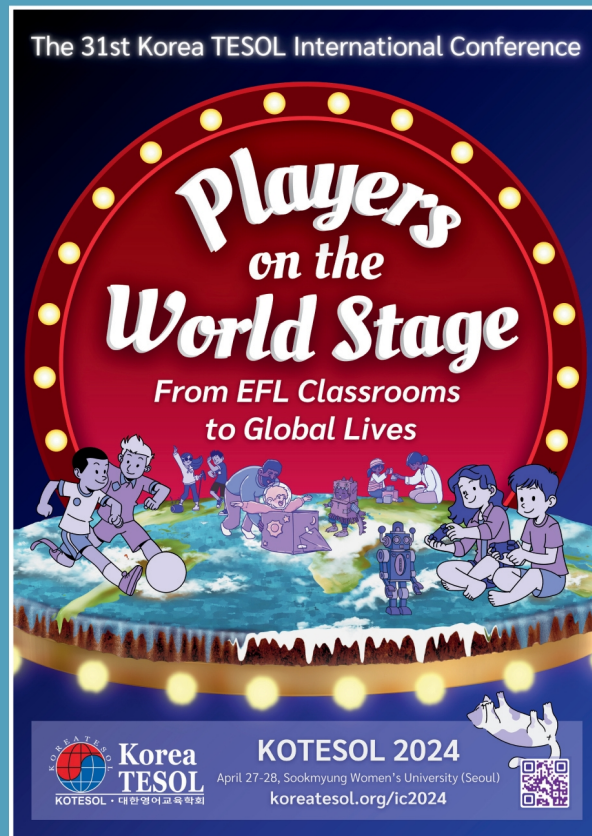




# KOTESOL Proceedings 2024

Players on the World Stage:  
From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives



Proceedings of  
The 31st Korea TESOL International Conference  
April 27 - 28, 2024; Seoul, Korea & Online

Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages  
(Korea TESOL / KOTESOL)





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**Edited by**  
**Dr. David Shaffer**  
Gwangju International Center, Gwangju, South Korea

**Published by Korea TESOL**  
KOTESOL Publications Committee Chair: Dr. David Shaffer



**Layout/Design:** Mijung Lee, Media Station, Seoul

**For information on this or other Korea TESOL publications,  
as well as inquiries on membership and advertising, contact us at:**

**[koreatesol.org](http://koreatesol.org) or [publications@koreatesol.org](mailto:publications@koreatesol.org)**

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(Korea TESOL / KOTESOL)

**ISSN 2586-4173 (Online) Price: 15,000 KRW / 10.00 USD (Free to Members)**

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## Foreword

The 2024 Korea TESOL International Conference was the annual highlight among the numerous professional development events that our organization holds throughout the year. This marked the second year after the pandemic that we have held a mainly in-person event, though it was hybrid in that it also included an asynchronous component of presentations for those unable to attend in person. Under the theme “Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives,” the conference played out over the weekend of April 27–28, 2024, and Sookmyung Women’s University in Seoul, Korea, provided the stage.

The event featured plenary sessions by two well-known authorities in TESL/TEFL: Aya Matsuda of Arizona State University, USA, and Boyoung Lee, active in the domestic private sector in EFL materials development and as an acclaimed radio and TV instructor. In addition, Guy Cook of King’s College London provided a special virtual plenary session.

The speaker lineup showcased seven featured speakers – David Paul, Robert Lowe, David Kellogg, Eun Sung Park, CedarBough Saeji, Michael Hurt, and Eunjee Ko – offering a total of 12 sessions. This year’s conference also featured an AI/EdTech strand of sessions by Yohan Hwang, HyeJin Lee, and Rakhun Kim, who presented in Korean. Our invited panel discussion, “Education in Korea: The Implications of Change,” featured Joo-Kyung Park, Nam-Joon Kang, and David Kellogg.

Over the two-day weekend, the conference hosted approximately 165 sessions, including 37 online presentations, during its 15-plus hours of programming, drawing more than 400 participants from countries across the globe. The presentations spanned the range of topics that ELT encompasses. (A list of all presenters and the titles of their presentations can be found in the Conference Overview section in the back of this volume.)

This volume presents 29 papers derived from presentations delivered at KOTESOL 2024, representative of the diverse interests within the field of TEFL. The papers include an invited speaker paper, 17 research papers, one action research paper, five workshop reports, three pecha kucha reports, and a dialogue session report. As a very special addition, we provide the text of the Guy Cook virtual plenary interview. We express our gratitude to all the authors whose papers appear in this volume for their valuable contributions.

Conferences are wonderful dispensers of cutting-edge knowledge, useful teaching techniques, and convenient classroom management practices, but it is the human element that adds a very special aspect to any conference – discussions with speakers and presenters, meeting new people, reuniting with colleagues and friends. Taking all this into account, the conference was deemed a resounding success by participants and organizers alike.

It is expected that this success will carry over to the 2025 Korea TESOL International Conference with the theme “Embracing Humanity in the Age of AI: Enhancing ELT Through Emotional Intelligence, Creativity, and Innovation,” scheduled to take place on May 10–11 in Seoul and online.

*David Shaffer*  
Editor

KOTESOL Proceedings 2024

# KOTESOL Proceedings 2024

## *Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives*

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## **Invited Speaker Papers**

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## Setting the Stage: The EFL Classroom in the First Quarter of the 21st Century

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Guy Cook

*King's College London, London, United Kingdom*

In a special virtual plenary, Guy Cook, preeminent scholar in both language play and the place of translation in EFL teaching, participates in a conversation with Conference Chair Bryan Hale. Professor Cook helps us put our current teaching situations in the context of developments in EFL over the first quarter of the 21st century, discussing the language play “moment” at the turn of the millennium, his criticisms of overly functionalist approaches to language teaching, the place of translation and first language use in the classroom, developments in artificial intelligence, and how teachers can make sense of it all.

**Bryan Hale:** Welcome to KOTESOL 2024. I'm Brian Hale, the chair of the conference this year, and I'm here with Professor Guy Cook, who is an emeritus professor of language and education at King's College London. He researches in three areas: discourse analysis, English language teaching, and literary stylistics. In stylistics, early work on literature and advertising expanded into a more general theory of the role of language play in cognition, social relations, and language learning. Professor Cook's work on English language teaching advocates the use of translation and students' own languages, and he is an opponent of strictly monolingual and utilitarian approaches to language teaching. We felt that both of these areas tie in fantastically with our theme this year, which is “Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives.” So, I'm really thrilled to be able to have this interview with Professor Cook today as part of the conference. Professor Cook, welcome and thank you for joining us.

**Professor Guy Cook:** Thank you.

**Hale:** First, I'd like to ask about your career, which has explored some fascinating and seemingly disparate areas from language play and translation in language teaching to language use in food politics and some research related to language and animals. Are there some salient threads that link all these different areas together?

**Cook:** Yes, thank you very much. That's a good question. To me, of course, they don't seem like disparate areas. They have a kind of way that they follow on from each other and connect, but I can very well understand that they might seem disparate to other people. I think there are a number of threads running through

that kind of come back together and then go apart again. I was initially an English language teacher traveling in various countries around the world. So issues to do with language teaching have always been on my mind, and I've been involved in language teacher education all through my career, so that's always been a theme in the background in terms of my own research and interests.

