentic documents” in the language classroom. But what exactly do we mean by this notion? Can a song be considered such a document in the context of teaching FFL?

In his *Dictionnaire de didactique du français langue étrangère et seconde*, Jean-Pierre Cuq (2003) defines the authentic document as follows:

The characterization of “authentic” in language didactics is generally associated with the term “document” and applies to any message produced by French speakers for French speakers with the aim of real communication: it thus refers to anything that was not originally designed for the classroom⁶ (p. 23).

This definition distinguishes authentic documents from so-called “fabricated” documents, which are specifically created for teaching purposes. Authentic materials thus include supports drawn from everyday life: press articles, advertising posters, recipes, film dialogues... and, indeed, songs.

There are also songs created specifically for pedagogical purposes. For example, we might cite *Au petit déjeuner* (“For breakfast”)⁷ by Alain Le Lait, which can be used to work on partitive articles and food-related vocabulary. For the purposes of this article, we will exclude such songs and focus on those produced outside of any educational intent. These songs, intended for a native-speaking audience, are produced for artistic or commercial purposes. They fully meet Cuq’s definition of an authentic document and also constitute a teaching resource rich in didactic potential.

Using a song in the FFL classroom requires adaptations by the teacher to guide learners in their understanding of the teaching material. This process is called “*didactisation*” which Cuq defines as follows:

Didactisation is the operation consisting in transforming or exploiting a raw linguistic document to make it into a teaching object. This process generally involves a pre-didactic analysis, essentially linguistic in nature, to identify what may be useful to teach⁸

6 All translations of the following quotations, unless otherwise stated, were done by the authors.

Original quotation: « La caractérisation d’« authentique » en didactique des langues est généralement associée au terme « document » et s’applique à tout message élaboré par des francophones pour des francophones à des fins de communication réelle : elle désigne donc tout ce qui n’est pas conçu à l’origine pour la classe. »

7 Alain le Lait - Topic. (2021, March 5). Au petit déjeuner [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 24, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfyQPIpkwS8>.

8 Original quotation: « La didactisation est l’opération consistant à transformer ou à exploiter un document langagier brut pour en faire un objet d’enseignement. Ce processus implique généralement une analyse prédidactique, d’essence

(Cuq, 2003, p. 71).

This means that when teachers “*didactise*” (adapt for teaching) a song in the context of a FFL course, they must preserve the way in which the song’s discourse is organised and acquires meaning in its original context, rather than truncating it (removing elements of meaning), decontextualising it (e.g., examining vocabulary without linking it to the song’s overall meaning), and so forth. This raises the question of the degree of adaptation compatible with maintaining the authentic nature of a document. For example, do pedagogical activities such as preparatory questions designed to contextualise the teaching material, in this case the song, detract from its “authentic” character? Likewise, does encouraging learners to focus only on a few selected lyrics?

According to Hedaywa and Sourak (2013), an authentic document cannot be received in the same way by a native speaker and by a learner, because there is both a spatio-temporal gap and a sociocultural gap. For instance, take the song *Marine*⁹ by Diam’s : it is possible to understand all the lyrics, but the song only fully makes sense when one understands that the name “Marine” refers to Marine Le Pen, a far-right figure and leader of the Front National (later renamed Rassemblement National), which is a French far-right political party.

For the purposes of this article, we will adopt Cuq’s definition of the authentic document and follow Puren’s perspective, whereby the exploitation of an authentic document implies preserving, as far as possible, the logic and meaning of the song, while recognizing that an authentic document loses some of its authenticity as soon as it is used in a classroom context.

A Vector for Sociocultural Competence

As discussed in the previous section, knowledge of the sociocultural context of an authentic document fosters a better understanding of it. An authentic document, such as a French song, will be more easily understood by learners when they possess elements of French sociocultural background than when they do not.

In this regard, Ludovic Gourvenec reminds us that the very notion of *chanson française* (“French song”) can convey a reductive view centered solely on mainland France, even though this artistic production is in fact marked by cultural diversity and openness:

The expression “*chanson française*” may appear inaccurate because it suggests the idea of a strictly hexagonal production (limited to metropolitan France). Yet the history of what is known as “*chanson française*”, like the society from which it springs, is shaped by diversity, by various cultural influences—in short, by openness. This is an essential characteristic that accounts for its dynamism and its constant renewal since the early

linguistique, pour identifier ce qui peut être utile d’enseigner. »

9 Diam’s officiel. (2009, October 25). Diam’s - Marine (Clip officiel) [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 24, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsL-2R402r4>.

twentieth century. “*Chanson française*” is a field open to the Other and not restricted to a single geographical space or a culture closed in upon itself, and it would therefore be more appropriate to speak of “*chanson francophone*” (“Francophone song”)¹⁰ (Gourvenec, 2017, p. 16).

The trigger document can take various forms (photograph, video, song, etc.) and serves as a starting point, a stimulus, a lever for encouraging oral expression, sparking reflection, or motivating language production, both spoken and written. The song, which is often presented in the form of a music video, thus constitutes a rich pedagogical resource for teachers, who can work not only on its lyrics (both orally and in writing) but also on the video itself (visual stimulation), among other aspects.

This leads us to consider the actual benefits that can be expected from the pedagogical use of a song. How can this medium meet the objectives defined by the CEFR, particularly in terms of pragmatic, sociocultural, and linguistic competence? From this perspective, it seems essential to identify, on the one hand, the specific advantages that songs offer for the teaching of French as a foreign language, and on the other hand, the limits or constraints they may entail.

The following two sections are devoted to this dual analysis.

The Advantages of Using Songs in the FFL Classroom

A Comprehensive Teaching Material

From a didactic perspective, any document that enables the integrated development of multiple language skills, such as listening and reading comprehension, as well as oral and written production, along with sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural competence, can be considered a comprehensive teaching material.

This type of material is generally embedded within a structured learning sequence, designed around clearly defined objectives and linked to the various components of communicative language competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic), as described in the work of Cuq and Gruca (2002).

In this respect, the song, as an authentic oral document, constitutes a particularly fruitful material. Depending on how it is exploited in the classroom, it can be used to develop a variety of language skills, comprehension, production, as well as grammatical or lexical observation, while fostering a dynamic and contextualized approach to language.

10 Original quotation: « La formule ‘chanson française’ peut paraître inexacte car elle induit la conception d’une production strictement hexagonale (qui serait limitée à la métropole). Or, l’histoire de cette chanson dite française, comme la société dont elle est l’émanation, est faite de mixité, d’influences culturelles diverses, bref d’ouverture, et il s’agit là d’une caractéristique essentielle qui explique le dynamisme et le renouvellement permanent à l’œuvre depuis le début du XX^e siècle. “Chanson française” est un champ ouvert sur l’Autre et ne se restreint à un seul espace géographique ou à une seule culture close sur elle-même, et il faudrait alors davantage parler de ‘chanson francophone’ ».

Furthermore, Tim Murphey's research (1992) highlights the value of songs as pedagogical tools in the language classroom. He notes: "it is very hard to escape music and song ... the only place music and song is slow to catch on is in school" (1992, p. 7), and reviews their contributions to pronunciation, fluency, and lexical retention.

Finally, several studies have emphasised that musical structure promotes vocabulary retention and heightens awareness of prosodic features (Fonseca-Mora, 2000).

An Affective and Motivational Driver

From an affective perspective, songs exert a strong power of attraction. Carmen Fonseca-Mora (2000) notes that "music seems to leave a particularly deep trace in our memories; this could be due to the fact that it is related to affective and unconscious factors" (p. 150). She further adds that "in general, the use of music in the language classroom encourages students to be quiet because it avoids other auditory distractions. Therefore, it is especially helpful to create the relaxing classroom atmosphere needed to develop written composition activities. Music has the ability to change the hearer's mood because it stimulates our imagination" (p. 151).

It engages emotion, memory, and identification. This appears, from the teacher's perspective, to foster a positive attitude toward the foreign language. Numerous classroom observations indicate that the enjoyment experienced by learners during a task contributes to strengthening their motivation and facilitating memorization. The rhythmic and melodic structure of songs particularly supports vocabulary retention: some expressions or turns of phrase become firmly anchored in learners' memories thanks to their musical setting. This affective and creative dimension is consistent with the principles of the humanistic approach, which emphasizes the role of emotion, motivation, and personal engagement in the learning process. These principles are explicitly reiterated in the CEFR, which states that "motivation, attitude, emotion, and affective factors influence the success or failure of learning" (Council of Europe, 2001, § 5.1.3.1). As previously mentioned, the choice of a song in the FFL classroom cannot be left to chance. It must meet specific criteria, considering pedagogical objectives, learners' linguistic level, their cultural interests, and didactic constraints. The following are the main factors to consider when selecting an appropriate song.

Criteria for Selecting a Song—Which Song to Choose?

The selection of a song for FFL classroom cannot be based solely on the teacher's personal taste or the popularity of the piece. It must rest on a rigorous didactic reflection, guided by the specific needs of the learners and the aims of the teaching-learning process (Cuq & Gruca, 2002).

The first and most fundamental criterion for selecting a song is its alignment with the intended learning objectives. The song should enable the development of targeted competences: lexical (semantic fields such as love, work, the city), grammatical (present indicative, simple future, imperative), phonological (prosody, intonation), sociolinguistic (registers, regional

variations), pragmatic (politeness formulas, instructions), or intercultural (values conveyed, social representations). As Cuq and Gruca (2002) note: a resource is even more didactic when it makes it possible to integrate several skills around the same document.

The second criterion relates to linguistic objectives and, more specifically, linguistic accessibility. A song can facilitate the study of vocabulary (semantic fields such as love, work, the city, etc.) as well as grammatical points (present indicative, simple future, imperative, subject-verb agreement, etc.). It is therefore necessary to choose a song adapted to the learners. The level of language, syntactic complexity, lexical density, and speed of delivery should be compatible with the CEFR level of the target audience (Council of Europe, 2001).

A third criterion is sonic intelligibility, which is also a key factor. Clear diction, a moderate tempo, and an audible voice are essential conditions to ensure comprehensible listening. In this regard, the song's natural prosody serves as an important lever for sensitizing learners to the musicality of the target language (Murphey, 1992). Through songs, teachers can also work on learners' prosody and intonation.

A fourth criterion is the cultural and intercultural dimension of the song, which makes it a particularly rich authentic resource. As a true reflection of the society that produces it, a song offers access to Francophone imaginaries and fosters comparison between cultural systems (Galisson, 1980; Zarate, 1986). This richness anchors learning in a sociohistorical reality and opens the way to discussions on norms, values, stereotypes, and social representations.

In this context, the artistic quality of the piece should not be overlooked. An aesthetically accomplished song, with a strong artistic intention, can foster learners' affective engagement and enhance their participation. Conversely, a song that is overly childish (outside the intended audience), outdated, or stereotypical may lead to rejection of the resource. Likewise, some sensitive aspects must be anticipated: violent content, explicit sexuality, discriminatory remarks, or offensive stereotypes. The teacher must exercise discernment according to the institutional context, local norms, and learners' profiles (Ruiz, 2015).

These various criteria do not constitute a rigid framework but rather a reflective guide for informed and contextualized selection. The teacher retains a degree of freedom, provided that they can justify their choices in light of the intended objectives and the target audience.

The following section will illustrate this approach through four examples of songs used in FFL classes with a Japanese audience.

Example of Educational Use of Song

In this section, the authors present four songs that they have had the opportunity to use in their teaching careers with Japanese high school and young adult learners of French. Given their age, this audience is particularly interested in issues related to identity, gender equality, ecology, and similar themes. Each song will be addressed in turn, with an explanation of the reasons for its selection, the intended pedagogical objectives, and the structure of the lesson or

teaching sequence. It should also be noted that the songs were always introduced to the learners through their music videos.

Song 1: *On brûlera* (“We will burn”) by Pomme

Why This Song?

The song *On brûlera* by Pomme (2017) provides an opportunity to address the theme of LGBTQ+ rights, which is a significant issue for high school and young adult learners from the perspective of French teachers. LGBTQ+ rights are especially relevant for young people, who are in the process of building their identities and who may need to feel that they are in an open and tolerant environment. In addition, the song makes it possible to discuss the diversity of family structures that exist in France (reconstituted families also commonly known as stepfamilies or blended families, same-sex families, etc.). From a pedagogical standpoint, this makes the song particularly relevant given the themes it raises.

Classroom Exploitation of the Song

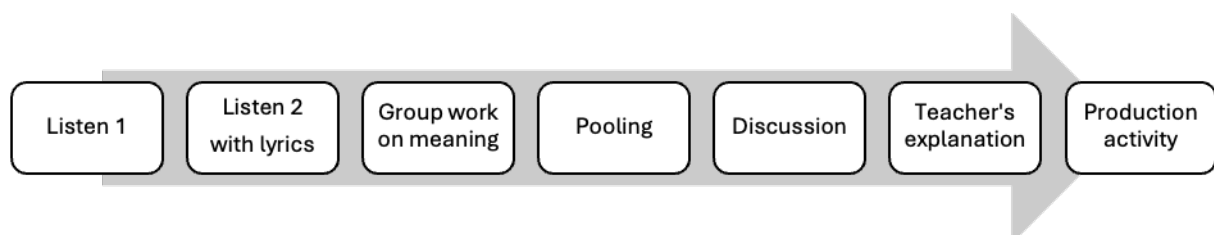
Working with this song in class allows for the development of several aspects of linguistic competence. From a grammatical perspective, three elements are addressed: agreement in gender and number, the use of the pronoun “on”, and the future simple tense. Two lexical fields are also explored: love and religion.

From the standpoint of sociolinguistic competence, the main objective is to help learners understand that the song deals with the tension between social norms (in this case, particularly those conveyed by the Catholic religion) and LGBTQ+ rights. This tension can only be fully understood if learners realize that the French pronoun “on” (e.g.: *On brûlera*) in the song refers to two women in love. This is revealed only by the phrase *toutes les deux* (“both of us”), where the ending -es on *toutes* is a grammatical marker used only when referring to females. The following words *les deux* (“the two”) then clarify that the plural is limited to exactly two women.

The Course Session Schedule

Figure 1

Steps of *On brûlera* Song Course Session



The song *On brûlera* can be used in a single 90-minute lesson in 6 steps, to which a second session may be added to introduce follow-up production activities (Step 7). Since the lyrics are simple and repetitive, this song can be used even with an A1-level audience, provided that the religious vocabulary is explained.

- Step 1: First viewing of the video clip.

(It should be noted here that the video is not very illustrative: it shows the singer seated, singing, while snails crawl over her body.)

→ The objective at this stage is to introduce the song gradually, allowing learners to become familiar with the melody and to try to pick out a few words. Since the video itself is not highly expressive, learners are likely to focus more quickly on the lyrics, which are sung at a slow enough pace to aid comprehension.

- Step 2: Second viewing with the lyrics provided.

- Step 3: Group work to establish the overall meaning of the lyrics.

This collaborative activity encourages learners to co-construct meaning, to cooperate, and to support one another, while also mobilizing their mediation skills. During this stage, the teacher can circulate among the groups to facilitate discussion, clarify vocabulary, and, above all, draw attention to specific lines that students may not have noticed spontaneously.

→ The objective here is for students to work together to understand the lyrics and to identify two essential points: (a) the religious lexical field with words such as *enfer* (“hell”), *dieux* (“gods”), *louanges* (“praises”), and *prières* (“prayers”); (b) the meaning of the lines « *On brûlera toutes les deux / En enfer, mon ange* » (“We’ll both burn / In hell, my angel”), where the indefinite determiner *toutes* is marked in the feminine plural.

- Step 4: Whole-class discussion to pool the results of group work.

- Step 5: Reflection and discussion activity.

After highlighting these elements, students can be invited to reflect on questions such as: “What is the singer’s message in this song?” and “What is the relationship between religion and homosexuality in French society?”

→ This stage can be challenging for Japanese learners, since the dominant religions in France and Japan differ, as does their relationship to LGBTQ+ rights. In Japan, Buddhism and Shintoism, being the most widespread, rarely address LGBTQ+ issues, and therefore are not in conflict with them. As a result, these concerns may seem distant or difficult to grasp for Japanese learners.

- Step 6: Class-wide sharing of reflections.

At this point, the teacher may, if necessary, provide further explanations about the French

sociocultural context in order to facilitate learners' understanding of the meaning conveyed by the song.

- Step 7 (optional): Production activities in a follow-up session.

The lesson can end with Step 6, but an additional session may be devoted to creative production tasks, such as:

- Designing a poster with a message of tolerance.
- Writing a new verse modeled on the structure: On + verb in the future simple + location (e.g.: *On dansera dans la forêt* (“We will dance in the forest”)).
- Conducting research and reflection on topics such as same-sex marriage and the demonstrations that took place in France at the time, or the aesthetic choices made by the singer for the video (for instance: Why is she seated, singing, with snails crawling over her body?¹¹).

In conclusion, the song *On brûlera* constitutes a relevant teaching resource for addressing the issue of LGBTQ+ rights within the French sociocultural context. Although Japanese learners' limited familiarity with this context may present multiple challenges, the song remains highly exploitable thanks to its simple lyrics and slow rhythm. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to emphasize the importance of gender and number agreement, which is an area that often proves difficult for Japanese learners, whose mother tongue does not include such grammatical features.

**Song 2: *Comme un homme* (“Like a man”) and
Sois un homme (“Be a man”) from Disney movie *Mulan***

Why This Song?

This lesson on songs was requested by Japanese learners, among whom Disney works are particularly popular. The teachers therefore chose to present the French version produced in France (hereafter referred to as the French version) and the French version produced in Quebec (hereafter referred to as the Quebec version) of a same song to students. Indeed, Disney films are almost always translated into these two varieties of French. The study of Disney songs thus enables teachers to draw learners' attention to two important aspects: translation differences and the diversity of the French-speaking world.

For this lesson, the teachers selected a song from the animated film *Mulan: I'll Make a Man Out of You*, translated as *Comme un homme* in the French version and *Sois un homme* in the Quebec version. The choice of this specific song also allowed them to address the issue of sexism, specifically the construction and dissemination of a stereotype.

11 It turns out that the singer made this aesthetic choice of the snail because the snail is a non-binary animal, possessing both female and male reproductive organs.

Classroom Exploitation of the Song

In this lesson sequence, we work with two versions of the same song (one in French and the other in Quebec French), while it is also possible to include the English original and the Japanese version as additional points of reference. From the standpoint of linguistic competence, the study of these two French versions allows learners to identify translation differences, and more importantly, differences in the vocabulary employed.

Highlighting these lexical differences also opens the way for reflection on sociolinguistic competence, particularly on how discourse and vocabulary can convey sexist ideas.