My primary interest was literature, really. I did a degree in English literature, and I continue to be fascinated by that. I got very interested in stylistics, which is the relevance of linguistics to literary analysis, and then from that, I got very interested in this question without an answer, which is "Can literature be defined?" and I think, clearly to me anyway, it's almost impossible to define literature, but it has some typical features.

From that, I went on to look at advertising. This was in a kind of golden age of advertising for various reasons to do with development of media in the 1980s and 1990s. Advertising at that time was really quite poetic and quite artistic, and it had many of the features that literature has, but it's obviously not literature. So that became an interest of mine.

Then, I got interested in those issues that crop up in literature and advertising when people are playing with language and messing around with the forms of language, and finding patterns in the forms of language. It kind of came to me that this is a very widespread feature of human life – that people do like playing with language. It was actually in the 1990s; I had two small children, so I was surrounded by those kind of childlike features of language – you know, endless repetition and games, fictional worlds, and all that sort of thing.

Then, I became interested in the ways in which adult life – although we take our adult lives so seriously – is also sort of saturated with language play, even though we don't always call it "language play." There's a whole raft of activities that adults find very important in life, from religious ritual to football chants, where you get the same features as you get in children's play. Then, I moved on to this idea of language play as an important feature of our species, actually, of our ways of thinking and our ways of behaving.

I then got interested in political rhetoric and debates over the environment. I suppose there the connection is a bit tenuous, but on the other hand, what's happening in political debate is that people are choosing the forms of language in a way that they think will push people into our directions and opinions that they want them to be pushed into. I know that is a bit tenuous, but there seemed to be a connection there to me. Then, I came all the way back to language teaching again because I wrote a book in 2010 on translation in language teaching. I wrote this because translation is really a kind of communicative activity. Obviously, it's really a key communicative activity in the world, but it also involves a deep understanding of form. So that came back and connected with my rather obsessive interest in focus on form in language teaching and learning, contrary to currents of my time.

It all sounds like a bit of a muddle, but to me there's a kind of thread running through it. I hope other people can see that as well. I can definitely see the thread there. Recently, I feel frustrated sometimes when people in political debate focus only on the politics, as though everyone's taking that seriously, and not on the form of language. So I can see the thread there.

**Hale:** Around the turn of the millennium, it seemed as though language play had a really big moment. You, and other scholars also, were writing about it. Could you tell me a little bit more about what was going on at that time and how that moment of language play scholarship kind of came to be?

**Cook:** Yes, that's a rather interesting phenomenon. It's a long time now since the 1990s when there was that kind of resurgence of interest in play. David Crystal actually wrote a book called *Language Play* [2001] at that time, too. Why it happened just then I don't know, but I think people, including people in language teaching, got rather fed up with this rather dreary approach to language. This is moving on to the relevance to language teaching, which we may come back to later, but the really dominant ideology during my career in language teaching has been some form of the communicative approach.

The communicative approach has been defined in all sorts of different ways by different people. I think the pioneers of the communicative approach had some very interesting approaches to language and language teaching, but it became rather misunderstood in my opinion, or rather degraded. It became an idea that you should always focus on getting something done with language, some practical problem, and then it sort of mutated into task-based language teaching. That general kind of functional, utilitarian approach left all these important uses of language – which I mentioned in my answer to the first question – brushed them to one side.

Of course, it's important to be able to buy a cup of coffee in another language, or find the way to the station, all those kind of things – tasks, if you like – but that's not the kind of language that people value. People value things like songs, for example, poems, prayers, games, fiction. Fiction is not just highbrow novels; it's also soap operas and all that kind of thing. People tend to go for a fictional world whenever they get the chance: computer games, TV series, films. I think in the 1990s, there was just a sort of realization that a whole area of language had got brushed to one side. And that, of course, is all very connected to the fact that literature teaching had been kind of pushed to one side by the very pragmatic approach of task-based learning. And when it was included, it was included as a sort of concession. It was like “Okay, we'll do a bit of literature,” whereas in the past, when I was learning languages at secondary school – a very long time ago – one of the reasons to learn a language was to read the literature in the original, which still is a motive and a very noble motive for many people, I think. So yes, there was a resurgence. Ron Carter, who died some years ago, was also involved in that, and he was also very interested in literature teaching, so it's not so surprising that these were the people who became involved.

**Hale:** I appreciate that answer, and I think that my own learners connect with a lot of what you just mentioned about the importance of pleasure and imagination and aesthetics in language learning. I think that for a lot of my learners in Korea, appreciating literature is a really deeply held goal of theirs in language learning. But it also seems to me that there's as much pressure as ever to focus on utilitarian outcomes. I think this kind of focus on outcomes is becoming more prominent in Korea, and it seems to be incredibly overwhelming in other contexts as well. What do you think are some of the challenges in moving away from that

kind of mindset?

**Cook:** Well yes, of course, there are lots of challenges. There is a sort of deeper thread in the philosophy of education here – the notion of what a curriculum should be. We live in an age when the utilitarian approach to education as a whole is dominant. This is typical of British universities, for example. I’m sure the same is the case in Korea: that everything you do is seen in the context of “will it get the students a job?” I personally think that this is a rather sad turn of events in education because people have to earn a living, and society needs people to do various tasks.

But I still think there should be more to education than just utilitarian motivations within language teaching. Language teaching reflects the more general picture in education as a whole, and we certainly still live in that time. I think I’ve been involved in ideas about English language teaching for a very long time, indeed, since the 1970s. I think the interesting thing is that the really big shift was in the ’70s and ’80s, and nothing has really changed all that much since. The sort of fashionable movements that we have at the moment are really continuations of ideas that began back then, so it’s quite a big shift to demand people to move away from that. Teachers have to work in the context of their employers, their schools, their governments, their curricula. There’s limited room to maneuver, but nevertheless, there is some room to maneuver for a teacher. A teacher as an individual in a particular classroom can stand up for values other than the utilitarian, whether it’s in English language teaching or in education more generally.

**Hale:** You mentioned that there were different kind of possibilities within communicative language teaching, and that maybe the more functional possibilities took over. I’m wondering if the utilitarian focus had not been so powerful and maybe if communicative language teaching had had a bit of a different focus or the language play moments had overpowered the utilitarian approach a little bit more, how would you imagine language teaching? Is there an alternate timeline where language play is more powerful in language teaching?

**Cook:** Yes, that’s an alternative history, a different branching into the future. I think a lot of the problem has to do with these false binary distinctions we make. If you go right back to the theory of communicative language teaching, you’ve got this binary distinction between form and function. But it isn’t actually all that convincing because of, as I mentioned, these kind of banal things you get in task-based language teaching, things like can you buy a cup of coffee? can you order an airline ticket? or something like that, where in fact, the form doesn’t matter very much.

One of the major problems for the communicative approach was that people can communicate successfully in limited circumstances but get the form completely wrong. For example, some foreign guest arrives in somebody’s house and is very tired and wants to go to bed. They say, “Me go sleep now please,” and the host understands this completely and shows them up to a room with a beautifully made-up bed and all this sort of thing – communicatively successful, but it’s such a simple task. The problem is that if you want to do anything subtle

or sophisticated or just nuanced in the language, then the better you know the form, the better you can do it. So form is function – that’s really the problem.

When you look at examples of language play, for example, literary type language – though it could be just something less prestigious – this playing with language (and this was part of the theory I put forward in my book on language play) is a tremendous advantage to individuals, to societies, and probably to the species. It’s well documented among biologists that there is a relationship between play and general intelligence, so the more generally intelligent a species is, the more it plays. We are generally very intelligent in some ways (although we’ve managed to wreck the planet, which is not very clever), but it’s part of being human to play, and it’s part of a child’s first-language acquisition to play with the language, and it’s part of our adult life to continue playing with the language. So you can’t really divide play from useful things to do – they are the same thing.

Playing is useful on a bigger canvas – things like games, games that are not reality. I’m not talking about football but trivial games. Football is a very big cultural phenomenon. It isn’t a real thing, but it’s terribly important in society, and in the construction of identities and relationships, and everything else. There isn’t a clear distinction between form and function, or utility and playfulness. I don’t think they’re as different as they seem. When I was writing *Language Play, Language Learning* [2000], that really hit me – that so much of our time with language is taken up in ways that we can just look directly past when we follow a really functionalist approach. But they’re right there, and they’re taking up all of the time and space.

**Hale:** Yes, absolutely. So, as we’ve been discussing, you’ve been a persuasive proponent of moving away from some of the focuses or doctrines of language teaching of recent decades. As a teacher in Korea, I feel that some of those doctrines, for example, communicative language teaching, have never really impacted the English language teaching that I see going on here in many classrooms. I teach in a Korean high school and the grammar–translation method remains really dominant here. In Korean public schools, I see a lot of fairly mindless drilling and a lot of rote memorization. What kind of message would you give to teachers establishing a career in this kind of context?

**Cook:** Well, that’s a very complex issue. I think the key word in the question you’ve just asked me is *mindless*. Mindless drilling is bad; mindless grammar–translation is bad; and so on. But not all drilling and not all grammar–translation are mindless. They may be more useful than they seem at first sight. I just want to make one caveat to everything I say about language teaching: I think one of the problems with all language teaching theory, including my own, is that it assumes that learners are all the same. It’s as though you know this works for some people, so you assume it works for everybody. I don’t think that’s the case. I think learners are very different.

I was criticizing task-based learning before, but some people love it. I personally always liked focuses on form, like learning paradigms of verb changes in French or whatever, and I think grammar–translation has some useful function in that it gives a learner – including me when I’m learning a language – a sense of control. You know what you can do and what you can’t do. You know where

you are with the language, and you're not being bombarded with things that mystify. So for some people – not for everybody – grammar–translation can be a good way to learn a language. It's probably better to mix it in with something else for a bit of variety. For other people, a sort of functional task-based approach is also a very good way to go about learning – not for me personally – but then, I'm not everybody, and nobody's everybody.

On the other hand, let's take form-focused activities – rote learning, for example. Rote learning has had a very bad press for some very good reasons. In Britain, and I think in many other countries as well, you get various very right-wing politicians going on about the need to reintroduce rote learning, everybody needs to learn things by heart. That puts off people who are not right-wing themselves – and that's fair enough – but on the other hand, when rote learning is spontaneous learning of something that people really like, it can be a very useful language learning activity.

I mentioned songs earlier on. The vast majority of people love songs, according to their taste. The songs I love are not the songs you love, but we know them by heart and most people know a lot of songs by heart. Of course, the fact that the words go with the music and you associate it with certain places, times, and people will all help, but that is a kind of rote learning. So the problem with rote learning is *what* you're rote learning and *how* you're rote learning. It doesn't have to be some kind of demon authoritarian teacher who makes a child stand up and recite a poem that they don't really like in front of the class. It doesn't have to be that. It can be a very useful activity.

For example, suppose somebody had learned a part in a play, that chunk of language in their memory is a resource on which they can draw. I know that this is the case because I happen to like learning poetry by heart. If I've learned poems by heart in French, for example, I can draw something from what I know and put it into active communicative use. So there again, there's an instance where you can't put things into compartments so much. There are a whole load of activities that were outlawed under the principles of the communicative approach.

That brings us to another issue I want to come back to a bit later: things like dictation, learning grammatical paradigms, and so on. Like anything, they can be done in a bad way, but they're not inherently bad, I think. I don't really go along with the insinuation that, say, grammar–translation is bad in itself. It may have a bad history, but it can be a very useful thing to do. It's best to mix everything together, no?

**Hale:** I definitely agree. I think a mix is very healthy, and I'm also not a big fan of task-based learning. I find that, especially in a class of all Korean speakers, if the task is new to them and exciting and involves some learning, they just want to do it in Korean. So then I become the "In English, please" police, and whenever I'm doing that, I just want to switch back to focusing on form.

**Cook:** If I could just pick up something from that. One of the other things I wanted to say, something about the other dogma of the late 20th century, is the belief that everything should be done in English if you're learning English, or whatever language it is that you're learning, everything should be done in that language. One of the things that this ignores – and you just mentioned it by

mentioning Korean – is the effect of language distance on language learning. Learning English for a Korean speaker is different from learning English for a Dutch or German speaker, where the languages are much closer. This suffered from some rather crazy ideas in second language acquisition theory – that somehow the progress of second language acquisition was independent of which languages you were talking about. These were ideas put forward in the '80s and '90s by Stephen Krashen and other people, and they had a very bad effect, I think, because they don't make a difference. This is all very well if you're talking about just speaking and listening, but if you're talking about reading and writing, then it's a very different matter. If you're used to using the Korean writing system or some other very different writing system, it's a very different matter than if you are using the same alphabet as English.

**Hale:** We'll have to get you to debate Krashen. He's been a speaker at our conference several times. He's very influential in Korea.

**Cook:** Well, he's a good speaker. He's entertaining.

**Hale:** We had both Krashen and Scott Thornbury one year, and they debated each other. It was a lot of fun.

**Cook:** Well, they're both excellent speakers, Stephen Krashen and Scott Thornbury, so that must have been a very entertaining debate.

**Hale:** It was. Well, it would be just as entertaining if we could get you to debate either of them. I really appreciate the focus you bring to the diversity and complexity of learners, their priorities, and the ways that they might engage with language learning. For the past year or so, there has been kind of obsessive discussion about generative AI, such as ChatGPT, and there are some other developments going on technologically and politically that can feel like really big changes in the landscape of language teaching and learning. I wonder if you have any thoughts or observations about language learners in 2024, and what do you think we as teachers should be asking ourselves about today's learners or noticing about them.

**Cook:** This is a very big topic. Like everybody else, I'm interested in the development of AI but also alarmed by it and its potential for impacting on us in all sorts of ways. AI has the potential to take over certain jobs, right? It can be a diagnostic doctor and also play pieces of music, write scripts, and all this sort of thing. We as language teachers and learners must wonder what can happen in our field. AI machine translation is progressing in leaps and bounds. It has already reached a level that would have been unimaginable 20 or 30 years ago. Obviously, the question that then comes is "Do we need to go on learning languages?" because the time will come – in some ways the time has already come – when you can hold something up, and it'll listen to the person you're speaking to and speak back to them. I say it has already come because I've had conversations with people whose languages I don't speak – where I have put what I want to say into Google Translate, pressed the little speaker button, held the

phone up, and they've listened, and then they've said something. Well maybe they still have to type what they want to say, but anyway, it's possible to have this kind of communication, and it has been for some years.