The Course Session Schedule

Figure 2

Steps of *Mulan* Disney Movie Songs Course Session



Working on several songs (especially if we include the English and Japanese versions) is time-consuming. Therefore, to keep within a 90-minute limit, it is wise to restrict the lyrics to one or two verses. In terms of level, this song can be used with A2 learners, but it is more relevant for B1 learners, who are more likely to grasp certain nuances of meaning. We can also consider teaching this lesson with a mixed-level group (A2–B1), where learners could support each other. Since the study of Disney songs was requested by the Japanese audience, even though it was the teachers who chose the specific song, we can assume that most learners are familiar with the story of *Mulan* and already know the chosen song. We can plan a 90-minute lesson in four steps, to which a second session may be added to introduce follow-up production activities (Step 5).

- Step 1: Viewing of video clip with lyrics

Distribution of the lyrics from the different versions of the song (French, Quebec French, and, depending on the learners' level, also the English original and the Japanese version), followed by viewing the video clips of the French and Quebec versions.

→ The aim is to provide learners with the tools necessary to facilitate comparative analysis.

- Step 2: Group work on the lyrics to ensure comprehension and to highlight the lexical fields used.

- Step 3: Whole-class sharing of group work.

→ The objective here is to consolidate understanding of the lyrics at the class level, through peer mediation among learners.

- Step 4: Comparison of the lexical fields used in each version of the song.

→ At this stage, learners' attention is drawn to vocabulary differences. They are first asked to identify terms used to describe incompetent soldiers, and then to classify them according to their connotation (sexist, neutral, pejorative, humorous, etc.).

Learners will observe that the French version employs a sexist lexical field with terms such as *des fillettes* (“little girls”), *de vrais hommes* (“real men”), and *femelettes* (“sissies”), whereas the Quebec version uses more neutral terms such as *des têtes-de-pioches* (“blockheads”), *des lavettes* (“a bunch of wimps”), and *de vraies mauviettes* (“real wimps”).

- Step 5: Reflection on sexism (optional)

Building on the observations from Step 4, learners are encouraged to reflect on the origins of sexist stereotypes and how they are reproduced in society. Following this reflection, further activities may include a class discussion on the normalization of sexist stereotypes in Japanese society, or a written production task (e.g., in the style of a DELF activity, rewriting of text (Silva, 2024)) aimed at promoting gender equality.

In conclusion, these songs constitute a relevant teaching resource for addressing the issue of gender equality while also bringing awareness to Francophonie.

Song 3: *Lettre à la République* (“Letter to the Republic”) by Kery James

Why This Song?

Kery James's *Lettre à la République* is a rich pedagogical resource that can be exploited in multiple ways to address complex themes such as colonization, immigration, and the integration of immigrant populations into French society. Written in an engaged style and addressed directly to the French Republic, the song offers a powerful and incisive critique of the colonial legacy and of the social marginalization experienced by some French citizens from former colonies.

Using this song as a teaching resource makes it possible to examine current issues in French public debate and to introduce Japanese learners to aspects of French history and society that are seldom covered in textbooks.

Classroom Exploitation of the Song

Working with *Lettre à la République* allows for the mobilization of both linguistic and sociolinguistic competences. From a linguistic standpoint, the study of the song helps learners

engage with vocabulary from political, historical, and social domains, as well as idiomatic and metaphorical expressions, and the comprehension of implicit meanings. From a sociolinguistic perspective, through notions such as structural racism, the colonial legacy, and the sense of belonging, the song provides opportunities to explore issues of collective memory, identity discourse, and civic engagement.

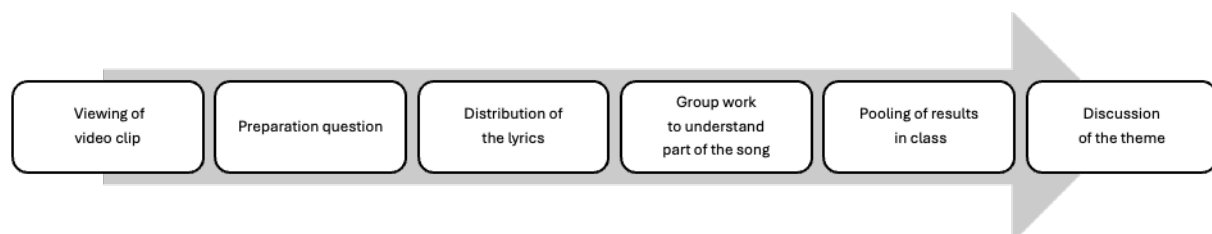
Nevertheless, the song requires substantial historical and cultural background knowledge that may be challenging for Japanese learners. Preparatory activities are therefore necessary to facilitate comprehension. The artist makes numerous references to France’s colonial past (*les pillieurs de richesse* (“the plunderers of wealth”), *les tortionnaires d’Algériens* (“the torturers of Algerians”), *les tirailleurs sénégalais* (“the Senegalese riflemen”), etc.) as well as broader cultural references (like *les favelas*, *le syndrome de Stockholm* (“Stockholm syndrome”), etc.). Although preparation questions can help clarify such references, there are too many to be covered exhaustively. Moreover, many university students may not conduct in-depth research on these issues. For instance, in response to the question “Who were the Senegalese riflemen?”, some students might simply answer that they were “a military corps belonging to the French colonial troops,” without realizing that this was in fact a generic term for all soldiers recruited from French colonies (Senegal, as well as Mali, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Benin, etc.) and that they fought for France in both World Wars.

Another challenge is the interpretation of implicit meanings. Japanese students are often less receptive to implicit discourse, which may make it difficult for them to grasp lyrics such as *Je sais c’que c’est d’être Noir depuis l’époque du cartable* (“I have known what it is to be Black since my schoolbag days”), which refers to experiences of racism. Preparatory work is therefore essential to help learners interpret the artist’s words and establish connections between the lyrics and the historical realities to which they allude.

The Course Session Schedule

Figure 3

Steps of *Lettre à la République* Song Course Session



This song is a dark and meaningful one, as it deals with themes such as colonization, immigration, and integration. It is therefore suitable for intermediate learners who, beyond the linguistic aspects, are also interested in sociocultural issues. As such, the song is appropriate for learners at the B1 level, or even B2. This song should be used over two 90-minute sessions, in

five steps, to which a third session may be added to introduce follow-up production activities (Step 6). These production activities can also be proposed as homework.

- Step 1: First viewing of the video clip, without written support.

→ The objective here is to capture learners' attention through visual and auditory elements and to gather their first impressions (striking images, words understood, emotions felt).

- Step 2: Distribution of a preparatory worksheet with questions for historical contextualization.

→ This step can be carried out either before or after the first viewing, depending on the pedagogical goal (to spark curiosity or to support comprehension).

- Step 3: Sharing and discussion of answers to the preparatory questions, supplemented by the teacher's clarifications and explanations if necessary.

→ The aim of this stage is to ensure that all learners have the same historical and cultural background knowledge before approaching the song.

To prevent learners from giving only superficial answers, it is advisable to stop at this point during the first session and take the necessary time to address the preparatory questions.

- Step 4: Small-group analysis of selected stanzas from the song.

→ Each group works to explain the meaning of the lyrics and to connect them with the information previously studied. For example, after addressing the preparatory questions "From which regions did immigrants come to France?", "Who were the Senegalese riflemen?", and "Who were the Harkis¹²?", it becomes easier to understand the following lyrics:

*De la douce France bafouée par l'immigration africaine
Demandez aux tirailleurs sénégalais et aux harkis
Qui a profité d'qui ?*

"Sweet France trampled by African immigration
Ask the Senegalese riflemen and the Harkis
Who benefited from whom?"

- Step 5: Whole-class discussion and guided debate on the themes raised in the song.

→ The teacher can guide this exchange by posing questions such as: "What are the artist's

12 *Les Harkis* refers to Muslim Algerians who served as auxiliaries or soldiers in the French army during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), often facing persecution in Algeria after the war.

feelings toward France?” and “What is the artist denouncing?”

- Step 6 (optional): Production activities.

As production activities, teachers may:

→ Propose to write a letter to an institution (real or fictional) about a perceived injustice in Japanese society.

→ Organize a discussion or debate on the following question: Does the State play a role in the discrimination experienced by the children of immigrants?

Lettre à la République is a song of considerable depth, which is not easy to exploit in the FFL classroom. It requires carefully designed pedagogical scaffolding, yet it provides an opportunity to focus on sociocultural competence and to equip Japanese learners with valuable tools for understanding current issues in French society, particularly those related to immigration and integration.

Song 4: *Saint-Denis* by Grand Corps Malade

Why This Song?

The song *Saint-Denis*¹³ by Grand Corps Malade was chosen as an introduction to literary analysis. It was selected to introduce learners to the genre of *slam*, which is a spoken musical form that is generally easier for learners of French to understand. The song addresses two main themes: the artist’s love for his city and the cosmopolitan character of that city. It therefore provides a way to reflect on the cultural diversity of French suburbs through a poetic style that helps to deconstruct various stereotypes.

Classroom Exploitation of the Song

This song serves as a useful introduction to literary analysis and textual commentary, the type of exercise French high school students’ practices in preparation for the *Baccalauréat*¹⁴. To write a commentary, one normally formulates a guiding problem statement, but for this initiation activity learners can be asked a simple question such as: How does the artist describe his hometown?, and a straightforward two-part structure can then be proposed: I – Saint-Denis, a cosmopolitan city / II – Saint-Denis, a city loved by its inhabitants.

Learners can be guided to fill out these two parts with concrete examples, focusing on lexical fields (e.g., diversity, affection for the city) as well as figures of speech (anaphora, metaphor, etc.).

For instance, in this song learners can identify:

13 Saint-Denis is a commune in the northern suburbs of Paris (France), where there is a lot of immigrant background people.

14 The *Baccalauréat* is a French national academic qualification that students can obtain at the completion of their secondary education by meeting given requirements.

- Anaphora: the first four lines of the opening stanza all begin with *J'voudrais faire un slam pour ...* (“I’d like to do a slam for ...”)
- Metaphor: the city of Saint-Denis is described as a *grande dame* (“great lady”), an old woman, who has witnessed the artist grow up like a mother figure.
- Alliteration in [r]: *Prends la ligne D du RER et erre dans les rues sévères d’une ville pleine de caractère* (“Ride the RER line D, then roam the rugged roads of a city rich full of character”).
- Assonance in [o]: *Prends la ligne 13 du métro et va bouffer McDo ou dans les bistros d’une ville pleine de bonnes gos et de gros clandos* (“Hop on the line 13, grab some McDo or hit the bistros in a city full of fine chicks and shady locos”).

Learners may also observe the lexical fields of cultural diversity:

En une heure, tu traverseras Alger et Tanger. Tu verras des Yougos et des Roms, et puis j’t’emmènerai à Lisbonne. Et à 2 pas de New Delhi et de Karachi, j’t’emmènerai bouffer du Mafé à Bamako et à Yamoussoukro.

“In an hour, you’ll cross Algiers and Tangier. You’ll see some Yugos and Roms, then I’ll take you to Lisbon. And just a stone’s throw from New Delhi and Karachi, I’ll take you to chow some Mafé in Bamako and Yamoussoukro.”

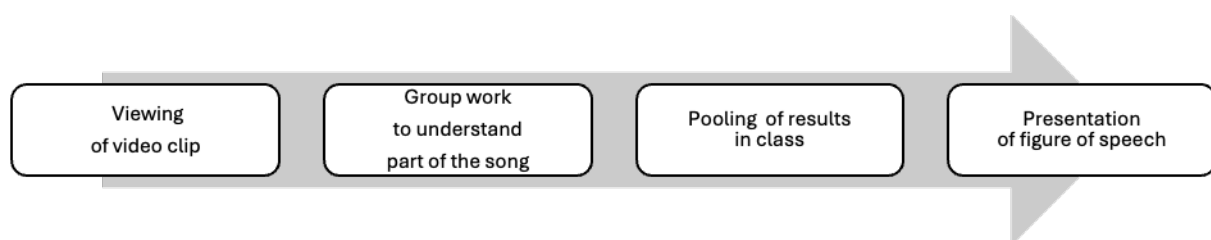
The main difficulty in exploiting this song lies in the fact that learners do not approach literary analysis in the same way as it is done in France, and they are generally unfamiliar with the exercise of *commentaire de texte* (a text commentary).

Thus, from a pragmatic perspective, this song offers an original text that can serve as an introduction to French-style literary analysis. At the same time, on the linguistic level, it helps enrich learners’ vocabulary related to the city, culture, and emotions. On the sociolinguistic level, it also contributes to deconstructing the negative image often associated with the Parisian suburbs.

The Course Session Schedule

Figure 4

Steps of *Saint-Denis* Song Course Session



This song was chosen to serve as an introduction to text commentary for French learners

and is therefore intended for a B1–B2 level audience. This lesson sequence can take place over two 90-minute sessions: the first for understanding and analyzing the song (Steps 1 to 4), and the second for producing the text commentary (Step 5).

- Step 1: Viewing of the video clip.

Learners are asked to pick out words as they listen and to guess the theme of the song.

- Step 2: Distribution of the lyrics and group work.

Learners work in groups to understand the meaning of the lyrics. To save time, the song can be divided into several sections, with each group assigned a different part.

- Step 3: Whole-class sharing of group work.

The objective is to ensure comprehension of the lyrics by the class, drawing on peer mediation among learners.

- Step 4: Teacher presentation of figures of speech.

The teacher introduces figures of speech (using examples not drawn from the song itself) and learners are then invited to identify such figures within the song.

- Step 5: Writing a commentary.

Learners are introduced to the French *commentaire de texte* (as practiced for the *baccalauréat*) and are invited to write one, either individually, in small groups, or as a whole class with teacher support, depending on their level.

Grand Corps Malade's *Saint-Denis* is an ideal resource for introducing learners to literary analysis. The text, rich in stylistic devices and allusions yet written in a contemporary and accessible style, is well-suited to learners of French who are not literature specialists. Moreover, compared to classical literary texts, this song allows students to engage with contemporary themes such as immigration and integration.

Conclusion

This article aims to explore the pedagogical richness of the Francophone song as a teaching resource. Indeed, the Francophone song can prove to be an original authentic document, more or less easily exploitable in the FFL classroom. In the context of this article, we have chosen to present four contemporary songs: *On brûlera* by Pomme, *Comme un homme* and *Sois un homme* (taken from the Disney animated film *Mulan*), *Lettre à la République* by Kery James, and *Saint-Denis* by Grand Corps Malade. Each of these songs was selected for its strong thematic scope, whether dealing with LGBTQ+ rights, gender norms, or the major

triptych: colonization, immigration, and integration.

The results of this analysis, structured around a didactic perspective, reveal that the song constitutes an effective lever for addressing complex and sensitive issues in the language classroom. Its evocative power, its anchoring in orality, and its expressive function foster both affective and cognitive engagement on the part of learners, while confronting them with varied social and cultural representations. Far from being reduced to mere “entertainment” or a passive listening exercise, the song here becomes a genuine resource for intercultural reflection, at the intersection of linguistic, identity-based, and civic issues.

The exploitation of these songs indeed makes it possible to develop transversal skills: understanding implicit meaning, critically analyzing social discourse, raising awareness of stereotypes, and expressing oneself on sensitive topics. The proposed pedagogical activities, discussion and debate, reformulation, personal creations, or text analysis, show that learners are capable of appropriating such complex content, as long as structured support is provided. This work requires the teacher to adopt a reflective didactic stance, attentive to learners’ sociocultural contexts, their representations, and possible resistances.

In the specific context of a Japanese audience, the chosen songs made it possible to question often implicit social norms, open up a space for discussion on topics sometimes rarely addressed in the school environment, and confront learners with other relationships to language, gender, or collective memory. This reinforces the idea that the teaching of FFL can and should be part of a broader educational perspective, integrating objectives of civic education and intercultural openness.

In sum, far from being a mere classroom animation tool, the Francophone song proves to be a genuine vehicle for critical learning. It invites learners to enter the language through the prism of sensibility and lived experience, while giving them the means to express themselves, to understand, and to act in a plural world. It is thus in the tension between aesthetics and ethics, between pleasure and reflection, that its pedagogical power lies. The song hence becomes a tool for pragmatic and sociocultural reflection, going beyond the purely linguistic objectives of the FFL classroom.

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Teacher-Selected Sources, AI-Supported Outputs: NotebookLM in the CLIL Classroom

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) requires materials that are both linguistically accessible and conceptually accurate, yet producing such resources is time-consuming and commercially available options remain limited. Recent attention has turned to generative AI (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT, but their tendency to hallucinate, lack of source attribution, and potential for plagiarism limit their classroom reliability. This article examines Google's NotebookLM, a GenAI tool that grounds outputs in user-uploaded sources, offering verifiable traceability not available on most other platforms. Using open-access texts from *E-International Relations*, NotebookLM was employed to generate B1-level CLIL readings, comprehension questions, and discussion tasks for a Politics and International Relations CLIL seminar. Findings indicate that NotebookLM effectively reduces teacher workload while retaining disciplinary vocabulary and providing transparent source attribution. Generated materials were largely accurate, with comprehension questions that were mostly answerable and pedagogically usable. At the same time, outputs reflected the orientation of uploaded sources, underscoring that no text is neutral and highlighting opportunities to foster students' critical awareness of framing. Challenges include the need to update sources for currency, review simplification for conceptual precision, and ensure balance in perspectives. Overall, NotebookLM demonstrates strong potential to support efficient, reliable, and critically informed CLIL material development while keeping educators in control of content.

Keywords: *CLIL, Generative AI, Materials development, Critical literacy*

Introduction

A common concern for teachers of CLIL classes is the difficulty of finding or creating suitable materials. Commercially published CLIL materials are limited, and developing level-appropriate learning resources is highly time-consuming (Coyle et al., 2010). Recent research suggests that generative AI (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT could help to address

this problem (Kohnke & Zou, 2025; Kostka & Toncelli, 2023; Wadden et al., 2024). However, several limitations have also been identified. These include a tendency to ‘hallucinate,’ or generate factually incorrect information (Bender et al., 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2023), the risk of unintentional plagiarism (Wadden et al., 2024), and issues related to bias, perpetuation of stereotypes, and the spread of harmful information (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Another major limitation is the inability of most GenAI platforms to cite or trace their sources (Kohnke et al., 2023; Kostka & Toncelli, 2023). Together, these issues hinder the production of accurate and reliable CLIL materials. The purpose of this article is to explore methods for generating factually accurate reading materials with identifiable sources by using Google’s NotebookLM, a tool that offers source traceability not available in many other GenAI platforms. This article evaluates NotebookLM outputs in terms of source attribution, plagiarism risk, and classroom reliability, including the clarity of comprehension questions and the framing of issues.

Background

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) requires teachers to integrate content and language instruction. For example, in the Politics and International Relations class that I was in charge of in the spring semester, students discussed and presented about topics such as theories of international relations, war and peace, migration, and human rights. As suitable materials were difficult to find, I tried various ways of scaffolding and simplifying native-level materials, while retaining as much of the original meaning and concept as possible. One way to do this is by glossing less frequent or domain-specific words, as recommended by Nation (2022). This method is particularly useful in activities whose purpose is vocabulary development. For activities in which the goal is to comprehend and communicate ideas and opinions, however, simplified texts often proved more effective, as the learning burden was reduced, allowing students to focus on the content.

As text simplification is a labour-intensive process, many teachers and researchers are now exploring ways to use GenAI for support (Kohnke & Zou, 2025; Wadden et al., 2024). ChatGPT has proven useful for generating initial drafts and adjusting text levels, but its tendency to hallucinate and its lack of source attribution limit its classroom reliability, particularly in CLIL contexts where factual accuracy is essential. At the same time, although AI tools can save significant preparation time, they can also reproduce existing copyrighted material without attribution. This may pose a risk of plagiarism, since large language models draw from vast, undifferentiated datasets and cannot provide verifiable citations. These shortcomings highlight the need to explore other GenAI tools, such as NotebookLM, that may better address the challenges of accuracy and source transparency. The following section examines how NotebookLM can be applied in CLIL contexts.

NotebookLM is an AI-powered research and note-taking assistant from Google Labs that was publicly launched in 2023. Leveraging the Gemini model and Retrieval-Augmented

Generation (RAG), the free version enables users to upload and synthesize up to 50 sources, such as PDF files, web links, and YouTube videos. It offers grounded summaries, answers, and audio overviews in a podcast-like format (Martin & Johnson, 2023). A key advantage of NotebookLM over many other large language models is source traceability. Unlike models that generate responses from a broad, non-transparent training corpus, NotebookLM grounds its content in the documents uploaded by the user. The Gemini model supplies the grammar, vocabulary, and structure, while the factual claims are anchored in the chosen sources. This distinction is of particular relevance to CLIL contexts, where the quality of teaching materials depends not only on linguistic accessibility, but also on the accuracy and verifiability of subject-related content. Source-grounded output allows educators to design classroom tasks, such as expert group reading activities, comprehension checks, and analytical questions, while ensuring that learners can trace information back to identifiable sources. Such transparency aligns with the pedagogical goals of fostering critical engagement and academic integrity.

Methodology

Data Collection and Preparation

To prepare CLIL materials, I selected and uploaded open-access texts from *E-International Relations (E-IR)*, an independent non-profit publisher and website in the field of international relations. E-IR publishes articles and books aimed at students, academics, and general readers, making it an accessible source for classroom use. These materials were chosen for their relevance to course topics such as theories of international relations, war and peace, and human rights, and their open-access status ensured there were no copyright concerns.

Use of NotebookLM

The selected texts were uploaded into Google's NotebookLM (Google, 2023), which was then used to generate level-appropriate CLIL readings, comprehension questions, and discussion questions. Grounding outputs in pre-selected sources increased their accuracy, transparency, and reliability. This process reduced text preparation workload while maintaining informational accuracy.

Prompt Design and Refinement

Prompts were refined iteratively for consistency. The final version generated expert group reading sets (Dale & Tanner, 2012), in which small groups of students read a passage and answer comprehension and discussion questions, becoming 'experts' on that particular topic. Groups then disband and form new groups, where each student, as an 'expert' on the topic that they read about in their previous group, teaches their peers about that topic. The final prompt generated reading sets with the following five components:

1. A 200–250 word introductory text for all students to be covered as a class.
2. Three 150–200 word CEFR B1-level readings, each self-contained but contributing to an overall understanding of the theme. The purpose of using B1 is to keep the emphasis on content comprehension. More challenging readings for higher-level or highly motivated learners can be assigned as out-of-class readings. The prompt asks for all important domain-specific vocabulary to be retained.
3. Comprehension questions to check understanding, and discussion questions to encourage personal engagement and sharing of opinions with other group members.
4. A set of group discussion questions requiring students to synthesize and compare information across all readings when groups change.
5. A graphic organizer table summarizing main ideas, designed to support note-taking and collaborative synthesis.

Sample Output

The following excerpt illustrates the style, content, and accessibility of the generated readings. It is taken from an expert group’s activity. The other two readings are entitled ‘Socially Constructed Inequalities’ and ‘The Legacies of Colonialism and Systemic Inequality.’ This reading was generated by NotebookLM from Bloor (2022). The embedded numbers (e.g., <1>) denote different parts of Bloor (2022) that are linked to in the original NotebookLM output. For reasons of space, only one sample reading is shown here. The full set of readings also includes synthesis questions and a graphic organizer, as outlined in the methodology.

Reading: Global Economic Inequality

The world today faces significant **economic inequality**, where wealth is not shared equally among countries or people <1>. This imbalance is often described by the **global north-south divide**: wealthier countries, mainly in the North (like Western Europe and North America), possess most of the world’s income, despite having less than a quarter of the global population <1>. In contrast, less economically developed countries are primarily located in the South <2>.

To understand this, **world systems theory** is helpful <3> <4>. It divides the global economy into three parts: the **core**, the **semi-periphery**, and the **periphery** <3>. **Core** countries specialize in high-skill, capital-intensive production, controlling wages and manufacturing <3> <4>. **Peripheral** countries provide cheap labor and raw materials for the core’s industries <3> <4> <5>. This system is considered “rigged in favor of the core” <3>, meaning it benefits richer countries and limits the development of poorer ones <4>.

Dependency theory also explains that poorer countries are kept underdeveloped to serve the needs of a global elite, or “global bourgeoisie” <3> <4> <6>. It suggests that the underdevelopment in the South results directly from policies and unfair trade practices by the North, a process sometimes called **neo-colonialism** <7> <8> <9>. Even international organizations like the IMF and World Bank are sometimes criticized for implementing Western-centric policies that worsen poverty and global inequality <9> <10>.

Key Terms: economic inequality, global north-south divide, world systems theory, core, semi-periphery, periphery, dependency theory, neo-colonialism.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What is the main characteristic of the **global north-south divide**?
2. According to **world systems theory**, what are the three main economic areas in the world?
3. How do **core** countries benefit from **peripheral** countries in the global economy?
4. What does **dependency theory** suggest is the reason for underdevelopment in the Global South?

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think that the global economic system makes it hard for poorer countries to develop, as **world systems theory** claims? Why or why not?
2. What are some actions that could help reduce **economic inequality** between countries?

Findings and Discussion

Source Validation and Plagiarism Mitigation

One of the most significant advantages of NotebookLM is the ease with which sources can be traced. Each generated passage is anchored to notes or documents I uploaded, allowing me to confirm the factual basis of specific claims quickly. This transparency contrasts with ChatGPT, which produces fluent text but often leaves the reader uncertain about where particular facts, phrases, or examples originate. The traceability feature also helps mitigate plagiarism concerns. By reformulating content with source links, NotebookLM avoids the “uncannily similar” (Wadden et al., 2024, “HAL, are you okay?” section, para. 14) structures or wording observed by Wadden et al. (2024) in ChatGPT outputs. From a pedagogical perspective, this protects teachers from unintentionally using plagiarized material and provides an opportunity to model responsible source use for students. Materials created with NotebookLM can thus

demonstrate, in practice, how academic integrity is maintained when ideas are grounded in identifiable references.

Content and Comprehension Questions

NotebookLM’s generated readings show a clear capacity to retain core disciplinary vocabulary while presenting abstract concepts in accessible form. For example, in the reading on global economic inequality, the text introduced frameworks such as world systems theory and dependency theory while maintaining key terms like *core*, *periphery*, and *neo-colonialism*. This suggests that the tool is less likely to produce content that is “generic and repetitive, lacking in nuance, and sometimes untruthful” (Kohnke & Zou, 2025), and instead can generate texts that preserve disciplinary depth. Unlike the “stochastic parrot” effect described by Bender et al. (2021), in which large language models reproduce patterns from opaque training data without grounding, NotebookLM anchors each claim in teacher-selected sources, offering verifiable traceability. This grounding enhances accuracy and also allows teachers to demonstrate critical source use in practice.

At the same time, the framing of generated readings reflects the orientation of the uploaded sources. In the inequality example, the emphasis fell heavily on structuralist critiques, including dependency theory and criticisms of Western-led institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. Such framing underscores the importance of recognizing that no text is neutral. Teachers can make this explicit by comparing differently sourced readings, encouraging students to analyze how perspective influences both content and interpretation.

Unlike the ChatGPT-generated comprehension questions with no clear answers observed by Wadden et al. (2024), NotebookLM produces mostly answerable comprehension questions, which is an important factor for classroom reliability. Most questions highlight key details or main ideas, although a minority are near-verbatim rephrasings of sentences in the text. With review and occasional editing, however, the questions can be made classroom-ready, reducing the need for teachers to rewrite large sets of items. This time-saving benefit allows greater attention to be directed toward higher-order discussion tasks and multimodal scaffolding, such as diagrams, maps, and illustrations. Taken together, the generated content and questions indicate that NotebookLM can produce materials that are both pedagogically usable and verifiable, while still requiring teacher oversight to ensure accuracy and critical awareness of framing.

Pedagogical Implications

Perhaps the clearest pedagogical benefit of NotebookLM is the way it reduces the burden of text simplification and question-writing, tasks that are essential in CLIL but also highly time-consuming. While ChatGPT can also generate simplified content, NotebookLM’s advantage lies in its source-grounded output, which allows teachers to verify claims quickly rather than spending time fact-checking each detail. This reduction in preparation time

enables greater focus on higher-level teaching tasks, such as selecting information sources, designing activities, and adapting materials to learner needs. For example, more attention can be devoted to structuring and scaffolding ‘expert group’ activities (Dale & Tanner, 2012). NotebookLM’s ability to generate multiple subtopic readings anchored to the same sources supports peer teaching and ensures that each student contributes unique information during the synthesis stage. It also creates space to integrate additional scaffolds such as photographs, maps, illustrations, and glosses. As Kohnke and Zou (2025) suggest, teachers can also spend more time customizing and differentiating learning materials by adjusting text complexity and designing culturally relevant examples. NotebookLM does not replace teacher expertise but redirects effort toward more interactive and differentiated lesson design. Because outputs are anchored in teacher-selected sources, educators retain control over the content, supporting both accuracy and alignment with course objectives.

Challenges/Limitations

Some challenges emerged when using NotebookLM to generate CLIL materials. First, the outputs are only as current as the sources uploaded. In fields such as international relations, where events develop rapidly, this can limit the immediacy of the content. One way to address this is to emphasize enduring concepts and theories in generated readings, which students can then apply to contemporary cases using their own background knowledge.

Second, simplification sometimes leads to imprecision. Complex terms such as *core/periphery* or *neo-colonialism* may be reduced to vague substitutes or oversimplified explanations, which risks obscuring their conceptual value. Teachers therefore need to review outputs carefully to ensure that key terminology is retained and accurately presented.

Finally, the framing of outputs reflects the orientation of the uploaded sources. Rather than being a defect, this can be pedagogically valuable: because NotebookLM makes its source base explicit, it allows teachers and students to recognize how perspective shapes content. Still, this places responsibility on educators to select a balanced range of sources and, where necessary, to supplement them with alternative perspectives.

Future Directions

An important direction for future research is how AI tools can be used to encourage critical thinking in CLIL classrooms. Rather than treating AI outputs as neutral, students could be guided to compare differently framed texts or to question the perspectives embedded in them. This connects to the need to examine how GenAI outputs may reflect theoretical or ideological biases. Prior studies of ChatGPT have noted tendencies toward particular framings, and in the CLIL context, such biases could shape both the comprehension and discussion tasks generated. Investigating how different tools privilege mainstream development narratives (e.g., colonial

history, trade imbalance, SDGs) or critical perspectives (e.g., world systems or dependency theory) would extend evaluation beyond accuracy and answerability to include the cultivation of critical literacy. A secondary area for research concerns how to balance accessibility with the retention of domain-specific vocabulary, since over-simplification risks distorting key concepts, while excessive technicality may overwhelm learners.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that NotebookLM can play a valuable role in the development of CLIL materials by reducing the workload associated with text simplification and question design, while still allowing teachers to maintain full control over the content. Because outputs are grounded in teacher-selected sources, educators can ensure that readings and questions are accurate, verifiable, and aligned with course objectives. Rather than replacing teacher expertise, NotebookLM functions as an assistant that frees teachers to concentrate on higher-level pedagogical tasks such as designing interactive activities, integrating multimodal scaffolds, and differentiating materials to meet diverse learner needs.

At the same time, several practices can help maximize its effectiveness. Choosing a balanced set of sources helps avoid one-sided perspectives, while NotebookLM's explicit grounding makes framing more recognizable for both teachers and students. Retaining domain-specific vocabulary ensures that learners engage with key concepts while still benefiting from simplified syntax. Reviewing comprehension questions for redundancy or over-literal phrasing helps maintain their value as genuine checks of understanding.

Caveats remain: outputs are only as current as the sources provided, and simplification may lead to conceptual loss if left unchecked. Yet these limitations also highlight NotebookLM's pedagogical value: by making the influence of sources visible, it provides opportunities to foster students' critical awareness of how knowledge is framed. Overall, NotebookLM increases preparation efficiency and supports deeper engagement with both content and language, while keeping teachers firmly in control.

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Are You OK? Simple Interventions for Classroom Learning Difficulties

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Abstract

Globally, one in five students have diagnosed learning difficulties, with self and undiagnosed conditions pushing statistics higher. Ideally, all students would be screened for such disorders in early primary school and commence treatment and supportive education as soon as possible. The sad truth is however, that many students, especially those with milder conditions will never be screened and will experience difficulties in all aspects of their life because of this systemic failure. Students who manage to enter tertiary education will often have done so by optimizing familial and high school support systems, and by using masking and coping strategies that falter under the increased load that university places on their cognitive and executive functions. Due to the fact that learning and developmental disorders directly affect language development and information processing, foreign language teachers are often the best placed to identify these conditions and stop these student's failure cycle. Despite popular misconceptions that expertise in learning disorders is necessary to diagnose one, all that is really necessary is to be observant, compassionate and be prepared to give 10 minutes of your day to a struggling student. This paper will attempt to outline the basic characteristics of the major learning disorders, offer some practical strategies to identify them in students and maximize the learning experiences and life outcomes of these individuals.

Keywords: *Learning difficulties, Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Identification*

Introduction

For many educators the term learning disorders, conjures up images of students with severe impairments working in separate classes with specialist teachers on specialized individual programs. The thought of encountering a student with one of these difficulties in their class raises feelings of professional insecurity and a drastically increased workload. A prevailing attitude is that you need to be a highly trained specialist in order to approach a student who is possibly struggling with one of these disorders. In my experience however, these fears are unfounded. The difference between making a profound difference on a student's life and leaving

them alone to repeat cycles of failure is extremely simple. Just as a track coach would not ignore a limping athlete, nor a swim coach a swimmer nursing a sore shoulder, it stands to reason that educators whose mission is to help individuals learn, would gently pull a struggling student to one side and ask, “Are you OK?” In the 15 or so years I’ve been working with students of all ages and professions with learning and developmental disorders, I’ve realized that this simple question is all it takes to kickstart the student in question’s self-awareness and help them choose their own path away from a widening failure cycle. It is also an action that is well within the skill set and professional obligations of all education professionals.

I’m Not a Specialist

Colleagues’ reactions to the topic of learning difficulties tend to fall into one of two categories. Either they are concerned about their students and keen to do more, or hesitant and offer comments like: “I don’t know what to look for,” “I’m not a specialist,” “it’s not my business,” or “what if I’m wrong?” These are not unreasonable anxieties and seem to be universal. According to the US Department of Education (Burr et al., 2015) the predominant factors that contribute to educator challenges in identifying and supporting students learning and developmental difficulties are:

Lack of Understanding: Teachers may lack sufficient knowledge about the reasons English learner (EL) students are not making adequate progress, including the distinction between learning disabilities and second-language acquisition challenges.

Inadequate Training: Many educators are not adequately trained in evaluating the intersection between second-language acquisition and learning disabilities.

Cultural and Linguistic Barriers: Teachers may struggle to differentiate between behaviors caused by cultural or linguistic differences and those indicative of learning disabilities.

Poorly Designed Referral Processes: Ineffective or unclear referral processes can discourage teachers from initiating evaluations for suspected learning disabilities.

Fear of Misidentification: Teachers may worry about misidentifying students, leading to inappropriate placements or interventions.

Limited Resources: A lack of awareness of or access to appropriate tools, assessments, and support systems may make teachers hesitant to address potential learning disabilities.

Most of these fears have been reflected in conversations with colleagues over the years. Notably, much of their reluctance seems to be due to the fear of misidentifying a student and therefore somehow violating their human rights. Especially, as pointed out by a Japanese colleague, in a society where the general knowledge of learning and developmental disorders is low, and despite slowly changing attitudes, disabilities of any kind are considered shameful

(Mogul, 2016, October 13).

The reality is though, that a student is unlikely to claim harassment if a teacher expresses concern about their classroom performance and in them as human beings. All of the students I've approached were aware on some level that the difficulties they were experiencing were different to those of their classmates and were relieved to be able to both name the problem as one shared by a large percentage of the global population, and not an intellectual or personality defect.

A final, often heard concern is that of being locked into preparing time consuming specialist curriculums once a student has been identified with a learning difficulty and not having the specialist knowledge, time or energy to do so. However, very often the biggest impact on a struggling student's performance and life is made by an initial show of concern and a few empathetic questions, followed by a few practical classroom tweaks.

Learning Difficulties-What Are They?

Learning difficulties is an umbrella term for a wide variety of life-long, genetic conditions that occur on a spectrum, unique to every individual. Specifically, they affect:

Getting information into the brain (input)

Making sense of this information (organization)

Storing and retrieving information (memory)

Getting information back out (output)

Processing speed (speed of taking in, using or producing information)

Working memory (holding information in mind while also using the information)

Executive functions (planning and organizing)

(Integra, 2009)

Essentially, these conditions interfere with the uptake and processing of information between the brain and senses and are directly connected to difficulties with language development and use and the ability to speak, read and write (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2018).

Obviously, any condition that impacts these fundamental processes and skills will have a profound impact on all aspects of affected individual's lives, education, socialization, life and career choices. Adult students who have received affirmative diagnoses late in life have often expressed deep regret at missed life and career opportunities. Students in my university classes with clinical or self-diagnosis have outlined years of self-doubt, shame and masking strategies, and expressed great relief at being able to even approximately identify their problems.

Global Prevalence

Globally, learning and developmental disorders affect 20% of the population. 6–7% are classified as having a learning disability, in reading and language processing, 13–15% of the population are estimated to show signs of dyslexia (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2018). Self-diagnosed or undiagnosed individuals are typically not counted in official statistics indicating that true prevalence may be higher than officially reported. Advocacy and neurodiversity groups maintain that autism and ADHD are underdiagnosed in women, minorities, or low-income countries, especially since diagnostic models are traditionally based on male characteristics (Understood.org, 2024).

Personal experience indicates that this is the case. Most of the students with learning difficulties I've encountered in my classrooms have been initially undiagnosed, with the majority being female. Although this may possibly be due a reluctance of male students to admit to, or talk about perceived disabilities or weaknesses, as opposed to statistical gender bias.