I think the important thing is that AI doesn't replace us because when you listen to a performance of a piece of music, for example, what you're interested in is the person who's performing it as much as the music itself. It's a kind of horrible decontextualization, depersonalization of what is happening, and the same would be true in language teaching and learning. It's a very rich interpersonal human experience to be learning a language with someone – for them to teach you or for you to teach them – and then for the pupil, or you if you're learning, to have the ability to go and speak to people from another country and another language, and it works. It's communicatively successful. If a machine is doing this, it ceases to be interesting in a human sense. That's one thing, and then of course, the other thing is that AI could do some human tasks, like translating to some extent, but it's not doing them in the same way. I recommend to everyone Alex Garland's [2014] film *Ex Machina*. This absolutely brilliant film, which is one of the deepest commentaries on the fallacies of AI that I think I've ever seen, really highlights this. You're not dealing with another human being; you're dealing with something different. It's not the same, and it never will be the same. Although, the problem is that people may come to think of it as the same, which will be a deep impoverishment, I think. That's what I have to say about AI.

**Hale:** Well, I do wonder whether you think this could bring language learning back to some of the focuses that have been more important in the past, such as literature or an aesthetic appreciation for language.

**Cook:** I suppose the whole debate throws up those possibilities. The idea that technology can take over in language teaching and learning is by no means new. In the 1950s and '60s, there were language labs, where people sat and didn't have direct communication with the teacher. Learners listened to tape recordings and spoke into microphones. And then, things like the effect of corpus linguistics on language teaching have kind of dehumanized language teaching and learning because suddenly it's not that human beings know what language to teach, but instead some computer program can throw up how words behave in that language. So, there's nothing new about it. I suppose the issues that it throws up make people think more deeply about the human side of language teaching and learning, and that would be a very good thing. But given the way that the world is going wrong in so many different compartments at the moment, I don't have much faith that people won't be taken in.

A big concern in British universities, for example, and I suppose in British schools at the moment too, is what will happen to assessment with AI. In the university where I still work a bit, we're heading for oral exams again because you can't trust what's written. I think those changes are happening in Korea, too.

**Hale:** Definitely. My colleagues and I have made some changes towards writing by hand and doing everything face to face.

You've mentioned a couple of times the state of the world and that we're doing a lot of damage to the planet. I wonder if you have any observations about

how this might relate to language teaching. I ask because one of our special interest groups is about the environment in ELT and how we should be dealing with this in our English language teaching. I just thought I'd follow up and see if you have any observations about that.

**Cook:** Well, I have an observation, but it's in danger of sounding extremely old – tired but true. I think that communication between people who are in many ways different from each other is or should be the key to a better state of the world. If people can communicate the truth about what's happening to the environment and persuade through truth to other people about this, then that can only be for the good. And if groups of people who are at war with each other, literally, or in conflict, understand each other better, of course, the world would be better. Well, we hope.

The really fundamental problem behind what we do in language teaching and applied linguistics is that in the world different people speak different languages, both literally and metaphorically (you can have two people who are both speaking English, but they're speaking different languages in some sense). Some people speak Korean, some people speak English, and so on. So the various ways of coping with this are to learn each other's languages or to translate, to be a translator and interpreter, and the peace and prosperity and good of the world depends upon language teaching and learning, and translation and interpreting.

I might mention something I meant to mention earlier on – dogma hanging over from the 20th century in language teaching – which is the notion that it's best to learn a language in that language rather than understanding the relationship between the two languages. This goes on as well; this has not gone away. Content and language-integrated learning is an extension of this English-only, direct-method approach from the 20th century. I think it's not good for world understanding or for world peace if everything is done in one language. I don't think the monolingual tendencies of the world towards English only is a very good thing in itself. So, let's hope that will change as well.

**Hale:** That's an interesting point. We do have some CLIL, especially at the university level in Korea. Do you think that it has some role to play in a context like Korea, or do you really think that any content learning would be best for students to do in their mother tongue.

**Cook:** Well, CLIL has some unfortunate effects, I think. Sometimes the scientific vocabulary of a particular language comes to a dead end because everything is being done in English. But that's partly due to the fact that in the international community, science is now conducted in English rather than in several languages. But it also cuts people off from their own identity and heritage if everything has to be done in English. The language of science happens to be English at this moment in history, but it could be another language at some other point in time. Language diversity is important in itself, but identity is tied to language as well. I think that's talking about translation. The quantity of translation into English and into other languages from English is totally unbalanced. Thousands and thousands of things are translated into English, but English texts are not so often translated into other languages. I think that's a limitation with AI, too. It's often

not translating from one language to another; it's translating everything into English.

**Hale:** I thought the point about science was really fascinating, especially since I think there's been a push to include other points of view and other epistemologies like indigenous approaches to science into science education in the Anglosphere. I guess there are pushes in different directions happening, and maybe that's something for a CLIL-focused approach to consider.

I get that in some contexts in Korea, the students are not only Koreans, there are a lot of international students in Korea now, so English is functioning as a lingua franca. But I think the points you raise are really important and are something for my colleagues who do teach content-based English to think about.

You've argued that teachers should not feel compelled to follow changing trends in applied linguistics scholarship, and you've also said that applied linguistics is something that teachers might explore for its own sake. I'm sure that you've been to many events similar to our international conference, so I wonder if you have any tips or advice to language teachers about how to get the most out of this kind of conference.

**Cook:** Well, I certainly do. I certainly do, and it's in tune with what I've been saying all the way through about utilitarian approaches to things. I don't think one should go to a conference just in terms of "it's good for my career," or "it's good for my job," or "it'll help me teach better," or whatever. Good conferences are enjoyable events, and they're social events. They're a chance to find out about things that are not apparently or immediately useful, but just generally broaden the mind. So for tips, I'd say enjoy yourself, don't feel guilty if you don't seem to be doing what the boss told you to do, and just use it as an opportunity to relax, and when you're relaxed maybe you gain new and useful knowledge that may not be immediately apparent that it's useful. That's the sort of serendipity thing about the way humans behave and think. Some of the greatest discoveries are made by accident. In the same way, if we don't concentrate on doing what we ought to be doing, we may come up with some benefits that were unexpected.

**Hale:** Thank you. I think that's fantastic advice. I think that's what made me fall in love with these kind of events. Maybe I've drifted away from that love somewhat, but I hope to reconnect with that kind of approach to conferences. Well, thank you so much. As I said, I'm thrilled, and I think that our conference attendees will get a huge amount out of this interview.

**Cook:** Well, that's very nice of you. Thank you very much.

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## **Rote, Role, Rule: Halliday, Vygotsky, and Shakespeare in Play Development and the Development of Plays**

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David Kellogg

*Sangmyung University, Seoul, Korea*

Children play, but adults play golf, play the stock market, and put on Shakespeare's plays. How does the verb *play* go from an intransitive, what Hegel might call "activity-in-itself," to a transitive process producing a visible outcome, what Hegel might call "activity-with-others," to a noun, where "the play's the thing"? English teachers, more than anyone else, can watch this development happen, and when we do, we can't help but notice that there's a big gap between classroom activities like "listen and repeat," where only motor activity is really required, and those like "listen and answer," which engages cognition (the answer to a question is not to repeat the question). So it is that rote play (chants, songs, rhymes) seems worlds away from role play (scripted and especially unscripted dialogue). But there appears to be a similarly sized gap between role play and rule-based games that involve monologic turns of talk and narrative storytelling. In this talk, I draw on a theory of language (Halliday) and a theory of learning (Vygotsky) to explain these two gaps. But the main problem we'll tackle is the adult meaning of the word "play," and the way in which rote play, role play, and rule play are combined for everyone in the audience – the sort of "play" around which Shakespeare built modern English.