In Japanese Universities

Officially, the Japan Student Services organization (JASSO) lists the total number of students with disabilities (all types) in universities and short-term colleges as 55,510 students as of May 1, 2024. Of these developmental disorders account for 11,923 students, and only include students holding a disability certificate or having a diagnosis or evidence of disability in a health check (Japan Student Services Organization [JASSO], 2025).

By institution type (national, public, private), private universities have the most students with disabilities nationally at 35,784 students, followed by national universities at 10,947 and public universities at 2,941 (ReseEd 編集部 [ReseEd Editorial Department], 2023).

In terms of support, national universities not only have a higher proportion of students receiving support, but also higher support rates compared to private institutions. It should be pointed out though, that while national institutions offer mandatory legal accommodations, private ones are only bound by a duty of effort, not strict legal obligation (fukushi.tv, n.d.).

Essentially, private universities account for the majority of students with disabilities in higher education (72% of total in 2022) with the lowest support rates (fukushi.tv, n.d.). Again, these numbers do not include self, or undiagnosed individuals. This means that while statistically, educators working in private Japanese universities are over three times more likely to encounter a student with learning difficulties than one in a national university, and over 12 times more likely to than an educator in a public university, the real figures are likely to be much higher.

Most Commonly Encountered Learning Difficulties

Experientially, dyslexia, autism and ADHD are the most statistically prevalent and the most visibly identifiable learning difficulties educators will encounter in university classes. The main traits of each difficulty and the classroom difficulties students with them have are

summarized below:

Dyslexia

Most common learning disability affects about 80% of individuals identified with LDs (International Dyslexia Association, n.d.).

Worldwide, up to 15% of the population shows signs of dyslexia (International Dyslexia Association, n.d.).

Most visible features: difficulties with reading, spelling, and writing.

Caused by phonological processing problems (International Dyslexia Association, n.d.).

Classroom Difficulties

Remembering verbal instructions

Retrieving stored information from memory

Sequencing and organizing information

Recognizing/discriminating sounds

Applying structures/vocabulary accurately

Accurate spelling

Coherent writing

Comprehension/content retention

Discrepancy between oral and written work (International Dyslexia Association, n.d.)

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

Wide-ranging condition, from severe to mild/high-functioning autism (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013).

Prevalence: 1 in 36 individuals in the U.S. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2025); higher prevalence among males.

More individuals are being identified with mild/high-functioning autism (CDC, 2025).

Key Elements of an Autistic Profile

Difficulties in social interaction and communication:

Maintaining appropriate eye contact

Making appropriate contributions to conversations

Understanding underlying meaning of others' contributions (APA, 2013)

Limited or repetitive patterns of behavior or interests:

Fixed behaviors/routines

Difficulties coping with change/flexible thinking

Fixed interests (e.g., trains, timetables, anime)

Heightened sensitivity to light, sound, or other sensations (APA, 2013)

Anxiety (APA, 2013).

Classroom Difficulties

Understanding non-literal or idiomatic language

Recognizing conversational turn-taking cues

Coping with inconsistencies in language rules or words with multiple meanings

Role-playing from unfamiliar perspectives

Language classes may provide rare opportunities for authentic communication (APA, 2013; CDC, 2025).

ADHD

Neurodevelopmental condition characterized by difficulties with attention, impulse control, energy regulation, and working memory (APA, 2013).

Associated with emotional regulation difficulties, anxiety, and mental fatigue (APA, 2013).

Three types: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive-impulsive, and combined (APA, 2013).

Classroom Difficulties

Loss of concentration when reading/listening for extended periods without visual/practical support

Difficulty with social interactions and conversational turn-taking

Challenges following instructions and classroom activities

Poor time management (“time blindness”)

Excessive energy disrupting focus

Weak working memory (APA, 2013).

What to Look for

Although primarily language and information processing disorders, very often it is problems with executive functions that will be the most visible. While each difficulty has its own unique symptoms, there is a high degree of overlap and concurrence as indicated below.

Figure 1*Common Issues Associated with Specific Learning Differences*

Note. Adapted from *A guide to specific learning differences* (2nd ed.) p. 1. British Dyslexia Association, 2018.

Essentially, it is these common set of issues that are the best initial indicators as to whether a student is having difficulties or not, and these are usually the ones that the class teacher will likely notice a deficit in first. Often putting such deficits down to a lack of application or motivation. In my experience, persistent problems with self-organization and management are some of the best indicators that a student is struggling with a learning difficulty, especially dyslexia and ADHD. Colleagues will often interpret the lack of these skills as resistance or a lack of respect, while the students themselves will usually attribute them to personal defects such as laziness or a lack of discipline. Personally I regard resistance to a task, myself or to class in general as an indicator that a student is struggling in some form.

Noticeable level differences in student's skill sets are also good indicators of struggling students. In general, I have found that most students with either ADHD or dyslexia are quite fluent English speakers yet struggle visibly with one or two of the other core skills. As indicated in the diagram above, all disorders affect working memory and therefore the amount of information a student can process at a given time (British Dyslexia Association, 2018). Students with ADHD have told me that while they can focus for hours on tasks that are interesting to them, they struggle to follow conversations in a group and process information or instructions given orally. Dyslexic students obviously struggle to process written information but also have problems processing oral information and translating their thought into writing. All of the

dyslexic students I have uncovered so far follow a similar pattern. They are predominantly female, fluent English conversationalists with good people skills. When I ask them where they learned their English, meaning overseas or conversation school, they invariably answer “YouTube.” When I respond “that’s great, lots of natural input, do you read? If you read regularly as well, you will improve faster.” They then inevitably respond that they have problems reading in Japanese and English and prefer to learn by aural methods or by visual methods that involve little reading.

Confronted with the possibility of having a learning disorder, the presence of either ADHD or dyslexia seems to be more readily acceptable to students than autism, although I have yet to have that conversation with a student. With the exception of one, all of the autistic students I have encountered in my classes have had some level of communicative and social impairments and have not self-identified, making it difficult to approach them regarding the subject. In this case, my approach after checking with the Support Centre as to whether or not they have self-identified, is to work around their difficulties and provide as much practical in class support as I can.

With ADHD and dyslexia though, once the conversation starts students tend to readily admit that they have problems and are open to a tentative diagnosis. When a possible diagnosis for the student’s difficulties is reached between us, there is an initial surge of relief that they are not lacking in intelligence, and that there is a name for the problems that they have been facing all their lives. One 19-year-old student told me “Jason, for the first time in years I went home and slept like a dead woman.” However, this relief is often followed by reluctance to take the next step and get a formal diagnosis, remedial treatment or training. As one student explained, going for a diagnosis and getting a negative result would mean that they were “just stupid after all.” Other fears revolve around what a positive diagnosis made public would do to their future employment prospects and their position in society, rather than seeing such a diagnosis as legal protection and a path forward for an alternative future.

At this point, I stress to the students that get diagnosed or suspect themselves of having a learning difficulty, that their difficulties don’t stop there. They still have to graduate and get a job, and their present problems will continue throughout their university career and into the workplace, affecting their choice of career and career path. Working with company managers and CEO’s I often hear stories of problem employees who are not performing to expectations, and how these managers and CEO’s struggle to coach them. Digging into the story, it becomes obvious that the employees display one or several of the common core traits of learning difficulties and that simple pep talks or reprimands from their superiors will not improve their performance. From the company’s perspective the employee with problems is a consumer of company time and resources who will ultimately be shunted aside, demoted, forced to quit or fired. From the employee’s point of view, the workplace is a constant source of pressure and disappointment. Whenever I teach adult classes and mention learning difficulties and the different types, many people come forward saying that they feel that they have symptoms,

especially of dyslexia and ADHD that it is revelatory for them, putting a name and perspective to their daily difficulties and also explaining many of their life choices. Managers especially those in Human Resources have also come forward saying that they realize that their present company regulations and training systems are inadequate for dealing with neurodivergent employees.

Why Me?

As previously stated, learning difficulties are language and information processing disorders, that impact language development and use, and specifically the ability to speak, read and write. Foreign language classes are ostensibly the only subjects that reteach these skills post primary. Recent trends in Applied Linguistics/ESL focus on communicative methodologies coupled with interactive, learner centered environments. This usually translates into smaller, communicative high input/high output classes which directly stress and highlight student's difficulties. Students find that existing masking or learning strategies cannot cope with the extra linguistic and cognitive loads, making learning difficulties easier to detect. This means that whether they realize it or not, language teachers are often the first to identify underlying neurodiversity in their learners (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

In addition, for many students, existing coping mechanisms were effective in primary and high school due to the tightly controlled curricular and extra-curricular schedules that were heavily assisted by their parents. However, the shift to university often exacerbates their learning difficulties due to a sudden increase in complex reading content and output loads, and expected autonomy in self-management, often including part-time jobs and living alone. All of these new demands overload the core difficulties common to all learning/developmental differences (Howard-Gosse et al., 2024; MacCullagh et al., 2017; Olofsson et al., 2012).

It is also worth noting that conditions such as ADHD and autism are not just about problems with learning. Marriages where at least one of the partners has ADHD are more likely to end in divorce than marriages where partners do not (University at Buffalo, 2008; Low, 2023) and marriages with autism are also more likely to have problems than those where autism is not (Rudy, 2023; Lazarony, n.d.). All LDs/Developmental conditions are highly genetic (Davis et al., 2009) and likely to be passed on to children. By helping students to identify their problems, seek help and learn more about their conditions, we are helping them to identify possible future problems and prepare for them and build healthier, more successful futures.

What to Do

Prescriptive lists can be intimidating and in reality, are not necessarily practical. It is usually around mid-to-late semester when we begin to suspect that a student is showing signs of having learning difficulties. This is when we start to recognize the individual characteristics of the students in the class, the first one or two assignments are due, and students with time management problems have reached their maximum allowed absences. Effectively this means

that there will only be four to five weeks left in the semester, and no time to make meaningful adjustments to the curriculum to assist any struggling learners. In which case, when such a learner is encountered, it is far more effective to:

- Pull them aside and ask “Are you OK?”
- Help them to identify the problem.
- Encourage them to widen their support networks/ contact the student support center/ get professional help.
- Help/encourage them to find learning strategies that suit them in the long term.
- Adopt a universal design mentality/assume learner differences from the start.

It only takes about five minutes to pick an opportune moment and quietly ask the student if they are okay. Something along the lines of; “Are you OK? I noticed that whenever we’re doing x, you’re doing Y.” Or, “you seem to struggle to get to class on time and hand in your assignments by the deadline. Is there something going on at home? Is it me? How are you doing in your other subjects? Do you have the same problems there, or is it just this class? Would you like to talk about it?”

I’ve never once had a student who has reacted negatively to this kind of concern. Even if they do not have any learning difficulties per se, you have acknowledged their presence in the class, shown genuine concern about their progress and performance, offered assistance and gently called them out. In almost 100% of cases, after this initial chat, there is increased self-awareness and an increase in performance, even in students with chronic ADHD self-management issues. Arguably, it is this increased self-awareness that is the most beneficial outcome of these conversations. Although educators are duty bound to do whatever they can to help these students learn inside their classrooms, these are intensely personal life-long conditions that the individuals themselves have to learn to manage and live with. By helping them to reflect on the nature of their problems, pointing out that 20% or more of the global population are experiencing the same difficulties, encouraging them to actively seek ways to manage their problems and seek professional help if necessary, we are encouraging them to seek lifelong solutions, rather than one semester fixes or tweaks to the in-class curriculum. In reality, this is probably the best we can do and the most impactful action we can take in the 14 or so weeks we are with these students.

Teaching Tips

In terms of teaching practice, recommended best practices in foreign language teaching often correspond to those in special education for providing student support. Practical, simple techniques such as those below can make a big difference and are within the skill set of every teacher.

- Give learners instructions in both oral and written form.
- Segment and sequence instructions clearly.
- Give learners adequate time to comprehend and respond to instructions.
- Present information in a variety of formats-audio/visual/text.
- Giving learners choice in formats as to how they demonstrate their learning.

Conclusion

Despite best intentions, the reality of a once-a week, fourteen-week semester is that by the time a student has been identified as possibly having a learning difficulty; counselled, been to the support center and reported back, there will be little time left in the semester to make meaningful adjustments to the curriculum. In which case it is far more meaningful to assume the presence of such students from the very beginning of the semester, incorporate the simple teaching practices above and have the courage to ask students if they are okay when it looks like they are not. Exaggerated as it may seem, a simple five-minute conversation can have a huge impact on the trajectory of a student's life. Early intervention is the key to managing these conditions in the long term, and students are usually both unaware of the nature of their difficulties and their accommodation and treatment options. By helping them to reflect on the nature of their difficulties and pointing them in the direction of professional help, educators can both fulfill their obligations as educational professionals and steer their students away from failure to success.

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Motivation Through Play in Second Language Learning: It's All Fun and Games and Nobody Gets Hurt!

WHITE, John Paul

Abstract

This paper investigates the role of fun and games in enhancing student motivation and engagement in the ESL classroom. It begins by examining the theoretical and practical significance of play and explains how the incorporation of games into English language lessons can help stimulate engagement, increase participation, and promote deeper learning. Drawing inspiration from parlour games, competitive challenges, collaborative puzzles, and timed challenges, this paper makes recommendations on how to make lessons fun, memorable, and educational. The paper then explores how the use of fun and games can create a positive classroom atmosphere that supports learner confidence and encourages risk-taking. It also provides examples of how different types of games can be used to target the four skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing, emphasising the connection between playful learning and the development of key language skills. Finally, the paper concludes by highlighting the importance of play in learning and how fun can be a driving force for sustained student motivation within the ESL Classroom.

Keywords: *Fun, Games, Motivation, TESOL, Language learning*

Introduction

If twenty-two people were asked to run around a field all day, they would most likely complain, drag their feet, or refuse the task entirely. However, if those same people were given a football, split into two teams, and told it was a game, then they would probably keep playing for hours. It is within this interstitial space that we discover how fun fuels motivation, entices engagement, and determines not only how a task is approached, but also experienced and remembered.

Games create enjoyment, and enjoyment motivates individuals to engage in activities that they would otherwise avoid. In much the same way, academic activities are not always devoid of enjoyment. Students can, and often do, derive pleasure from their studies. Yet, there are times when even the most studious student may feel tired, frustrated, or unwilling to continue. Therefore, it is essential for language teachers to consider how to make their lessons

enjoyable and engaging for their students.

If a teacher can make studying fun, then the students will feel like they want to learn, rather than as though they have to study as part of some other greater goal. One way of accomplishing this is by integrating games into study activities in order to create a marriage between fun and learning. Fun should not merely be a reward for learning, but rather a catalyst for making learning possible. When enjoyment is embedded within the process, students are more likely to participate, persist through challenges, and achieve deeper learning outcomes through active engagement. It's all fun and games and nobody gets hurt!

Games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting. They can be used to give practice in all language skills and be used to practise many types of communication (Ersoz, 2000).

There are many types of games that can be beneficial for English language students. These games can involve students challenging themselves, challenging others, or interacting with their surrounding environment. Each with their own benefits and drawbacks.

Individual challenge games encourage students to focus on their own personal growth, building confidence as they track their progress over time. These types of games allow learners to measure their own success without pressure or competition from others. Allowing them to work at their own pace. The sense of accomplishment that comes from completing a task independently helps to boost motivation and encourage self-study outside of the classroom. However, as with all games, students will still need some form of positive feedback for their motivation to be sustained.

Competitive games are activities in which students challenge others, either alone or as part of a team. When presented appropriately, these games can make students quite voluble as they eagerly exchange ideas, debate problems, and strategize their next move. In practice, these types of games made the students the most exuberant and excited as they battled for supremacy over their opponents. It has also been observed that competitive team games help to spread the pressure each member may feel to win as they work together and play upon their own individual strengths. In any case, these types of games work best when they are designed in such a way that the use of the target language functions as a game mechanic (Lo et al., 2021) in order to defeat the other team.

Environmental games, by contrast, involve students interacting with the setting around them rather than focusing on themselves or others. In these types of games, a sense of accomplishment comes from completing the task, rather than enhancing their skills or vanquishing a foe. Examples include sorting words, finding answers, or solving problems either alone or as part of a team.

All of these types of games can be adapted for different levels or thinking skills, including low-order thinking skills; in which students regurgitate and share knowledge that

they already know, or high-order thinking skills; in which they have to analyse, evaluate, or be creative with what they are given in the classroom (Bloom, 1956).

The reader is perhaps already familiar with many of these types of games, but it is useful to think of games within the theoretical scope of these three categories. However, for the purposes of this paper, the games will be organised according to the four skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing so that the reader may draw inspiration from the examples stated and possibly try them out for themselves.

Speaking Games

Speaking games give students the opportunity to practise oral communication, build fluency, and gain confidence expressing their own ideas. These games allow students to engage with the target language in meaningful contexts, turning routine speaking tasks into enjoyable challenges. For example, an activity that would normally involve simply discussing answers to questions as part of a group could be reframed as a game. For example, a game where students are split into teams and the content presented as a competitive classroom quiz. One that transforms the task into a competitive and collaborative experience in which all members must unanimously agree in order to succeed. The target language becoming a necessary tool required to defeat the opposing team, win the game, and be burnished in glory.

By contrast, the same activity presented in a traditional format may lead some students to take a back seat and let others dominate; which highlights the importance of designing activities that require collective participation and collaboration from all participants. Ensuring that each student has a role to play and contributes to the group's success. For instance, tasks that require low-order thinking skills (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), such as; applying, understanding, and remembering, can be incorporated into games that engage students and reinforce their foundational knowledge.

An example of this was practised by the author of this paper in a review lesson of Rikkyo University's English Discussion Course. For this lesson, students were required to practise asking for opinions, giving opinions, and agreeing/disagreeing in groups. This was normally done by merely asking and answering discussion questions from the textbook. However, in order to gamify this lesson, the class was split into two groups which competed against each other in the style of a British pub quiz. Each question becoming more playful and having no clear answer that could be searched or googled.

For instance, for one question, the students had to discuss the topic of fame. Normally they would just sit and answer discussion questions on the topic. However, this activity was gamified so that instead they looked at poorly drawn sketches of famous people on the projector and tried to determine who each celebrity was. This led to a lot of uncertainty and laughter among the students as they shared ideas on who each crude drawing was supposed to represent. In the end, the answers were shown, points were given, and everyone put on their game face

for the next activity.

This gamification (Altarriba, 2014) of lesson activities introduces the idea of fun into non-game contexts, enhances the learning experience, and encourages students to work as a team for the success of the task. Fostering a collaborative mindset that depends on the contribution of all members. Those teams that fail to work together will inevitably find the activities more challenging. But with good game design, direction, and feedback they will have the necessary tools to give them a fighting chance.

Listening Games

Listening games are important because they encourage students to move beyond inactive listening and actively engage with the meaning, detail, and context of what they hear. They help students to sharpen their attention, notice patterns in speech, and move beyond passive listening so that they can focus on accuracy. By framing these activities as games, they become less about right and wrong answers and more an exercise in active discovery. They also allow students to gain confidence as they begin to see listening as a skill that can be improved, rather than something that just happens gradually through repeated exposure. Games give listening clear purpose which helps keep attention high and prevents students from tuning out during long stretches of spoken material.