### **INTRODUCTION: UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS**

If you are a language teacher, then you know that it doesn't help to start a lesson with some unanswerable question. On the other hand, if you are a language teacher, then you know that it sometimes does help to start off a whole term with some unanswerable question. The best ones are easy to grasp but turn out to have implications for the whole of your curriculum – and maybe even the whole of your career.

My father, for example, used to start his freshman physics class with the question of whether the universe is a finite singularity or whether it repeats itself indefinitely; if you could understand the question and what it had to do with relativity, you passed: You didn't actually have to answer it. I remember half my teachers (the behaviorist half) starting off their classes with some version of "Learning is a fact, but teaching is only an interesting hypothesis," and the other half (the behavioristic ones) starting off with "Teaching is an observable fact, but learning is only an unproveable hypothesis."

When I first came to Korea, we began elementary school English with the following sentences, all of which appeared in our third-grade English book. Let me put it in the form of what we used to call a "substitution drill," back in the

20th century, when we believed that sentences were like cars, made of interchangeable parts. Zellig Harris (and later his student Noam Chomsky) really thought language could be reliably modeled as kernel sentences with slots for fillers (Chomsky, 1957/2002; Harris, 1990); J. W. Oller (1974), who later went into creation science, thought unitary language proficiency could be reliably tested with cloze exercises. Like this:

I am \_\_\_\_\_.

I am Minsu.

I am a student.

I am sick.

Grammatically, it's like Mozart – there's repetition (*I am*), and there's variation (*Minsu, a student, sick*). But can you really say that “I” is the same person? Of course not – I am Minsu and a student when I am in English class, but not when I am at home and my little sister Mina is addressing me as *oppa* (오빠, older brother), and in neither case is sickness part of my identity. Can you say, really say, that “am” is the same when you are using it to identify, when you are using it to classify, and when you are using it to describe temporary attributes? Why, then, do you have to say “a student” and not simply “student,” and why do you say “sick” and not “a sick”? Why “I am a student, aren't I?” and not “I am a student, am't I?” Paradoxically, these questions are both answered and unanswerable: there are good answers to all of these questions, but with each good answer comes even better questions.

So the question for this session, as I see it, goes something like this: Children play; adults play games like golf, gambits in chess, and dramas like Shakespearean tragedy. That is why when you ask your students what they did over the weekend and they say something like “I played with my friends,” you can't help but feel that there is something slightly immature and even childish about it.

“To play” isn't an ergative in English: “to play” is not like “Children walk, but adults walk their children” or “Children grow, but adults grow children.” It's really two very different verbs: one intransitive and suggesting “play-in-itself,” with no particular goal or outcome, and one transitive and suggesting “play-for-something,” aimed at transforming the environment. Why and how does the activity of “play-in-itself” become an activity of “play-for-something,” and what does it mean when it does?

And here is my answer, although I admit it really looks like another question.

## **ROTE, ROLE, RULE**

David Shaffer asked me a question in our pre-conference interview (Kellogg, 2024) that I really didn't answer: He wanted to know if there was any relationship between “rote,” “role,” and “rule” on the one hand, and Shakespeare, Vygotsky, and Halliday (to put them in historical order) on the other. It's a good question, so of course I ran away from it, but today I have stiffened my spine,

summoned up my courage, and I now want to come back to it. And in fact, I'll come back to it three times.

As you've probably guessed, it's not a one-to-one relationship. If we are interested in development and not just description, we can't just say that learning Shakespeare is learning lines by rote, nor that learning Vygotsky gives us a theory of childhood as learning sociocultural roles, nor that the core of Halliday's systemic functional grammar is rule-based. For one thing, when I teach Shakespeare, I teach it as improv – as improvisation. This is partly because the people I teach really *can't* memorize all that great poetry, but it's partly because improv is a good way to see how they understand the text. For another thing, Vygotsky's famous "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) is, among other things, the story of the transition from rote- to role-based "complexes," and above all, from role- to rule-based concepts. And for a third, Halliday says, quite explicitly, that language is *not* a system of rules for generating structures – that's Chomsky's view – but instead a bank of resources for making meanings.

The relationship between Shakespeare, Vygotsky, and Halliday on the one hand and rote-role-rule on the other isn't a one-to-one relationship because, although both sequences are developmental, in one case, the elements are given to us in *ontogenesis* (that is, childhood) while in the other, the writers are related to each other in *sociogenesis* (that is, human history). They are both kinds of development, but they are very different kinds, both quantitatively and qualitatively different kinds. In the one case, Vygotsky writes his PhD thesis on Shakespeare, but Shakespeare has, mysteriously, nothing at all to say about Vygotsky. Similarly, Halliday shares Vygotsky's view of the social nature of consciousness, but Vygotsky never mentions Halliday (who was only seven years old when Vygotsky died).

### **Rote Play**

In the other case, we can say that on the whole, the first forms of play in life are probably forms of rote play, even if the elements of role-play and rule-based games are not absent. In this YouTube clip, for example, Baby Yebin's mother is trying to answer yet another apparently unanswerable question: How do you teach children to be wary of strangers, without teaching them to be unfriendly, unhelpful, and xenophobic? She comes up against a problem with which every language teacher is very familiar – the gap between "listen and repeat" and "listen and answer." It's one thing to simply copy the sounds that you hear, and it's something very different to understand them and make an appropriate response. According to Kellogg and Ripp (2020), it takes a long time for a child to understand that the answer to a question is not to repeat the question – not even a yes/no question.

FIGURE 1. Yebin in the Baby Yebin (2014) YouTube Video



Adult: “모르는 아저씨가 ‘예빈아 까까 먹으러 가자’ 이러면?” (“So what if some uncle you don’t know says, ‘Hey, Yebin, let’s have some crackers?’”)

Child: “아이 좋아.” (“Yipee, goody!”)

Adult: “‘안돼요’ 해야지.” (“You’ve got to say ‘No way.’”)

Child: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

Now, if you watch the video, you’ll see something quite interesting. “Yipee, goody!” appears quite heartfelt and is accompanied by a winsome smile. But “No way” is listless and lifeless – as if it were mere rote repetition.

Is this a one off? Let’s see.

Adult: “그럼. 그럼 아이스크림 먹으러 가자 하면?” (“So, if he says, ‘Let’s go have some ice cream?’”)

Child: “좋아.” (“Goody.”)

Adult: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

Child: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

When Yebin is answering the question, she smiles and answers positively. But when she’s repeating the right answer, the smile is gone.

Adult: “그럼 ‘수영하러 갈래?’ 이러면?” (“So, if it’s ‘Let’s go swimming?’”)

Child: “좋아.” (“Goody.”)

Adult: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

Child: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

Exactly the same pattern. Yebin’s mother now tries to generalize using a condition.

Adult: “무조건 ‘안돼요’야 모르는 아저씨가 물으면. 알았어?” (“Unconditionally, if an unknown uncle asks this, it’s ‘No way.’ Got it?”)

Child: “응.” (“Yeah.”)

Adult: “다시 ‘예빈아, 까까 먹으러 갈래?’ 이러면...?” (“Try it again. ‘Hey, Yebin, let’s have some crackers!’”)

Child: “좋아.” (“Goody.”)

Adult: “‘안돼요’ 하라고. 하하” (“‘No way.’ Ha ha.”)

Child: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

Some habits are hard to break. But Yebin's mother is very persistent.

Adult: “다시. 모르는 아저씨가 ‘예빈아 까까 먹으러 가자’ 하면?” (“Try it again. ‘Hey, Yebin, let’s have some crackers!’”)

Child: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

Adult: “그럼 ‘아이스크림 먹으러 가자’ 하면?” (“So, if it’s ‘Let’s have some ice cream?’”)

Child: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

**FIGURE 2. Yebin Learning a Life Lesson in Baby Yebin (2014): “Shoo, Shoo”**



The kind of play we see in rote repetition does have a limit!

Adult: “그럼 수영하러 갈래?” (“So, ‘let’s go swimming?’”)

Child: “네.” (“Yes.”)

Adult: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

Child: “안돼요.” (“No way.”)

Adult: “옳지, ‘저리가요’ 해.” (“Right, say ‘Go away.’”)

Child: “저리가요.” (“Go away.”)

Adult: “가!” (“Go!”)

Child: “가!” (“Go!”)

Adult: “위이. 위이.” (“Shoo. Shoo.”)

Child: “위이. 위이.” (“Shoo. Shoo.”)

When we look at the video, we notice three things.

1. The child is *not* making eye contact – her gaze wanders throughout.
2. The child is eating goodies out of a cup. These are real goodies and not make-believe ones.
3. Gestures are, at this point, just as important as words or even more so: She gives a little shoulder-shimmy of pleasure at the thought of ice cream, and her mischievous smile shows a clear preference for giving the dispreferred answer “Yipee, goody!”

It is not clear to what extent Yebin is simply winding up her mother, but it's very clear that she is getting a lot of pleasure, both out of the repetitive language and out of the repetitive gestures; it's a kind of verbal jump rope or dialogic hopscotch.

Wittgenstein argues that there is no single characteristic that all play has – there are only “family resemblances” between rote play, role-play, and rule play and not any real genetic relationship. But Vygotsky says that these “family resemblances” are the phenotypical, outward, expression of not one but two genetic relationships, not one but two genotypes: genotypically imaginary situations and genotypically abstract rules. And here’s the problem.

1. There’s no genotypically imaginary situation. It’s actually not clear if Yebin understands that Mommy is not Mommy when she role-plays a stranger.
2. There’s no genotypically abstract rule. It’s actually not clear if Yebin understands *unconditionally*.

So Vygotsky calls this quasi-play. I will call it “rote play” (so that I can argue that it is both distinct from and linked to other forms of play like role-play and rule play). We see this kind of play in drinking games like “I Am Ground.”

**FIGURE 3. The Drinking Game “I Am Ground”**



- Minsu: “I am Minsu. You are Mina.”  
Mina: “I am Mina. You are Julie.”  
Julie: “I am Julie. You are Tony.”  
Tony: “I am Tony. You are...” (*Looks at Minsu but says*) “...Julie!”  
Minsu: I am Minsu...”  
Tony: You lose! I said “Julie” not “Minsu.” (*Minsu gets a finger flick from everybody.*)

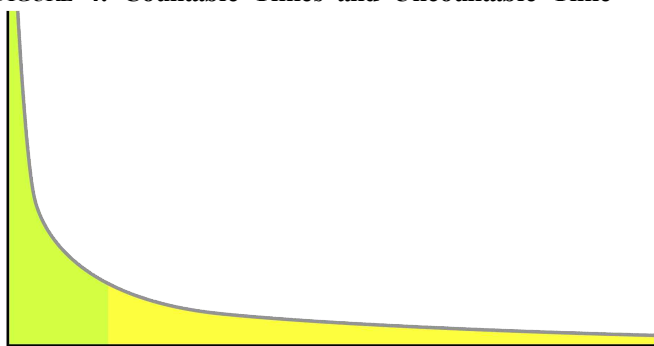
There are, literally, at least as many forms of this drinking game as there are forms of food and drink in a Korean *hof* – probably more. You can think, for example, of versions that involve the “Frying Pan Game” (“Julie three” “Julie, Julie, Julie”) or the 369 game (Julie claps three times instead of saying her name three times), or “Going to the Market” (시장에 가면) [“I am Minsu, you are Mina”; “I am Mina, he is Minsu, you are Julie”; “I am Julie, he is Minsu, she is Mina, you are Tony” until someone makes a mistake].

But we are not here to play games! Should you try these games (say, on the

first day of class as a way of making sure that people know each other's names or as a way of teaching the names of imaginary characters), you will notice that, as your teacher trainer probably told you, it's a lot easier to *show* than to *tell*: Some things are easier done than said. But if you keep playing, you will notice that showing becomes less important than knowledge of the roles and the rules, just as eye-contact becomes less important than naming in the very first round.

So the seeds of role-play are sown in rote play; naming things and naming the child itself are, at least at first, largely a matter of repeating a sound that has been given, apparently arbitrarily given. What better definition of rote play? And how better to describe what happens in rote play than the so-called power law of practice (Snoddy, 1928; and – my personal favorite – Crossman's study of the time it takes to roll something to smoke, way back in 1959, the year I was born).

**FIGURE 4. Countable Times and Uncountable Time**



If the x-axis represents countable TIMES (that is, practice times), then the y-axis represents uncountable TIME (that is, the time it takes to figure out your response and respond to the task). That is,  $\text{TIME} = a (\text{TIMES})$  to the  $-b$  power  $+ c$ , where  $a$ ,  $b$ , and  $c$  are unknown constants (Figure 4).

So what then? To put this theoretically, in Vygotskian terms, we might say that although repetition and gesture are key to playing the game, a game is never *just* quasi-play, never *pure* role play, and certainly not degree *zero* of play. There is always, developmentally, the hidden whisper of roles and the silent wisdom of rules; that is, what Vygotsky would call the child's next or proximal zone of development.

The roles, of course, are the names – with the Seventh National Curriculum Textbook, they were the names of siblings (in third and fourth grade) and the names of classmates (in fifth and sixth grade), and I think this reflected an important shift of interest that does happen around age thirteen: Kids who used to look to siblings for a zone of proximal development start to look to their peers for a zone of proximal learning. At the same time, quasi-play becomes a lot less interesting to children: It's the *role* and not the *rote* that is holding their attention. But the main role that they are interested in, at least as the game goes on, is how the role of “player” changes to that of “winner” or “loser.”

How to formulate the rule? The “power law of practice” is nowhere near accurate – in fact, it's nowhere at all. Instead, the rule for continuation is rather similar to the “simplest systematics for turn-taking” that was discovered at the very beginning of conversation analysis by Sacks et al. (1974). That is, whoever is

speaking nominates the next speaker, simply by mentioning the name or by eye-contact, more often by both (since turn-taking systems are quite redundant). The rule for termination is simply that when someone does not observe the rule for continuation, they lose. But conscious awareness of that rule (in this case, the ability to formulate it in words) lies far in the child's future.

So what's next?

### Role-Play

So what then? Well, one thing that must happen is that the object that is being named changes: The child starts to name groups of objects, categories of objects, and eventually entirely abstract concepts. But the other thing that happens is that the child naming the object changes. Consider, for example, this exercise, from our elementary school sex ed materials.

FIGURE 5. Korean Elementary Sex Education Material



To practice refusing, the child has to role-play: first, a little boy who is interrupted on his commute to school by an *ajumeoni* (아주머니, married woman) with some luggage to carry, and then a little girl who is accosted by a young male neighbor who wants her to come and look after a sick dog. Let's run this second scenario by a real seven-year-old and see what happens.