For example, for Rikkyo University's Reading and Writing Course, the author of this paper prepared a video clip for students with partially completed subtitles where key words were replaced with underscored blanks. Students then had to listen closely in order to fill in the missing words.

In one such activity, a clip from *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (Jackson, 2001) was used in which Bilbo Baggins says, "I am old Gandalf. I know I don't look it, but I'm beginning to feel it in my heart. I feel thin. Sort of stretched. Like [X] scraped over too much [Y]." The words that were removed and replaced with blanks were "butter" and "bread" as they are easy to hear in the clip, but also draw attention to the subject of the lesson: similes.

A similar activity was repeated later in the lesson after students had written their own similes to describe people and places. For this, they watched a clip from *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* (Jackson, 2013) where he compares his teeth to swords, his claws to spears, and his wings to a hurricane. In this case, the vocabulary was pre-taught in an earlier matching game in which the students took turns in teams playing Pelmanism, using images projected onto the whiteboard. For this game, the students needed to take turns matching words to pictures (e.g., sword, spear, hurricane, etc.), which served as a way for the teacher to surreptitiously teach the meaning of new words and jargon that would appear in later activities and future lessons.

Reading Games

Reading games are activities designed to engage students with texts while encouraging comprehension, critical thinking, and interactive participation. By gamifying comprehension tasks, teachers can encourage students to pay closer attention to the lesson material, think critically about texts, and interact with the lesson content in deeper ways. Gamifying these activities not only enhances student understanding, but also stimulates motivation as students interact with reading materials in playful and imaginative ways. Moreover, reading games can help bridge the gap between reading and communication, where students read and share answers, or compete against their peers. An example of this occurred in Rikkyo University's Reading and Writing Course where students are required to develop key reading skills throughout the semester. Notably, in one lesson on the key skills of skimming and scanning, the author of this paper prepared a few games to help his students improve these skills.

To practise skimming, the students were shown a simple text projected onto the screen. The text had been prewritten by their teacher to ensure that it was simple to read and level-appropriate. The students were then shown a multiple-choice question and told to read the text as the sentences slowly disappeared from the screen. This forced the students to skim read the text before it was gone and focus on key words and vocabulary in order to glean a general gist of what the text was about. They then held up a card (A, B, or C) for what they believed to be the correct answer to the multiple-choice question.

Specifically, for one text, the students read a simplified version of Chapter 9, "Shelob's Lair," from *The Two Towers* of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Tolkien, 1954b), in which the Hobbits encounter a repulsive spider-like creature that stalks them through pitch-black tunnels as they try to navigate their escape. In this instance, the students only had a brief time to read the text and then decide on what type of emotion the hobbits were likely experiencing at that moment (A: Worried, B: Hungry, or C: Excited) based on the text. To succeed at this activity, the students had to look for key words and clues that could best help them determine the answer. For example, actively scanning and noticing words like "food" and "potatoes" when reading about the hobbits preparing a rabbit stew helped them to determine that the hobbits were probably hungry.

Any students who gave a wrong answer during these activities were told that they would miss a turn in the next round. However, this threat never came to fruition, as the students became very good at playing the game and finding the correct answers. This is because the activity was intentionally designed so that the students were incapable of failing and instead just gained a lot of practice skimming for context in the form of a game.

In total, the students read ten stories that all followed this same simple structure despite the questions becoming increasingly difficult each round. Each time the students were given less time to read, they read faster, skimmed words more effectively, and seemed to enjoy the game and the lurking threat of failure.

Later that same lesson, the students were put into pairs and told they would be playing a scanning game. For this activity, the students were pitted against each other and told to scan the original, unedited text of a chapter from *The Fellowship of the Ring* (Tolkien, 1954a). The students were then shown a scanned page from the book projected onto a large screen at the front of the class. A random word appeared to the side (For example, “Gandalf x 3”) and the students had to race against each other to find all instances of the word on the page.

The page was overlaid with a grid (like the kind one might find on a map) with a row of letters along the top, and a row of numbers down the side. Once the student found a word, they would then yell out its position on the page before their partner could (For example, “C4!”). Once all the instances of the example word were found, new pairs were formed and the winners sent to “the winner circle” at the back of the class, and the losers moved closer to the front. The students were then paired with a new partner respective to their position, and by way of attrition, all had a chance of winning, or failing.

This game generated a lot of excitement among the students as the teacher carnival barked between each round to encourage the quick movement between chairs. The winners were praised and welcomed to the winner circle, while the losers were encouraged to try harder next time. Again, these activities themselves were not that difficult, and the real challenge for the students came from them trying to beat their opponents. By design, it was impossible to fail or win every time, and the real aim was for the students to practise the skill of scanning. Even if they were personally more focused on winning.

Writing Games

Writing games are activities that encourage students to produce written language in an interactive and engaging way. They can help students practise vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, or composition while also adding an element of play and challenge. By gamifying these writing tasks, teachers can turn potentially tedious exercises into stimulating experiences that develop both written accuracy and creativity.

For instance, in a similar activity to the listening activity mentioned earlier, the students watched a scene from *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg, 1993) in which John Hammond introduces the main characters, Dr. Alan Grant and Dr. Ellie Sattler to the park and their first dinosaur. While watching, the students practised writing quotes and had to summarise what each character had said, asked, or shouted. For instance, while watching the clip, the students either wrote; “Dr. Alan Grant asked ‘How fast are they?’” (direct speech) or “Dr. Alan Grant asked how fast they were” (reported speech) in order to practise writing both grammatical structures.

This activity was slightly gamified as it required the integration of both listening and writing skills and included the challenge of obtaining the most quotes from the scene. To make it easier, the students were able to watch the scene three times. Moreover, the scene had been edited so that the colour of the subtitles for each character were; white for John Hammond, blue

for Dr. Grant, and pink for Dr. Sattler. The same colours as their clothing.

Incidentally, this scene was shown again in a later lesson so that the students could discuss the metaphorical implications of Spielberg's colour choices. One theory being that the park owner John Hammond wears white to symbolise God, Dr. Malcolm wears black to symbolise chaos, and how these colour choices could tie into the overall theme of the movie; life, death, and giving birth (Hill, 2018). This not only encouraged the students to think beyond a simple two-dimensional interpretation of the story, but also its symbolic meaning so that they could apply the same thinking to their own writing.

Conclusion

Motivation is at the heart of ESL learning. Without it, students lose interest, stop studying, and ultimately give up. However, by using the right games and creating a positive classroom environment, teachers can make students feel confident, included, and excited to learn English.

When designing lessons, teachers should be aware that the gamification of activities helps to empower students so that they can take control of their own learning, motivate themselves to succeed, and enjoy the process as it happens. Even silly games or small victories can create strong feelings for students. The power of fun and games turns learning into play, and in turn restores motivation. Making the learning process fun, social, and exciting for all participants.

This is something that can be utilised by teachers to build a positive class identity and positive learning environment. It should therefore be every teacher's aim for their students to want to attend lessons, and have fun learning. Each lesson being a joyful experience, something fun, and something memorable to tell others about.

The examples provided throughout this paper show how speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities can be adapted into games in order to aid different levels and learner abilities. Each type offering its own unique benefits. While combining playful elements with pedagogical goals, teachers can ensure that their students' learning remains purposeful and enjoyable.

Moreover, the strategic use of games promotes active engagement and deeper cognitive processing from class participants. When students must think, recall information, solve problems, or collaborate as part of a game, they practise language in more meaningful and memorable contexts. This active participation strengthens retention, builds fluency, and reinforces both lower-order and higher-order thinking skills (Bloom, 1956). Games help to build a bridge between enjoyment and learning, demonstrating that fun is not an optional extra, but a vital educational tool.

By providing opportunities for choice, competition, and creative problem-solving, teachers can cultivate a cycle of engagement in which students want to attend lessons, want to

learn, and want to get better at the English language. It helps the lesson content to stick in their brains as a fond memory of when they attended classes, witnessed their own progress, and it was fun.

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Exploring the Effects of English Discussion Courses on Japanese EFL College Students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of English Discussion courses on speaking anxiety among first-year Japanese university students. While Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has been widely acknowledged as a major barrier to language acquisition, especially in speaking, its long-term reduction through structured discussion-based instruction remains underexplored in the Japanese EFL context. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study measured students' anxiety levels before and after a 14-week semester using the Short-Form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (S-FLCAS) and analyzed responses to four open-ended questions. Results from 32 participants revealed a significant decrease in anxiety scores over time, with 90% of students reporting reduced anxiety. Qualitative data indicated that repeated small-group discussions, teacher scaffolding, and pre-thinking tasks were effective in creating a psychologically safe environment. However, students continued to feel anxious during high-stakes or unfamiliar speaking tasks. The findings suggest that while structured discussion activities can alleviate speaking anxiety, continuous affective support and learner-centered strategies are essential for long-term impact. Implications for EFL instruction include incorporating peer familiarity, vocabulary preparation, and emotionally supportive practices into curriculum design.

Keywords: *Foreign language anxiety, English discussion courses in academic context, English as a second language*

Introduction

“Do you want to use a foreign language at work? Why or why not?” This is the first warm-up question used to start the discussion class in Week 10 at Rikkyo University. Unfortunately, quite a few students in my class respond by saying, *“I don't want to use a foreign language at work because I'm not good at speaking English.”* But is that truly the case? The English Discussion Class, a required course for first-year students at Rikkyo University, is designed to improve students' academic discussion skills. However, after observing the class

over the past two years, I have noticed that some students continue to struggle with English-speaking anxiety, even though they participate in discussion classes weekly.

Research on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) highlights its significant impact on learners' speaking performance and overall language acquisition. Horwitz et al. (1986) defined FLA as a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." This concept has been extensively studied in various contexts, with findings indicating that speaking is often the most anxiety-provoking skill for language learners (Young, 1991).

In the Japanese EFL context where English is learned as a second language, several studies have shown that cultural and educational factors contribute to high levels of speaking anxiety. Williams and Andrade (2008) found that Japanese students often fear making mistakes or being judged negatively by their peers, which inhibits their willingness to participate in discussions. Similarly, Cutrone (2009) argued that Japanese learners' anxiety derives from cultural tendencies toward modesty and risk hedge, which can discourage them from speaking in front of others.

English Discussion Classes at Rikkyo University are designed to improve students' confidence and fluency in spoken English. However, as observed in my classes, speaking anxiety may persist despite regular practice. Young (1991) suggested that even interactive teaching methods might fail to address deeper psychological barriers unless specific strategies are employed to reduce anxiety, such as creating a supportive environment and focusing on communication rather than correctness.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) further emphasized that alleviating anxiety leads to better speaking performance and greater willingness to communicate. Collaborative activities, such as small-group discussions, have also been shown to lower anxiety levels and improve oral proficiency (Bozkurt & Aydin, 2023). However, whether these benefits extend to all learners, particularly those in high-anxiety environments like Japan, remains uncertain.

While significant research exists on foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), the specific impact of discussion-based courses on Japanese EFL learners' speaking anxiety is underexplored. Studies by Williams and Andrade (2008) and Cutrone (2009) highlight the cultural and educational barriers faced by Japanese students, but there is limited understanding of how structured discussion activities influence learners' anxiety over time.

Moreover, while studies like those of Young (1991) and Bozkurt & Aydin (2023) have shown that collaborative learning environments reduce anxiety and enhance speaking proficiency, their focus has largely been on general learner populations. Few studies have examined the long-term effects of discussion courses on anxiety or investigated learners' perceptions of these changes throughout an academic semester.

Research Questions

In light of these gaps mentioned above, this study aims to address these gaps by exploring the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of discussion courses on Japanese college students' speaking anxiety?
2. How do Japanese college students perceive the impact of discussion courses on reducing their initial speaking anxiety over the course of a semester?

Methodology and Procedures

This study employed a case study approach, with data collected from 32 students enrolled in the first semester of three mandatory English Discussion courses for first-year students during the academic year 2025. The participants, consisting of both male and female students aged 18 to 21, had an average English proficiency level of A2–B1 as determined by their TOEIC® scores (ranging from 380–480, Level 3 and 4), based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Each class lasted 100 minutes and was conducted once a week from April to July during the 14-week spring semester (See Table 1).

To evaluate changes in students' Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) over the course of the semester, this study utilized a pre- and post-survey approach with the Short-Form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (S-FLCAS). The S-FLCAS, a validated instrument derived from the original Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986), focuses on assessing key dimensions of FLA relevant to speaking anxiety. The original FLCAS measures FLA across three subcomponents—fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety—using 33 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” While comprehensive, the FLCAS includes items that may not directly align with the context of English Discussion courses, particularly for evaluating foreign language speaking anxiety which is the focus of this study.

The S-FLCAS, as described by Botes et al. (2022) in *Validating the Short-Form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale*, offers a more concise and targeted approach, retaining the psychometric rigor of the original while demonstrating high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .90) and strong reliability across diverse contexts. In this study, the S-FLCAS was administered to students at two time points: at the beginning of the semester (April) to establish baseline levels of speaking anxiety and at the end of the semester (July) to evaluate changes following their participation in the English Discussion courses. By employing this pre- and post-survey design, the study was intended to effectively measure both initial levels of speaking anxiety and any reductions or shifts in anxiety over the course of the semester. To facilitate the students' easiness to complete the survey, both pre- and post- surveys employed the translation

of relevant items taken from Yashima et al. (2009). The below shows the original version of questions on the S-FLCAS.

Short-form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (S-FLCAS)

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

Use the scale below:

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

- 1) Even if I am well prepared for FL class, I feel anxious about it
- 2) I always feel that the other students speak the FL better than I do
- 3) I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in FL class
- 4) I don't worry about making mistakes in FL class (reverse coded)
- 5) I feel confident when I speak in FL class (reverse coded)
- 6) I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my FL class
- 7) I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in FL class
- 8) It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my FL class.

Open-ended Questions:

In addition to the quantitative pre- and post-tests, qualitative data was collected from a post-class survey to gauge how the students perceived the impact of discussion courses on reducing their initial speaking anxiety.

- 1) How have your feelings of anxiety changed throughout the semester?
- 2) What specific activities or aspects of the discussion courses helped you feel less anxious about speaking English?
- 3) Were there any moments or experiences during the course that made you feel especially nervous about speaking English?
- 4) What suggestions do you have for improving the course to help students overcome their speaking anxiety more effectively?

Note. Questions developed by the author

Table 1

Course Schedule and Target Discussion/Communication Skills

Week	Content	Discussion/Communication Skills
1	Course Introduction	Introduction of all Communication Skills
2	The Importance of Communication	Opinions
3	Entering University	Supporting Opinions
4	Life at University	Follow-up Questions
5	Becoming Independent	Review & Comprehension Discussion Test 1 (Sharing & Supporting Opinions)
6	Living Abroad	Connecting Ideas
7	The Globalization of Japanese Culture	Joining a Discussion
8	Japanese and Foreign Customs	Changing Topics
9	Learning a Foreign Language	Review & Paraphrasing Discussion Test 2 (Organizing a Discussion)
10	Entering the Workforce	Different Viewpoints
11	Social Media	Balancing Opinions
12	Public Behavior	Sources of Information
13	Social Issues	Review & Clarification Discussion Test 3 (Challenging & Evaluating Ideas)
14	Review of all topics	Review of all skills

Results & Discussion

Students' anxiety levels

To answer the first research question, which is “What are the effects of discussion courses on Japanese college students’ speaking anxiety?,” the pre- and post- survey results of 60 students were compared. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant decrease in levels of anxiety at the end of the semester by 0.44 in mean score, from 3.46 to 3.02, compared to the beginning of the semester. Furthermore, almost all students (30 out of 32) showed a decrease in their anxiety scores. These results clearly suggest the effectiveness of discussion classes to alleviate the students’ speaking anxiety.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics of Short-Form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (S-FLCAS)*

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Pre- FLCAS	3.46	1.12	1.00	5.00
Post- FLCAS	3.02	0.58	1.00	1.00

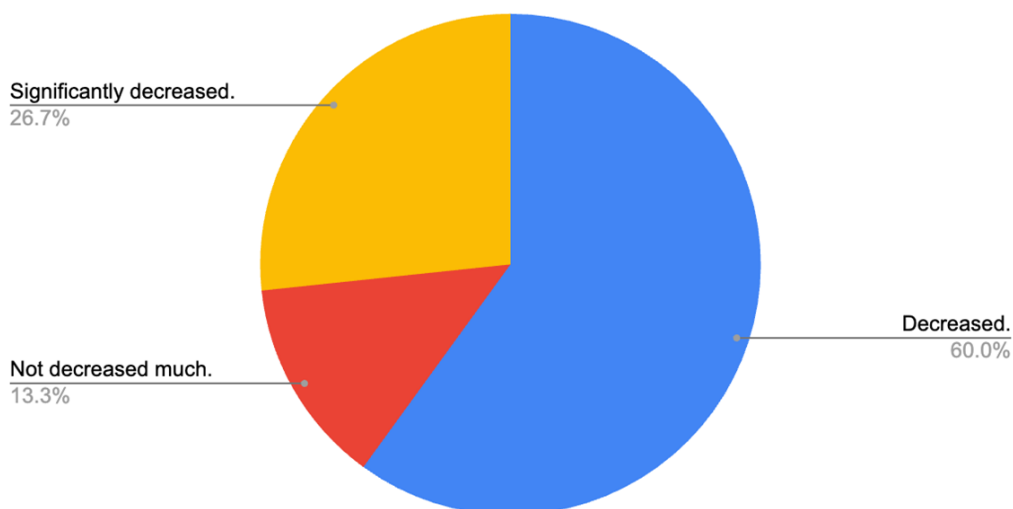
Note. Pre- FLCAS N = 32, Post- FLCAS N = 30

Qualitative data analysis from post-class survey

To address the second research question, “How do Japanese college students perceive the impact of discussion classes on reducing their initial speaking anxiety over the course of a semester?,” qualitative data from the post-class survey were analyzed. The four open-ended questions were categorized into the following themes, in accordance with the question order: “Change in Anxiety,” “Speaking Activities,” “Nervous Feelings,” and “Suggestions.” Since two students were absent from the Week 14 lesson, responses were collected from a total of 30 students.

The following pie chart Figure 1 illustrates responses from the first question “How have your feelings of anxiety changed throughout the semester?” based on the theme “Change in anxiety.”

Approximately 27% of the students reported that their anxiety has decreased significantly and as many as 60% of them said it has decreased. In contrast, only 13% of the students indicated the anxiety had not changed much. These results also suggested discussion classes played a significant role in reducing the students’ speaking anxiety.

Figure 1*How Have Your Feelings of Anxiety Changed Throughout the Semester?*

The qualitative data collected from these questions added a rich layer of nuance to the

quantitative findings, which indicated that discussion classes contributed to alleviating students' speaking anxiety.

Table 3 presents a sample of analysis including theme, descriptions, and examples.

Table 3

Excerpt of the Comments From the Participants

Theme	Description & Example from students' comments
Speaking activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Forming small groups and talking about the same topic repeatedly was helpful. 2) The teacher rephrased my awkward answer into simpler English which, eased my nervous feelings. 3) Repeating my classmate's opinions when we wrap up our discussion was useful for my speaking skills. 4) The pre-thinking activities before the actual discussions helped me generate ideas more smoothly. 5) The teacher ensured equal participation opportunity which made it easier for me to speak up. 6) Repeatedly using the same discussion skill phrases allowed me to realize that my English skills were improving. 7) I felt more relaxed because there was only one teacher and I didn't feel constantly monitored.
Nervous Feeling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) I felt especially nervous during the discussion tests because I couldn't come up ideas smoothly. 2) I felt anxious when asked by "What do you think of my idea?" because I somewhat couldn't understand what my classmates were saying. 3) I felt more nervous when the topic was difficult or something I had never thought of, I felt more nervous. 4) When I hadn't read the textbook but was asked to give my opinion, I felt very anxious. 5) Performing discussions in front of the whole class made me even more nervous.
Suggestions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) If I had more time to memorize the phrases, the class would be even more effective. 2) If we had more activities to get to know our classmates better, our anxiety would decrease even more. 3) If we could learn more vocabulary related to the discussion topics, I could participate more actively. 4) The smaller the group size, the easier it is for me to speak. 5) If the topics were more familiar, we could talk more smoothly.

Overall, the data suggest that structured repetition, teacher scaffolding, and psychological safety are key elements in reducing learners' speaking anxiety and enhancing classroom participation. At the same time, the persistence of nervousness in more demanding or unpredictable speaking tasks points to the importance of continued affective support. Learner feedback also emphasizes the value of peer familiarity and topic relevance, indicating a strong need to balance communicative challenge with emotional readiness in discussion-based language instruction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study highlights the transformative potential of structured English Discussion courses in reducing Japanese college students' speaking anxiety—a commonly cited barrier to active language use in the EFL classroom. Quantitative data collected through the Short-Form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (S-FLCAS) revealed a statistically significant decrease in anxiety levels over the course of a 14-week semester. These findings indicate that regular, structured speaking practice within a supportive framework can have a measurable impact on learners' emotional comfort with using English.

Complementing these quantitative results, qualitative feedback from students shed light on the specific instructional elements that contributed most to their reduced anxiety and increased confidence. Key among these were small-group repetition of discussion tasks, teacher scaffolding such as rephrasing and modeling, and pre-thinking activities that supported idea generation. Together, these strategies fostered a psychologically safe classroom environment where students felt encouraged to take linguistic risks and participate more fully. The findings confirm that when learners are supported both linguistically and emotionally, they become more engaged and confident communicators in English.

However, the data also reveal that speaking anxiety does not disappear entirely, even in well-structured, supportive environments. Students reported continued nervousness in high-stakes moments, such as formal discussion tests or when encountering unfamiliar topics or vocabulary. Emotional discomfort also increased when students lacked adequate preparation or felt unsure of their classmates' reactions. These findings highlight the limits of instructional design alone and point to the enduring influence of cultural, interpersonal, and psychological factors—such as fear of negative evaluation and low peer familiarity—that may inhibit learner participation.

Therefore, the importance of cultivating a culturally responsive and emotionally attuned classroom culture cannot be overstated. Discussion-based instruction, while effective, must be embedded within a broader pedagogical framework that recognizes and responds to students' affective needs.

To further enhance the effectiveness of such instruction, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Increase Familiarity Through Icebreakers and Community-Building Tasks

Starting the semester with informal, low-pressure activities that encourage interpersonal connection can help students feel more at ease with their classmates, lowering the perceived social risk of speaking in English.

2. Incorporate Scaffolded Vocabulary Support

Pre-teaching key vocabulary and expressions relevant to discussion topics can reduce cognitive load and increase students' willingness to contribute during discussions.

3. Adjust Group Size for Comfort and Participation

Organizing students into smaller, more intimate groups increases opportunities for equal participation and decreases the likelihood of performance anxiety associated with larger audiences.

4. Offer Repetition with Variation

Using repeated discussion structures across different topics allows students to develop fluency and confidence through familiarity while gradually increasing linguistic challenge.

5. Normalize Mistakes and Encourage Risk-Taking

Teachers play a critical role in modeling a nonjudgmental attitude toward errors. Framing mistakes as learning opportunities helps shift students' mindset from fear of failure to growth and experimentation.

In conclusion, structured discussion courses present a promising and practical avenue for reducing foreign language speaking anxiety and enhancing communicative competence among Japanese EFL learners. Yet, the full realization of these benefits depends not only on instructional techniques but also on the creation of a classroom culture that values emotional safety, peer connection, and positive reinforcement. Future research may further explore the long-term impact of such interventions, as well as the differential effects of instructional strategies across diverse learner backgrounds, proficiency levels, and personality traits. With thoughtful implementation and ongoing adaptation, discussion-based instruction can serve as both a linguistic and emotional bridge to more confident English communication.

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「なぜ外国語を学ぶのか」 ——複言語・複文化科目初年度を担当して

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要旨

本稿は、2025年度春学期から新たに開講されることになった複言語・複文化に関する科目「なぜ外国語を学ぶのか」(新座キャンパス開講)の講義がどのように展開されたか、そのねらい、内容等を紹介するものである。単に言語学習に関するノウハウ的な内容のみを扱うのではなく、大学という場においてことばを学ぶ意義とは何か、複言語・複文化に触れることがなぜ必要なのかをあらためて考える機会を提供することを目指した。講義の構成や扱ったトピックは、「言語学入門」的なものであったが、事前に言語そのものに対する知識を求めたり、言語学に対する知識を前提としたりするようなことはしなかった。受講していくうちに、言語学の基礎的素養を身につけるとともに、複数の言語を学ぶ重要性や意義などに触れ、新たな言語を学ぶ時にも役立つヒントを得ることを目標とした。授業の形式は、基本的に講義形式であったが、途中ディスカッションのセクションを入れ、受講生間の意見交換の機会を持った。各回終了後にはCanvas LMS上にレジュメを掲出して、受講生自身が事後学習できるようにするとともに、リアクションペーパーの提出を求めた。

キーワード：複言語、複文化、言語学習、言語学

1. はじめに

本稿は、2025年度春学期から新たに開講されることになった複言語・複文化に関する科目「なぜ外国語を学ぶのか」の講義がどのように展開されたか、そのねらい、内容等を紹介するものである。

立教大学の言語系科目には、言語A(英語)と言語B(英語以外の多彩な言語)があり、言語Bについては2024年度から新カリキュラムが始動した。大学入学までに学んできた言語Aはさらにその運用能力を高め、新たに学ぶ人が多いであろう言語Bの各科目もことばそのものの運用能力を高めるとともに、当該言語圏に関する知識を深めるためのカリキュラムが組まれている。言語の学習において、言語運用能力を伸ばすことは言うまでもなく重要なことである一方、ただ単にことばが使えるようになる

という次元のみに留まっていることは好ましくない。そこで、「なぜ外国語を学ぶのか」という科目において、ことばを学ぶ意義とは何か、複言語・複文化に触れることがなぜ必要なのかをあらためて考え、大学という場での言語学習をより深化させるきっかけになる視点を提供するために、どのような講義をデザインしようと考えたか述べたい。

2. 講義の概要

2.1 ねらい

「なぜ外国語を学ぶのか」という科目は、1. で述べたように2025年度に新規開講となったもので、科目名が示すようにどのように切り込んで行くかは間口が広い。開講に先立ち、当該科目に関するワーキンググループ内で議論を重ねたが、取り上げるトピックや構成は担当者が扱える範囲や興味関心に応じて組み立てていくのがよいのではないだろうかという結論に達した¹。筆者の専門分野を考慮すると、「複言語・複文化」のうち、特に「言語」に焦点をあてて扱うのが最も適切であろうと考え、言語の持つ性質、共通性や多様性を紹介し、ことばというものを一般的かつ客観的にとらえ、受講生の多くが母語としているであろう日本語²、比較的長い間学習を続けている英語、さらに言語Bやその他の言語、それぞれをあらためて見直し、単に言語を学ぶためのノウハウ的な内容ではなく、ことばの持つ「なぜ」にフォーカスして、複数の言語を学ぶ重要性や意義を考える機会になるようにした。

2.2 受講者

本科目の受講者数は54名であった。新座キャンパス所属の全学部・全学科の学生が登録しており、特にコミュニティ福祉学部および現代心理学部の学生が多く参加していた。学年については、科目の性質上、1年生が大多数であったが、2～4年生の受講生もいた。

2.3 構成と内容

2.1で述べたように、本科目は「言語」というものが一般的にどのような性質を持ち、さらにどのような点で共通性を持っているか、それと同時に、いかにバラエティに富み、多様性を示すものであるかを俯瞰的にとらえることができるようになることを意識した。受講生の多くは既に日本語および英語の知識は十分あるものと想定されるが、「複言語・複文化科目」である以上、これに加え、言語Bとして開講されてい

1 筆者が担当した科目は新座キャンパスでの開講科目であったが、別の教員が担当する同一名称の科目が池袋キャンパスでも開講された。名称は同じであるものの、このような観点からそれぞれが準備を進めたため、当然構成も内容も異なる。本稿では、新座キャンパスで開講された科目のみについて言及している。

2 科目名には「外国語」と入っているが、留学生にとって日本語は外国語であり、また、日本語を母語とする学生には日本語も言語の一つとして眺める機会を持ってほしいと考えた。したがって、講義の際には、日本語について扱う機会もしばしばあった。

る言語やそれ以外の言語もいろいろと例として紹介することを試みた。言語Bは学び始めたばかりである受講生が大半であると考えられたので、言語そのものに対する知識を求めたり、言語学に対する知識を前提としたりするようなことはせず、ことばそのものに対する関心を持っていることを受講に当たっての望ましい条件とした。最終的には、言語学の基礎的素養を身につけるとともに、複数の言語を学ぶ重要性や意義などに触れ、新たな言語を学ぶ時に役立つためのヒントを得ることを目標とした。

講義は以下のようなトピックと内容で進めた。かっこ内にはその回に用いた主な参考文献を示す。その他にも、講義全体を通し、齋藤 (2010)、高橋ほか (2021)、Yule (2020) を適宜参照した。

【第1回】 イントロダクション：「複言語・複文化」の考え方を紹介し、ことばの多様性の観察、ことばの仕組みをさまざまなレベルで考える、自分の知っている言語・学んでいる言語の特徴を客観的に見る、ことばを知る重要性の再確認といったトピックを通して、今後の授業の方向性を示した。

【第2回】 ことばと音 (1)：ことばで使われる音の種類、どこで、どのように音が作られるか、作られた音はどのような性格を持ち、どのように伝わるか、伝わった音はどのように理解されるかなどについて、音声学的立場から解説した (Ashby & Maidment, 2005; 川原, 2018; Reetz & Jongman, 2020; 齋藤, 2006)。

【第3回】 ことばと音 (2)：音の「システム」、音の「並び」、音を構成する「要素」を扱い、音韻論で扱われる基本的事項を説明した (Carr & Montreuil, 2013; Odden, 2005; 齋藤, 2006; Saussure, 1995)。

【第4回】 語の組み立て：「意味」を持つ最小単位は何か、形態素の種類、語形成、生産性等を扱い、形態論の導入を行った (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011; 齋藤, 2010; Martinet, 1996)。

【第5回】 文の組み立て (1)：文はどのように出来ているか、数、性、格などの統語論の基本的概念について説明した (齋藤, 2010; 千野, 1986; 東京外国語大学 (n.d.-b))。

【第6回】 文の組み立て (2)：人称、時制、相、法、態など統語論の基本的概念について、スペイン語、イタリア語、フランス語、中国語、インドネシア語などの例を引きながら、説明した (齋藤, 2010; 東京外国語大学 (n.d.-a))

【第7回】 文の組み立て (3)：文法・統語論の歴史的流れを振り返り、現代言語学への歩みを概観した。具体的には、伝統文法、ソシュールの提示した主な概念、プラハ学派、アメリカ構造主義、生成文法等を扱った (Carnie, 2013; 太田・梶田, 1974; 田中ほか, 1975; 渡辺, 2009)。

【第8回】 ことばの意味：「意味」(語・文レベルでの「意味」、コンテクストを含んだ「意味」とは何か考え、意味論・語用論の基本的概念を例を用いて説明した (池上, 1978; 池上, 1985; 今井, 2001; Saussure, 1995)。

【第9回】 いろいろな文字：文字とは何か考え、さまざまな言語の文字とその特徴を紹介した (クルマス, 2014; 鈴木, 2020; 世界の文字研究会, 2009)。

【第10回】ことばの系統：共通する祖語や語族、音対応などを扱い、比較言語学について触れた。ロマンス諸語を例にことばの移り変わりを観察した (Aitchison, 2013; Hualde et al., 2010; Pöckel, 2003; 菊田ほか, 2015; 吉田, 2005)。

【第11回】ことばのバリエーション (地域差・世代差)：ことばの地域差、ことばの社会的な差異、ことばの世代差など、ことばにどのような差異が見られるか、言語地理学における分析方法の実例を含め解説した (大西, 2016; 金水, 2007, 2011, 2023; 泉水, 2009a; 松本, 1993; 三原, 2004; 柳田, 1980; Labov, 1982)

【第12回】ことばの接触：複数のことばが接触すること、二言語併用、ダイグロシア、ピジンとクレオールなどの現象について触れた (重松, 2007; 杉本, 2010; 渡邊, 2013; Ferguson, 1959)。

【第13回】ことばを学ぶ・ことばを教える：日本における第2外国語教育を巡る諸問題について、現状や要点、今後の展望等について述べた (大谷ほか, 2004; カイトほか, 2002; 柿原, 2012; 川又, 2014; 北村ほか, 2016; 金, 2014; 泉水, 2009b; 泉水, 2018; 田中, 2012, 2013; 西山, 2014; 林田, 2014)。

各回は基本的に講義形式であったが、各回の講義の間に複数回ディスカッションのテーマを与え、筆者が受講生の間を回りながら意見を求めた。マイクを向けられた受講生は多少戸惑いながらもいずれもきちんと答えてくれ、当初予想していた以上に活発な議論が行われた。

各回が終了した後、授業中に用いたプレゼンテーションのファイルをレジュメとしてCanvas LMS上に掲出し、そこに入門的・啓蒙的なものからやや専門的な内容を含むものまで、さまざまな参考文献も示して、必要に応じて事後学習を進められるようにした。これとともに、第1回と第13回を除き、各回終了後にはCanvas LMS上に振り返り課題を掲出し、リアクションペーパー (A4用紙1枚程度) の提出を求めた。リアクションペーパーのうち、興味深い指摘があったものについては、筆者名が分からないようにして、次の回の冒頭に紹介するとともに、前回の内容を踏まえたコメントを加えた。

最終回となる第14回は、筆記試験を行った。

2.4 評価

本講義の評価は、筆記試験80%、平常点20% (うち、リアクションペーパー15%、授業参加度5%) の割合で行った。

3. 結びに代えて

開講初年度ということもあり、全体としてどのような到達点を設定するか、どのトピックをどの程度まで扱うかは、最後まで逡巡する点があったものの、言語というのがどのような性質を持っているものなのか、複数の言語を学ぶことにどのような意義があるのかという点については、おおよその理解が得られたのではないかと考えて

いる。本稿執筆中に「授業評価アンケート」の結果が届いたが、その反応を見ても、比較的好意的に受け止められたように思われる。一方で、言語に関する専門的な内容が分かりづらかった、あるいは、リアクションペーパーの分量とメ切にもう少し余裕が欲しかったという意見もあったので、トピックのラインナップと合わせて今後の見直しの課題としたい。

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Uso de los *chatbots* de IA generativa como herramientas de corrección de composiciones escritas: análisis y propuestas para la enseñanza del español en el ámbito universitario japonés

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Abstract

In this article, we present an assessment instrument for written composition used in two Spanish as a Foreign Language (ELE) classes during the first semester of 2025. This instrument, based on a proposal by Sanz Yagüe (2025), consists of a writing portfolio divided into three parts: original composition, composition corrected by a generative AI chatbot, and a personal reflection on the identified errors. In the first section, we establish the theoretical framework and define the educational context. We have opted for the Action Research methodology, a cyclical approach in which new activities are implemented, and their results are analysed to determine whether they meet the anticipated needs and expectations. This methodology allows us to move toward teaching that closely adapts to the needs of students at each level. In the second section, we describe the assessment instrument and detail its main features. In the third section, we present three proposals for improving the instrument linked to preparation, student autonomy, and teaching-learning process. We conclude the article by highlighting a possible line of research for future studies. We believe this instrument not only contributes to achieving the competency goals established in the course but also to fostering self-reflection, meaningful learning, and the responsible use of new technologies, both inside and outside the classroom.

Keywords: *Spanish as a foreign language (ELE), Action research, AI-assisted learning*

Introducción

El presente trabajo nace de la experiencia acumulada por los profesores Pérez y Villa durante el primer semestre del curso académico 2025/2026. Esta experiencia resulta especialmente relevante por la introducción y uso de un instrumento innovador, el portafolio de composición escrita, integrado tanto en el diseño curricular como en la dinámica de clase de dos cursos de español en el *Center for Foreign Language Education and Research (FLER)*

de la Universidad Rikkyo.

Esta innovación es una adaptación inspirada en la propuesta expuesta por la profesora Monserrat Sanz Yagüe en el V Encuentro de Experiencias Prácticas en la Enseñanza de ELE (Sanz, 2025), organizado por el Instituto Cervantes de Tokio y por la Consejería de Educación para China, Corea del Sur y Japón. Inspirados en este modelo, se introdujeron algunos ajustes para adecuarlo al contexto y a las necesidades de nuestro alumnado.

El objetivo de este reporte es reflexionar a través del análisis de los objetivos, retos y resultados metodológicos recogidos en los últimos meses y proponer mejoras tanto en el instrumento como en su implementación, para trasladarlas en un futuro cercano al aula. Este proceso de investigación-acción pretende mejorar y sentar las bases para el uso de un recurso, actualmente, tan novedoso como es la inteligencia artificial (IA en adelante) en un contexto educativo como es la clase de español como lengua extranjera (ELE en adelante) en universidades japonesas.

La primera sección de este estudio desarrolla el marco teórico, con una explicación y justificación de la investigación-acción como enfoque elegido, el cual orientará los pasos a dar en las siguientes fases del proceso.

Tras esto, se contextualiza brevemente el estudio, buscando presentar los retos y oportunidades metodológicos definidos al inicio de los cursos y confrontarlos con la propia evidencia empírica de los docentes tras seis meses de implementación.