Adult: 이거 두 번째? 거는 어떤 평범하게 생긴 아저씨가 옆집에서 우리 여기 203 호

에서 딱 나와 가지고. 어, 애야 너 혹시 강아지 좋아하니? (“Oh, the second one? This is an ordinary-looking uncle who just came out of Number 203 next door. ‘Hey, kid, maybe you like puppies?’”) 우리 집에 아주 예쁜 강아지가 있는데 강아지가 좀 아프거든 집에 부모님 너네 부모님 아직 안 계시니? 그럼 한 번 대답해야지. 진짜라고 생각하고. “너네 부모님 아직 안 계시니?” (“We’ve got this really pretty puppy at our house, but he’s a bit sick and my parents and your parents aren’t home. So answer me this. Think of it as real. “Your parents aren’t home?”)

7: 지금 계시요. (“They’re home now.”)

That was fast!

Adult: 아이고 계시? 안에 아무도 없는 거 같은데. 아무 소리도 안들리는데? 진짜 계시? 아 그래~ 그러면은 부모님이 부를 때까지만 우리 집에 같이 가서 강아지 좀 돌봐 주지 않을래? (“Oh, they are home, are they? It looks like there’s nobody there to me. Since I can’t hear a thing? Are they really there? Ah... so why not come over to my house and we’ll take care of the puppy together for a while until your parents call?”)

7: 어... 팬... 어... 지금 엄마가 조금만 있다가 집에 들어오라 해서 안 될 것 같아요. (“Uh... ah... uh... just now my Mum asked me to come home so I don’t think I can.”)

The power law of practice seems to have been reversed; this response takes longer. But what about the *quality* of the answers?

Adult: 너 강아지 좋아하지 않아? (“You don’t like puppies?”)

7: 전 별로 관심 없어요. (“I don’t really care for them.”)

Adult: 관심없어? 그럼 강아지 보고 싶을 때 아저씨 집에 놀러 올 거야? (“You don’t care for them? Then when you want to see our puppy, will you come over and play with your uncle?” [i.e., with me? — DK])

7: 시간되면요.. 하고 바로 뛰어갈거야. (“If there is time, I’ll come right over.”)

Two untruths in as many turns. But of course a puppy is a puppy and a candy is something else again.

Adult: 시간 되면요.. 하고 바로 뛰어갈거야? 도망갈꺼야? 지나가다가 누가 맛있는 사탕 같은 거 주면? (“If you have time, you’ll come right over? You’ll run away? You’ll run right over if somebody gives you some delicious candy?”)

7: 아, 괜찮아요. (“Uh, I’m fine.”)

Adult: 아 왜? 엄청 맛있는 거 엄청 네가 좋아하는 거. 막 하리보 같은 거 그런 거 주면. (“Er... why? Super delicious stuff, something you like ever so much. Like if they give you Haribo [gummy bears].”)

7: 그래도. 괜찮아요. 이거 저 별로 안 좋아해요. (“Even so. I’m fine. I don’t really care for those.”)

Something has changed. It’s not just the ability to say one thing and think another – it’s the ability to *be* one thing and at the same time *act out* another. Vygotsky calls this “internalized переживание” (perizhivanie). But children and their teachers have another name for it.

## Rule Play

“Internalized переживание” means an experience that has been “interiorized,” or semiotically represented in some way. Or does it?

Note that “переживание” isn’t just “experience,” or even “emotional experience” or “lived experience” as it is sometimes translated: It’s often a negative word in Russian – Russians mean a passion in the sense of the passion of Christ, something that you have to overcome.

As Vygotsky points out, that’s what rules are all about. The child wants to run and race, but the rules say you must wait for a signal. The child doesn’t want to lose, but the rules say that only the winner wins. The child wants the prize without the trial, but the rules say you must suffer and overcome some kind of passion first.

That abstract rule isn’t the only real outcome of the rule-based game: It’s just the only new outcome, the only “neoformation.” Vygotsky says that all role-based games already have implicit rules: A group of five-year-olds playing “House,” for example, will probably insist on Mommy serving and Daddy reading the newspaper even if they have often seen this situation the other way around. Similarly, all rule-based games have implicit roles, but these are quite abstract and general: “turn-taker” and “player” are the most general; “winner” and “loser” are the most abstract. But there are also meta-roles that have to do with enforcing rules: “umpire,” “referee,” “game master,” etc.

Consider these roles, from our university webtoon, which I have adapted for the purpose of freshman sex education. Sang-u and Ju-hi are a campus couple. One day – their hundredth day together, as it happens – Ju-hi has her period and a string of rather unpleasant things happen to her: She loses her credit card, gets splashed by a passing car, and Sang-u shows up late for a date. Ju-hi loses her temper, and they break up. Six months later, the professor accidentally puts them in the same group, and they have to prepare a joint presentation. The competition between them is so fierce that other members drop out, and now the deadline is upon them. They spend the night together – in the library! Ju-hi, worried about her scholarship, is biting her nails and distracting Sang-u. Sang-u, who thinks Ju-hi is dating someone else, loses his temper.

FIGURE 6. Sang-u and Ju-hi in Sangmyung University Webtoon



The homework, for this week actually, was to fill in a “Kohlberg chart” (see Table 1), based on the Piagetian ethics of Lawrence Kohlberg (1958), or else a “Gilligan chart” (see Table 2) based on the post-Piagetian ethics of Carol Gilligan (1982).

**TABLE 1. Kohlberg Chart**

<b>Kohlberg Stage</b>	<b>Sang-u did something wrong.</b>	<b>Sang-u didn't do anything wrong.</b>
1. Good is what I want and like.		
2. Good is what I want and like... and you too, if you will help me!		
3. Good is what Mommy and Daddy and authority like, even if they don't help me.		
4. Good is what God and Government want and like, even if they don't help me.		
5. Good is a contractual: Rights depend on responsibilities.		
6. Good is universal and absolute: Rights do not depend on responsibilities, and responsibilities do not depend on rights.		

**TABLE 2. Gilligan Chart**

<b>Gilligan Stage</b>	<b>Sang-u did something wrong.</b>	<b>Sang-u didn't do anything wrong.</b>
1. I love ME, and I will sacrifice everything and anyone for me, including you.		
2. I love YOU, and I will sacrifice everything and anyone for you, including me.		
3. I love US, and I expect everybody to make sacrifices to make our relationship work.		

We could do this as role play (and in fact, we do in class): creating the characters, casting the roles, and having each actor decide what to say. But because there is an underlying rubric – because some stages are really more developmentally advanced than others, we prefer to do it as rule play – the idea is to get the learner, who has not seen the rubric, to the last stage, just by asking questions.

This scene, too, might be a role-play. Ophelia is describing to her father, Polonius, how Hamlet broke up with her.

OPHELIA: He took me by the wrist and held me hard;  
 Then goes he to the length of all his arm;  
 And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,  
 He falls to such perusal of my face  
 As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so;  
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm  
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down,  
 He raised a sigh so piteous and profound

As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
And end his being: that done, he lets me go:  
And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,  
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;  
For out o' doors he went without their helps,  
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

**FIGURE 7. Sang-u (Hamlet) Grabs Ju-hi's (Ophelia's) Hand in the Sangmyung Cartoon**



Although initially designed as a role-play, in our classrooms, it works well as a *rule play* – a dictogloss, where teams compete to write down as much as they can (or simply *act out* as much as they can). As the Shakespearean actor David Tennant recently found out, it also works as a game of “Just a Minute” (see Figure 8).