Por último, a partir de la reflexión de los resultados obtenidos y de los retos esperados, siguiendo el proceso de la investigación-acción, se proponen una serie de intervenciones y mejoras que se implementarán y analizarán en los meses posteriores al fin de este curso académico, y que servirán como punto final de este ciclo y punto de partida de futuras intervenciones educativas.

Marco teórico

La metodología elegida para el trabajo es la investigación-acción; este es un paradigma académico que, a través de la participación, de la reflexión y de la transformación continua, busca implementar mejoras en la práctica docente mediante lapsos ininterrumpidos de observación, definición de necesidades, planificación, acción, reflexión para, tal como señalan Kemmis y McTaggart (1988), de nuevo, comenzar el proceso.

Pese a tener múltiples aplicaciones y vertientes, en nuestro caso es la implementación en las clases de enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, concretamente de ELE, en centros de educación superior donde adquiere una especial relevancia al permitir a los docentes diseñar planes de estudios dinámicos que, semestre a semestre, i) incorporen nuevas metodologías teóricas, ii) pongan en valor cambios tecnológicos presentes en la sociedad (como es nuestro caso), iii) reflejen nuevas tendencias didácticas, e iv) incluyan en el currículo oculto problemáticas sociales que se presenten como esenciales para la formación integral del alumnado.

En un contexto como el actual, donde se producen de manera constante profundos

cambios sociales, tecnológicos y culturales, la enseñanza de lenguas tiene la oportunidad de renovarse para responder mejor a las nuevas realidades.

Autores como García Álvarez (2021), Grupo de Investigación de la Didáctica del Español (2015) o Shields (1989) señalan la importancia de desarrollar currículos alineados con los plazos temporales y las directrices del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCER), así como de fomentar la actualización didáctica, la competencia metodológica y la formación continua del profesorado. Estas acciones permiten responder de manera más efectiva a las necesidades, retos y motivaciones de una nueva generación de aprendientes nativos digitales, cuyos objetivos vitales y formas de aprender nos invitan a repensar los enfoques tradicionales del aula (González y Pérez, 2023).

Es por ello por lo que, desde el punto de vista de los autores, la investigación-acción se antoja no solo importante o necesaria, sino esencial e indispensable para que los docentes tomen conciencia de los fallos y retos que se dan en sus aulas y, así, tener una herramienta que les ayude, e impulse, a repensar su praxis desde una perspectiva que ponga como prioritaria la labor transformadora de la educación.

La elección de la investigación-acción como paradigma educativo, y como método de evaluación de la propia práctica docente, permite a los profesores impulsar una mejora gradual y adecuada a la realidad del aula en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, justificada esta por el propio proceso y por las evidencias empíricas del mismo.

Del mismo modo, la reflexión constante, ejercida por el profesor, lleva a una autoevaluación de la propia metodología y práctica docente y promueve un proceso de reciclaje continuo que es, sin duda, necesario para la enseñanza de lenguas.

La investigación-acción convierte al docente en un investigador de su propia realidad educativa, más allá de la visión estática de mero transmisor de elementos prefijados, y le da la opción, y la responsabilidad, de innovar, adaptarse y, sobre todo, de tomar decisiones, fundamentadas en la experiencia, por las propias necesidades y por la realidad de su aula.

De esta forma, a través de la investigación-acción se dota a la educación universitaria, y en nuestro caso a las clases de ELE, de una mayor calidad al basar el desarrollo e implementación de los planes de estudios en evidencias, necesidades y respuestas documentadas que se adaptan a las características del grupo de discentes y a las demandas que estos presentan.

Para finalizar, el hecho de elegir la investigación-acción como metodología para intervenir en nuestra propia práctica educativa legitima los cambios que se presenten en cada intervención y permite proyectar mejoras significativas con vistas al futuro. Por ello, y teniendo conciencia los autores de la necesidad de cambiar paradigmas educativos que obvian la realidad digital que impregna la sociedad, la investigación-acción permite, como señala Burns (2009) una vía para rediseñar prácticas más inclusivas, efectivas y motivadoras.

Implementar en el diseño curricular actividades, ya sean de evaluación o de estudio, con herramientas como la IA no debe ser un fin en sí mismo, sino parte de un proceso más amplio de reflexión y mejora continuos, donde las decisiones pedagógicas se fundamentan en

los resultados de la investigación.

Contexto educativo

El instrumento de evaluación recogido en el siguiente punto se ha implementado en las materias de スペイン語演習3 y アカデミックスペイン語1. Ambas son asignaturas del FLER (Universidad Rikkyo).

Objetivos

Ambas materias tienen objetivos de diversa índole. A continuación, enumeramos los objetivos directamente relacionados con el instrumento propuesto.

スペイン語演習3:

1. Profundizar en el conocimiento de la cultura hispanohablante a través de sus festividades, gastronomía y arte.
2. Aplicar las construcciones gramaticales requeridas para cada tarea incluyendo, entre otros, el dominio del presente de indicativo, el imperativo, el contraste entre pretérito indefinido e imperfecto y las oraciones impersonales.
3. Describir una receta, una festividad y una manifestación artística del mundo hispano utilizando el léxico específico de cada tema y conectores discursivos básicos para secuenciar ideas.
4. Desarrollar la autonomía y capacidad de autoaprendizaje utilizando la IA de forma crítica y reflexiva para mejorar su competencia lingüística de manera independiente.

アカデミックスペイン語1:

1. Desarrollar las habilidades académicas y los recursos lingüísticos necesarios para la redacción de textos argumentativos académicos.
2. Desarrollar la autonomía y capacidad de autoaprendizaje utilizando la IA de forma crítica y reflexiva para mejorar su competencia lingüística de manera independiente.

Metodología

Para conseguir estos objetivos se ha optado por metodologías de aprendizaje activo y centradas en el alumnado:

– *Aprendizaje cooperativo* (Johnson y Johnson, 1975). El aprendizaje cooperativo ha sido el método utilizado principalmente. Se han creado grupos de entre 2 y 4 alumnos de diferentes niveles de competencia lingüística para favorecer el intercambio y la construcción conjunta de conocimientos.

– *Aprendizaje por indagación* (Dewey, 1938). Esta metodología ha sido especialmente utilizada en la clase de アカデミックスペイン語1. En esta materia se han planteado numerosas preguntas abiertas que han estimulado la investigación autónoma, la profundización temática

y el uso y referencia de fuentes.

– *Aprendizaje asistido por inteligencia artificial* (Gallent-Torres et al., 2023). Como se describe en la siguiente sección, se han utilizado herramientas basadas en IA generativa como apoyo a la corrección, fomentando así la autonomía, la autorreflexión y el aprendizaje continuo dentro y fuera del aula.

– *Estudio de casos*. En ambos cursos se han hecho análisis de textos relacionados con los contenidos de cada curso que han permitido aplicar de forma práctica los contenidos y recursos trabajados en clase.

Evaluación

Para evaluar el grado de obtención de estos y otros objetivos se han utilizado diferentes instrumentos.

スペイン語演習3: Portafolio de composición escrita (25 %), observación directa (20 %), presentación oral (20 %), examen final (20 %) y actividades (15 %).

アカデミックスペイン語1: Portafolio de composición escrita (30 %), observación directa (15 %), presentación oral (20 %), examen final (20 %) y actividades (15 %).

Como se puede observar, el portafolio de composición escrita constituye uno de los instrumentos centrales para evaluar el grado de cumplimiento de los objetivos.

Descripción del instrumento

A. Nombre del Instrumento

Portafolio de composición escrita.

B. Objetivos

El instrumento tiene un doble objetivo:

– Evaluar la competencia en la expresión escrita en español del alumnado sobre temas específicos trabajados durante el curso.

– Fomentar la capacidad de autorreflexión y aprendizaje autónomo del alumnado mediante el uso de una inteligencia artificial generativa.

C. Estructura y tareas

El portafolio de composición escrita se compone de las siguientes tres partes:

Parte I: Redacción original

El alumnado debe redactar uno o varios textos sobre un tema de su elección dentro de

las unidades didácticas propuestas en el curso.

Para esta parte, se prohíbe explícitamente el uso de traductores automáticos para la traducción de frases completas o el uso de la IA generativa para la creación del texto. Sin embargo, se permite y se fomenta la consulta de materiales de referencia como libros de texto o diccionarios.

La extensión de la redacción es flexible y varía según el nivel del curso.

Parte II: Redacción corregida por IA

El alumnado debe introducir su redacción original en un chatbot de IA generativa y solicitar su corrección.

En esta parte se debe incluir el nombre del modelo de IA utilizado, el/los *prompt/s* exacto/s empleado/s en el proceso de corrección, y la versión corregida por la IA, subrayando todos los cambios realizados.

Parte III: Reflexión

El alumnado debe escribir, sin la ayuda de la IA, una reflexión comparando su redacción original con la versión corregida por la IA.

En este análisis, el alumnado debe identificar sus errores principales y explicar lo que ha aprendido durante el proceso. Además, si la IA introdujo estructuras gramaticales nuevas en la versión corregida, los estudiantes deben investigarlas y explicarlas.

Finalmente, el profesorado puede decidir si esta reflexión se presenta en español o en japonés, ajustándose al nivel del curso.

D. Criterios de evaluación y rúbrica

En la rúbrica utilizada se valoran cinco criterios con distintos pesos: corrección gramatical (15 %), riqueza léxica y coherencia (10 %), contenido (15 %), cumplimiento de las instrucciones (10 %) y profundidad de la reflexión (50 %). Cada criterio se califica de 0 a 4 puntos según el nivel de logro, desde “Insuficiente” hasta “Excelente”. La parte más importante es la reflexión, en la que se busca un análisis de los errores cometidos que muestre comprensión y aprendizaje. Se incorpora la rúbrica utilizada en el Apéndice A.

E. Ejemplo

Para ilustrar el uso de este instrumento, presentamos un ejemplo que el docente ofrece al alumnado de nivel A2. En esta actividad, el alumnado debe pensar en un plato tradicional del mundo hispano sobre el que tenga interés, investigar la receta y redactarla.

Parte I: Mi redacción: Receta sobre la tortilla de patatas española

Para hacer tortilla española, necesitar huevos, patata, aceite de olivo y sal. Primero, se pelar y se cortar las patatas en trozos pequeño. Freír las patatas en mucho aceite caliente hasta

que estan blandos. Mientras, batir los huevos en uno plato con uno poco de sal. Cuando las patatas estar listo, quitar el aceite y mezclar las patatas con los huevos batidos. Poner uno poco de aceite limpia en una sartén y calentar. Echar la mezcla en la sartén y cocinar a fuego medio. Cuando los bordes estar hecho, dar la vuelta a la tortilla con uno plato y cocinar por el otro lado hasta que estar listo. ¡Ya tener tu tortilla!

Parte II: Redacción corregida por Gemini 2.5

Prompt usado: “Corrige este texto en español. “Por favor, identifica y explica brevemente todos los errores que encuentres (gramática, vocabulario, ortografía, puntuación). No modifiques el estilo ni uses estructuras gramaticales más avanzadas. Simplemente, corrige lo que sea incorrecto. Finalmente, proporciona la versión corregida del texto.”

Para hacer tortilla española, necesitas huevos, patatas, aceite de oliva y sal. Primero, pela y corta las patatas en trozos pequeños. Fríe las patatas en mucho aceite caliente hasta que estén blandas. Mientras, bate los huevos en un plato con un poco de sal. Cuando las patatas estén listas, quita el aceite y mezcla las patatas con los huevos batidos. Pon un poco de aceite limpio en una sartén y caliéntalo. Echa la mezcla en la sartén y cocina a fuego medio. Cuando los bordes estén hechos, da la vuelta a la tortilla con un plato y cocina por el otro lado hasta que esté lista. ¡Ya tienes tu tortilla española!

Parte III: Reflexión

Al comparar ambos textos, observo que mi versión original tenía muchos errores, como el uso incorrecto de las formas verbales. Usé muchos infinitivos (como “necesitar”, “pelar”, “cortar”, “freír”, etc.) cuando debía usar formas conjugadas, especialmente el imperativo para dar instrucciones (“pela”, “corta”, “fríe”) o el presente (“necesitas”, “tienes”). Otro fallo era la falta de concordancia, por ejemplo, entre sustantivos y adjetivos (“pequeño” debería estar en plural, “blandos” debería estar en femenino, “limpia” debería estar en masculino”), y también en los artículos (“uno plato”, “uno poco”).

Después de ver la versión corregida creo que tengo que prestar más atención al género y al número de las palabras y a las estructuras gramaticales que se usan normalmente en las recetas. La versión corregida por Gemini usa principalmente el imperativo pero también son posibles otras, como la oración impersonal (“se pelan” y “se cortan”), que estudiamos en clase.

Esta versión corregida también usa un tiempo verbal que no he estudiado nunca: el presente de subjuntivo (por ejemplo, “cuando los bordes estén hechos”, “hasta que esté lista”). En ambos casos, se emplea la estructura “cuando”/“hasta que” + subjuntivo para referirse a acciones o condiciones que todavía no han ocurrido, pero que sucederán en el futuro. La conjugación del verbo “estar” en presente del subjuntivo es: yo esté, tú estés, él/ella/usted esté, nosotros/as estemos, vosotros/as estéis, ellos/as/ustedes estén.

F. Características del portafolio

A continuación, presentamos algunas características particulares de este instrumento. Muchas de estas fueron señaladas por la profesora Sanz Yagüe (2025).

1. *Permanencia en la zona de desarrollo próximo (ZDP en adelante) de cada estudiante.* En primer lugar, es fundamental que las correcciones generadas por la IA se mantengan en la ZDP de cada estudiante. Para lograrlo, es necesario proporcionar un *prompt* adecuado. Si bien el *prompt* usado en el ejemplo ha sido probado y ha ofrecido buenos resultados, los estudiantes tienen libertad para usar otros y trabajar las correcciones del texto original con mayor detalle. No obstante, existe el riesgo de que la corrección devuelta por la IA supere con creces la ZDP, sufriendo un bloqueo de aprendizaje.

Por ello, el docente debe fomentar la consulta de dudas antes de la entrega del portafolio, intentando garantizar un uso pedagógicamente eficaz de esta herramienta (Liu, 2025). De otra manera, las correcciones podrían superar el nivel de comprensión del estudiante con el riesgo de convertirse en una fuente de frustración.

2. *Flexibilidad y adaptación.* Relacionado con el punto anterior, este instrumento destaca por su flexibilidad y adaptación al nivel de competencia lingüística de cada estudiante. Independientemente del nivel de partida del estudiante, todos pueden encontrar en el ejercicio un reto ajustado a sus capacidades.

Gracias al uso de la IA y a la formulación de *prompts* adecuados, las correcciones siempre se sitúan en la ZDP del alumno. Si un estudiante emplea estructuras gramaticales simples y comete errores, la IA devolverá unas correcciones adaptadas a ese nivel. Lo mismo ocurre si emplea formas más complejas, como, por ejemplo, el subjuntivo u oraciones condicionales potenciales. La IA ofrecerá una retroalimentación ajustada al tipo de producción del estudiante. Siempre que los *prompts* sean adecuados, las correcciones no añadirán especial complejidad a las oraciones, manteniéndose en la ZDP del estudiante.

3. *Versatilidad.* Otra de las características destacadas de este instrumento es su versatilidad. Este instrumento puede ser implementado sin necesidad de modificar las instrucciones básicas en grupos de diferentes niveles de competencia lingüística y con diversos objetivos didácticos.

4. *Cambio en el enfoque pedagógico.* Con este instrumento el foco se desplaza desde la búsqueda del error para penalizarlo hacia la capacidad del estudiante para analizarlo y aprender de él (Mera et al., 2022). Las herramientas tecnológicas actuales se integran aquí como un medio para el análisis de errores y fomentar la mejora.

Tal y como está planteada la rúbrica, el docente calificará tanto el producto final como el proceso de aprendizaje y la capacidad metacognitiva del alumnado para identificar sus propias áreas de mejora.

5. *Autonomía del estudiante*. Hay muchos planteamientos posibles a la hora de decidir qué puntos deberían estar presentes en la reflexión. En esta propuesta se otorga completa autonomía al estudiante, dejándole reflexionar sobre lo más relevante para él según su nivel de desarrollo lingüístico y competencial. En nuestra opinión, y en la de la investigación más reciente (Mirriahi et al., 2025), esto permite ahondar en el aprendizaje significativo.

6. *Corrección como oportunidad de aprendizaje*. Con frecuencia, las correcciones no son revisadas por el alumnado si van acompañadas de una calificación que le resulta satisfactoria. Este instrumento soluciona parcialmente ese problema, ya que los estudiantes deben revisar sus errores y seleccionar aquellos que consideren más significativos para su posterior análisis. En este sentido, la corrección se convierte en una oportunidad de aprendizaje activo (Halkiopoulos y Gkintoni, 2024).

7. *Ahorro de tiempo*. Un beneficio igualmente notable para el profesorado es el ahorro de tiempo. Al delegar gran parte de la corrección inicial en la IA, el docente puede reducir el tiempo dedicado a la revisión y a la corrección manual de las actividades. Esto le permite, si así lo desea, asignar más tareas de composición escrita, lo que favorece que el alumnado practique y entrene más frecuentemente tanto la escritura como la reflexión metacognitiva.

G. Reflexión crítica

Una posible crítica a este instrumento es la posibilidad de que los estudiantes utilicen la IA para otras partes de la actividad. En primer lugar, es posible que la utilicen para corregir errores en la redacción original. Sin embargo, si lo hacen para este fin, estarían aplicando la misma lógica del instrumento: identificar errores y aprender de ellos. Esto, en parte, continúa siendo pedagógicamente valioso. El verdadero problema surgiría si usaran la IA para generar el texto desde cero, por ejemplo, pidiendo a la IA que escriba la receta de la tortilla de patatas. Si bien esta es una objeción relevante, nos gustaría aclarar que no se trata de una limitación específica de este instrumento de evaluación, sino que es un riesgo compartido con cualquier otra tarea o actividad de composición escrita. En esos casos solo cabe confiar en *softwares* de detección de contenido generado por IA. Otra opción podría ser reducir el peso de la calificación de la redacción original, comunicándolo de forma transparente en los criterios de evaluación.

En segundo lugar, podrían recurrir a la IA para redactar el apartado de reflexión. Sin embargo, también hay aspectos positivos en ese uso. Al solicitar a la IA que detecte los cambios más importantes y reflexione sobre ellos, pueden aflorar conceptos o explicaciones que el estudiante desconocía, lo que constituye también una forma de aprendizaje. No obstante, existe la posibilidad de que el estudiante no revise en profundidad el análisis generado por la IA y se limite a copiarlo. Una vez más, este es un riesgo compartido con cualquier otra tarea de composición y tendremos que confiar en los *softwares* de detección.

Propuestas de mejora del instrumento

Tal como se indicó en el marco teórico, terminado el primer ciclo, o lapso, de observación, corresponde, dentro del proceso de investigación-acción, planificar la entrada en un nuevo ciclo de acción (Kemmis y McTaggart, 1988).

A partir de la observación de fortalezas, oportunidades y debilidades, se han identificado numerosas áreas de intervención, diversas y complejas. En este trabajo solo se presentaran las ligadas a la preparación, al proceso y a la autonomía del alumnado.

1. *Formación inicial en el uso de la IA.* Tras la experiencia introduciendo el uso de la IA generativa en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, hemos considerado necesario incluir una primera parte en la que se introduzca una formación inicial y un trabajo específico acerca del uso autónomo, crítico y responsable de la IA.

Siguiendo investigaciones como la de Aroz et al. (2025), es cada vez más común entre los estudiantes japoneses de ELE en educación superior hacer un uso constante y no reflexivo de modelos de IA generativos; dado que lo que se busca con el proyecto descrito es, además de la consecución de los objetivos docentes, el desarrollo integral de los alumnos, se les pretende dotar de las herramientas para que el uso de la IA posteriormente en el aula, y en general, no se traduzca en un aprendizaje superficial, un uso poco crítico de las nuevas tecnologías y aportación de datos sin contrastar, llegando al plagio, en trabajos académicos.

En la línea de lo propuesto por la Unión Europea en el proyecto DETECT (Developing Teachers' Critical Digital Literacies) (s.f.), el desarrollo de una competencia digital crítica se buscará a través de tareas enfocadas en una conciencia ética, en una reflexión metalingüística y en una visión holística que haga de este primer paso un componente transversal de todo el curso.

2. *Supervisión continuada por parte del docente.* Pese a todo lo explicado con anterioridad, y a la percepción de los autores de que estas nuevas herramientas presentes en la sociedad no deben estar aisladas del desarrollo de los estudiantes de nivel universitario, también es obvia la necesidad de ampliar la supervisión final del uso de la IA por parte del docente.

Dadas las experiencias en numerosas clases y asignaturas, se ve necesario un control más estricto incluido durante todo el proceso, buscando un equilibrio entre autonomía y supervisión, e incorporando este punto a las nuevas actividades de desarrollo ético incluidas en el primer punto.

Como propuestas iniciales para implantar esta idea, se pueden incluir elementos intermedios de supervisión docente, como la entrega de ambos textos para que el profesor pueda evaluar y dar retroalimentación acerca del proceso, uso de otras IA para analizar el trabajo de los alumnos, etc.

3. *Implementación de la metodología ABP.* Una posible mejora que acompañaría

al uso de esta herramienta sería la modificación del plan de estudios para que, además de las metodologías mencionadas anteriormente, el aprendizaje se llevará a cabo mediante el desarrollo de proyectos (Balcells Sanahuja, 2014).

El trabajo por proyectos, en el cual se incluiría la IA, dota a la clase de un componente de autenticidad que favorece el desarrollo de todas las destrezas y, a la vez, dota al profesor de un rol de acompañante que permite al alumno desarrollar todas las competencias formales y transversales que se esperan de un estudiante de educación superior.

En nuestro caso, trabajando objetivos transversales y socioculturales, el alumnado crearía conjuntamente un texto sobre una temática escogida libremente entre los contenidos del curso.

Conclusiones

Este *Practical Teaching Report* recoge las primeras impresiones y el estadio inicial del proceso de investigación-acción sobre la implementación del portafolio diseñado en el aula.

Entre los beneficios observados en esta experiencia, destacan el desarrollo de la autonomía del alumnado, la reflexión sobre el propio proceso de aprendizaje y una evaluación más formativa y personalizada. Desde nuestra perspectiva, la investigación-acción nos ha proporcionado datos y elementos que permitirán adaptar los contenidos y actividades a las necesidades reales del grupo.

Una posible línea de desarrollo para una investigación posterior sería intentar averiguar en qué medida esta metodología contribuye a la retención de vocabulario y estructuras gramaticales. Como posible procedimiento, al final del curso se podría aplicar un examen escrito cuyo objetivo sea reescribir una de las redacciones presentadas en el portafolio. De esta manera tendremos datos para analizar si los cambios reflejados en la reflexión se han interiorizado y consolidado, al menos hasta la fecha de la evaluación final.

Pese a que contar con una herramienta que se adecue a nuestras necesidades de forma óptima, sin los fallos señalados, es esencial para conseguir los objetivos de las asignaturas en las que se emplee, este proceso de investigación-acción apenas ha comenzado. Será necesario avanzar de forma gradual, puliendo, previamente, otros aspectos relevantes de la clase.

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Apéndice

Apéndice A: Rúbrica

Criterios de evaluación	Excelente (4 puntos)	Bueno (3 puntos)	Suficiente (2 puntos)	Insuficiente (1-0 puntos)
Corrección gramatical (Parte I) 15 %	El texto presenta un alto grado de corrección gramatical. Aplica de forma consistente y adecuada las estructuras trabajadas.	El texto presenta algunos errores gramaticales. Demuestra un control razonable de las estructuras trabajadas.	El texto presenta errores gramaticales frecuentes (concordancia, conjugación) que a veces dificultan la comprensión.	Los errores gramaticales son sistemáticos y graves. No ha usado los recursos estudiados durante el curso.
Riqueza léxica y coherencia (Parte I) 10 %	Utiliza un vocabulario rico y específico del tema tratado. Usa una variedad de conectores discursivos.	Utiliza un vocabulario adecuado para la tarea, aunque puede ser algo repetitivo. Usa conectores básicos de forma correcta.	El vocabulario es limitado o impreciso. Las ideas están poco conectadas.	El vocabulario es insuficiente para la tarea.
Contenido (Parte I) 15 %	Responde de manera completa a la tarea propuesta. El contenido es relevante y demuestra interés.	Responde a la tarea propuesta de forma adecuada. El contenido es relevante, aunque podría ser más detallado o profundo.	Responde a la tarea de forma parcial o superficial. El contenido es muy básico o presenta información irrelevante.	No responde a la tarea propuesta o el contenido es irrelevante.
Cumplimiento de las instrucciones (Parte II) 10 %	Sigue todas las instrucciones a la perfección: incluye el nombre de la IA, el/los <i>prompt(s)</i> utilizado(s) y la versión corregida, subrayando claramente todos los cambios realizados por la IA.	Cumple con casi todas las instrucciones, pero puede haber alguna omisión menor (ej. omitir el nombre de la IA usada).	Faltan componentes importantes de la tarea (p. ej. no incluye el <i>prompt</i> , no subraya los cambios).	No se siguieron las instrucciones.
Profundidad de la reflexión (Parte III) 50 %	La reflexión es profunda y detallada. Identifica patrones de error, no solo fallos aislados. Demuestra haber investigado y comprendido las estructuras nuevas y las explica con sus propias palabras.	La reflexión es correcta. Identifica los errores principales y trata de explicarlos. Menciona las estructuras nuevas, pero no profundiza en ellas.	La reflexión es superficial. Se limita a enumerar los errores sin explicar el porqué (“usé mal el verbo”). No hay evidencia de un aprendizaje significativo a partir de la corrección.	La reflexión es inexistente (“La IA me corrigió X e Y”), o no demuestra ninguna comprensión de sus errores.

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英語	8000語程度	3000語程度	3000-5000語程度	1000語程度
ドイツ語	8000語程度	3000語程度	3000-5000語程度	1000語程度
フランス語	8000語程度	3000語程度	3000-5000語程度	1000語程度
スペイン語	8000語程度	3000語程度	3000-5000語程度	1000語程度
中国語	13000字程度	4000字程度	4000-5000字程度	1600字程度
朝鮮語	20000字程度	6000字程度	6000-8000字程度	2500字程度
ロシア語	8000語程度	3000語程度	3000-5000語程度	1000語程度

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- (3) 投稿された原稿が人を対象とする研究にあたると考えられるものであった場合、その研究は「立教大学外国語教育研究センタージャーナル&リサーチ委員会研究承認規程」に基づく審査を受け、承認を得られた後に実施されたものでなければならない。
- (4) 研究承認申請をし、審査を受けるべき内容の研究に関する原稿でありながら、未申請あるいは未承認であった場合は、当該原稿はジャーナルに掲載しない。
- (5) 万が一出版後、剽窃等の不正が発覚した場合は当該論文をジャーナルから削除する。

(規程の改廃)

第12条 この規程の改廃は、外国語教育研究センター教授会の議を経て、外国語教育研究センター長が行う。

附 則

この規程は、2025年4月1日から施行する。

附 則

この規程は、2025年10月8日から適用する。

附 則

この規程は、2025年12月3日から適用する。

Center for Foreign Language Education and Research
Journal of Plurilingual and Pluricultural Education and Research
Manuscript Submission Guidelines

Established on April 1, 2025

Revised on October 8, 2025

Revised on December 3, 2025

(Eligibility)

- Article 1 Contributions to the journal are primarily limited to individuals affiliated with the Center for Foreign Language Education and Research (hereafter “FLER”). In the case of co-authored papers, this requirement applies only to the first author. Exceptions may be made for special editions.
- 2 A maximum of one contribution per issue is accepted (co-authored papers are also counted as one contribution). Due to space limitations, your submission may be considered by the Journal and Research Committee (hereafter “Committee”) for publication in a later issue, or you may be asked to reduce the length of the submitted article.
 - 3 Work submitted to the journal should not have been previously published and should not be under consideration for potential publication by other journals.
 - 4 Make sure to avoid committing plagiarism.

(Language)

- Article 2 In order to effectively share knowledge and research activity among FLER-affiliated instructors, manuscripts written in either Japanese or languages taught as compulsory courses of University-wide Liberal Arts Courses (English, German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Russian) are generally accepted.

(Content and Formatting Guidelines)

- Article 3 Upon submission, authors are required to select one of the categories listed below for their contribution. Appropriateness of the selected category will be reviewed by the Committee. You may be asked to change the submission category in some cases.

(1) Research Articles

An article which can be considered as making a substantial contribution to the relevant field through explicit analysis of data or theoretical discussion which leads to a clear and sound conclusion. The author is expected to include an introduction section in order to orient the research in reference to previous empirical research and/or theoretical discussion and a clear conclusion section well-connected to the

research findings or discussion presented.

(2) Research Briefs

An article which reports an aspect of a research project underway at the time of writing and demonstrates the potential of the topic for generating further questions of interest or prospective contributions in the relevant field.

(3) Practical Teaching Reports

A reflective report on your teaching practice in any language course of the University-wide Liberal Arts Courses. Reports should include reflection on experiences and detailed descriptions of tasks and/or activities. Make sure to establish a clear connection between your teaching practice and theoretical/pedagogical rationale where possible.

(4) Book/Article Reviews

A critical review of a published book or article relevant to the field.

2 Ensure all formatting guidelines listed below are followed. Authors who intend to write in Japanese should refer to the Japanese version of this document. When submitting an article written in English, be sure to format the article using the supplied template. For languages other than English, refer to the template when formatting the article. Submissions that do not follow these formatting guidelines may be returned to the author(s) for revision. Formatting and other modifications may be made by the publisher during the publication process.

(1) Size: Use A4-sized paper, leaving margins of 25 mm on all sides. The font used should be Times New Roman for English, German, French, Spanish, and Russian; MS *Mincho* for Japanese; SimSun for Chinese; and Shin MyeongJo for Korean. The font size should be 12 point. For any other languages, use the font type considered standard in the selected language. Use the same font consistently throughout the manuscript unless otherwise noted. The line spacing should be single-spaced, and the text alignment should be justified.

(2) Length: The number of words (characters) shall be determined for each language as follows. In all languages, include all graphs, charts, reference list, and any appendices in the word (character) count. Graphs and charts should be embedded in the text. However, if it is difficult to do so, submitting as a separate file is allowed, but be sure to leave space and indicate where they should be placed in the text.

	Research Articles	Research Briefs	Practical Teaching Reports	Book/Article Reviews
Japanese	Approximately 20,000 characters	Approximately 6,000 characters	Approximately 6,000-8,000 characters	Approximately 2,500 characters
English	Approximately 8,000 words	Approximately 3,000 words	Approximately 3,000-5,000 words	Approximately 1,000 words

German	Approximately 8,000 words	Approximately 3,000 words	Approximately 3,000-5,000 words	Approximately 1,000 words
French	Approximately 8,000 words	Approximately 3,000 words	Approximately 3,000-5,000 words	Approximately 1,000 words
Spanish	Approximately 8,000 words	Approximately 3,000 words	Approximately 3,000-5,000 words	Approximately 1,000 words
Chinese	Approximately 13,000 characters	Approximately 4,000 characters	Approximately 4,000-5,000 characters	Approximately 1,600 characters
Korean	Approximately 20,000 characters	Approximately 6,000 characters	Approximately 6,000-8,000 characters	Approximately 2,500 characters
Russian	Approximately 8,000 words	Approximately 3,000 words	Approximately 3,000-5,000 words	Approximately 1,000 words

- (3) Title: The title should be aligned left in 18 point bold, and written in title case. Font as above.
- (4) Author's name: The name of the author(s) should be aligned right and written in Gothic 12 point. Leave one line between the title and the name of the author(s).
- (5) Abstract: Except for book/article reviews, abstracts should be approximately 500 characters in Japanese or 150-250 words in English, with 3 to 5 keywords for the article at the bottom. For the abstract, the entire text should be indented 15mm from the left and right and written in Times New Roman (MS *Mincho* for Japanese) 11 point.
- (6) Footnotes: Footnotes should be placed at the bottom of each page in 9-point font.

(Manuscript Submission)

Article 4 To submit a manuscript, fill in the necessary details in the designated Google form, upload the electronic file containing the article content, and submit.

(Footnotes and Referencing)

Article 5 The author is responsible for consistently adhering to APA (7th edition) style. If the manuscript is written in any language other than English, adopt APA style format as much as possible and make sure that the style used is consistent throughout the manuscript.

(Call and Deadline for Submission)

Article 6 Submissions are accepted starting June 1 every year. The deadline for submissions is the last Saturday in August.

(Peer Review)

Article 7 All submissions to the research article category will be reviewed by one anonymous

reviewer. The review is conducted with a designated rubric and the reviewer may provide you with comments and suggestions for further improvement of your work. After the review is completed, review results will be sent to the author from the Committee by the end of September. No peer review will be conducted for research briefs, practical teaching reports, or book/article reviews. However, the Committee will check if the submitted work meets the journal submission guidelines and determine if the work is publishable.

(Revision and Resubmission)

Article 8

(1) Research Articles

After receiving the results of the peer review, the author is expected to revise the manuscript for resubmission. The revised manuscript must be submitted by the end of November. If the revised manuscript is not resubmitted by the deadline, it will be considered withdrawn. A final review will be conducted by the Committee to determine if the work is publishable. The author will be notified of the decision once the final review is completed. The author may be asked by the publisher to further revise the manuscript if there are any stylistic/format issues.

(2) Research Briefs, Practical Teaching Reports and Book/Article Reviews

After checking, if the content deviates significantly from the scope of the journal or there is a problem with the format, the author will be asked to revise and resubmit. Authors who have received revision requests must revise their manuscripts and submit them again within two weeks from the date of receiving the request. A final review will be conducted by the Committee to determine if the work is publishable. The author will be notified of the decision once the final review is completed. The author may be asked by the publisher to further revise the manuscript if there are any stylistic/format issues.

(Journal Publication)

Article 9 The journal is published annually in March.

(Registration on CiNii and Rikkyo Repository)

Article 10 Contributions to the Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Education and Research will be published on the FLER webpage and registered on the national CiNii database and the Rikkyo University Academic Repository.

(Other Conditions)

Article 11 Other terms and conditions are set out below.

- (1) No remuneration is offered to the author(s).

- (2) The copyright of articles published in the Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Education and Research resides with FLER. However, the author(s) retains the right to use their work for future research and/or educational purposes without permission.
- (3) If a submitted manuscript is deemed to involve research on human subjects, the research must have undergone review and received approval in accordance with the “Rikkyo University Center for Foreign Language Education and Research Journal & Research Committee Research Approval Regulations” prior to its implementation.
- (4) If a manuscript pertains to research that is subject to ethical review and approval, but an application has not been submitted or approval has not been granted, the manuscript shall not be published in the journal.
- (5) If any plagiarism or misconduct is discovered after a work is published, the applicable published work will be removed from the journal.

(Amendment or Abolishment of Guidelines)

Article 12 Any amendment or abolishment of these guidelines will be made by the Dean of the Center for Foreign Language Education and Research following deliberations at a Faculty Meeting.

Supplementary Provisions

These Guidelines shall be in effect from April 1, 2025.

Supplementary Provisions

These Guidelines shall be in effect from October 8, 2025.

Supplementary Provisions

These Guidelines shall be in effect from December 3, 2025.

執筆者・Authors

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Jon Mahoney is an Adjunct Lecturer at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, Japan. Originally from the UK, he has been teaching English in Japan for over 17 years. He achieved an M.Ed in TESOL from Sheffield Hallam University in 2018. His main research interests include English as a lingua franca, CLIL and developing critical thinking skills.

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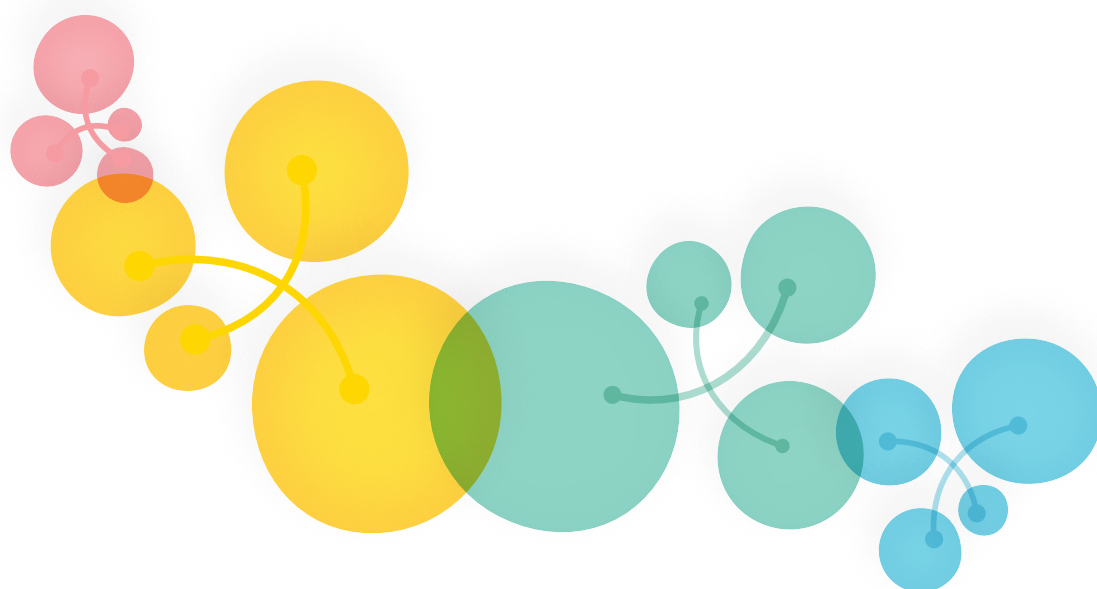
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