**FIGURE 8. The Panel Game *Just a Minute* on BBC Radio 4**



The game “Just a Minute” is simple. You get a topic – which in this case would just be the university webtoon or the script of Hamlet and Ophelia. You have to talk for one minute, continuously, without stopping, changing the subject, or repeating any noun, verb, or adjective (you can repeat “little” words like *I* and

*me, she* and *he, a* and *the*, and you can repeat the subject). The best – and hardest – way to play it is through improv: You are not allowed to use a script. But it also works if you give them Shakespeare’s script and they play, but they have to remove all the repetitions, deviations, and of course no hesitations are allowed. So you would have to find circumlocutions for *arm* and *head*.

OPHELIA: He took me by the wrist and held me hard;  
 Then goes he to the length of all his **arm**;  
 And, with his other hand thus o’er his brow,  
 He falls to such perusal of my face  
 As he would draw it. Long stay’d he so;  
 At last, a little shaking of mine **arm**  
 And thrice his **head** thus waving up and down,  
 He raised a sigh so piteous and profound  
 As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
 And end his being: that done, he lets me go:  
 And, with his **head** over his shoulder turn’d,  
 He seem’d to find his way without his eyes;  
 For out o’ doors he went without their helps,  
 And, to the last, bended their light on me.

The problem is that it doesn’t produce the *moral* and *ethical* rules that I am interested in as an English-medium sex education teacher (or rather teacher trainer).

But this does! Here is one of the earliest sonnets Shakespeare ever wrote, hidden in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 1, Scene 5:

ROMEO [to JULIET]: If I profane with my unworthing hand  
 This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:  
 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.  
 JULIET: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,  
 Which mannerly devotion shows in this;  
 For saints have hands that pilgrims’ hands do touch,  
 And palm to palm is holy palmers’ kiss.  
 ROMEO: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?  
 JULIET: Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.  
 ROMEO: O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;  
 They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.  
 JULIET: Saints do not move, though grant for prayers’ sake.  
 ROMEO: Then move not, while my prayer’s effect I take.  
 Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.  
 JULIET: Then have my lips the sin that they have took.  
 ROMEO: Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged!  
 Give me my sin again.

The rule is pretty simple: Find out if Juliet consents, and if so, where. But it’s a game that Franco Zeffereilli and Baz Luhrmann *both* lost by having Romeo use violence. The Zeffereilli (1968; Figure 8) version loses the game in another way: The actors in this version, as well as in Shakespeare’s original, are underage and non-consenting! However, the recent Shakespeare’s Globe (2009) version is

completely accurate (and also quite funny).

FIGURE 9. A Scene from Zefferelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968)



## IN CONCLUSION: THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

I'll be brief and grammatical in conclusion. I said before that “to play” isn't an ergative verb in English. Children play, and they even play adults, but we don't play children. But the argument I have put to you here – to put it ergatively – is that play develops and that the social situation of development – chiefly, after age one, made of language – is what develops play. Furthermore, I put it to you that play passes through three basic stages I will call “rote play,” “role play,” and “rule play.” Finally, I put it to you that these stages have to be taken seriously if we believe that the main role of English is not something like “global communication” – we've got that with Google Translate – but rather something like a developmental understanding of the self and the other, the mother tongue and the other tongue, and the lifelong learning of language that really imposes on each and every one of us.

## THE AUTHOR

**David Kellogg** has an MA (distinction) in applied linguistics from the University of Essex and a PhD (vice-chancellor award) in general linguistics from Macquarie University. He has authored or co-authored over 70 articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals and 25 books. He is now working in research groups in Korea, China, and Australia. Email: [dkellogg60@gmail.com](mailto:dkellogg60@gmail.com)

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## **Research Papers**

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# Grammar and Vocabulary in Making Inferences: A Contributory Exploration of Reading Comprehension

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I-Juan Ting

*HungKuo Delin University of Technology, New Taipei City, Taiwan*

Making inferences enables students to go beyond the explicit meaning and comprehend the implicit ideas, emotions, and motivations underlying the text. This enhances their comprehension of fundamental information and leads them to a more intricate and sophisticated comprehension of the author's intended communication. This study examined 246 official TOEIC score reports of English majors enrolled in a private technology university in northern Taiwan to evaluate how students' grammar and vocabulary abilities are associated with their inferencing competence. The results indicate that enhancing the grammar proficiency of theoretical training-oriented junior students can significantly improve their ability to make inferences, consequently promoting their cognitive growth. Elevating vocational training-oriented senior students' grammar and vocabulary abilities may significantly enhance their inferencing competence in English reading comprehension. Since these two linguistic variables act as interdependent partners in cultivating students' reading competence, it is advisable to integrate both abilities into reading teaching to cater to the diverse needs of technical university students and consequently advance their reading proficiency.

## INTRODUCTION

English reading comprehension relies on various cognitive and language processes, including letter- and word-level processes and above-the-word-level comprehension processes (Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2008). At the letter- and word-level process stage, students learn to be capable of decoding letters, understanding the meaning of vocabulary, and reading fluently and accurately without encountering word difficulties. Furthermore, at the above-the-word-level process stage, students are cultivated to transcend individual words and delve into the broader meaning of the text. They learn to use contextual clues, identify main ideas, make connections between ideas, and make inferences. Through the process of making inferences, students are able to reach conclusions by analyzing implicit information and making predictions based on their comprehension of the text. As many researchers have identified, students' reading skills at these two stages are interrelated and dynamic during their reading activities. They need to alternate between these skills frequently while deriving meaning from the text. Consequently, establishing a definitive hierarchy of reading comprehension skills is a complicated and ongoing debate with varying perspectives. The order may

differ based on several criteria, such as the complexity of the text, the reader's prior knowledge, their stage of language development, and the specific activity being performed.

Similar to students in other EFL contexts, Taiwanese vocational college students face many challenges in English reading. In addition to the primary hurdle of insufficient vocabulary, grammatical structures in English significantly differ from those in their mother tongue. Students encounter difficulties comprehending intricate sentence structures, verb tenses, and idiomatic expressions. In addition, vocational college programs prioritize practical skills over extensive English language training. Students' limited exposure to English can lead to a lack of practice and hinder reading fluency. English teaching in Taiwan has long been criticized for its exam-oriented culture, focusing on the memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules rather than developing students' authentic reading comprehension abilities. However, linguistic knowledge, including vocabulary and grammar, has been a main subject of numerous studies due to its critical role in reading comprehension. Since inferencing serves as the connection between the facts directly presented in the text and the reader's comprehension of the broader implications and significance, it is essential to explore the contributory role of grammar and vocabulary in students' competence to make inferences.

## **Research Questions**

This study investigates the effects of vocabulary and grammar abilities on the inferencing competence of technology university students. The primary focus of this study was to determine which linguistic skill could improve students' capability to make inferences. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher raised the following questions:

- RQ1. Is there a correlation between students' grammar ability and their inferencing ability?
- RQ2. Is there a correlation between students' vocabulary ability and their inferencing ability?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Lower-Order Processes and the Bottom-Up Approach**

In general, reading is considered to consist of both more fundamental, lower-order processes and more cognitively complex, higher-order processes. Lower-order processes refer to processes primarily accountable for word recognition. These processes involve the visual recognition of features and letters and the use of phonological and orthographic information (Bell & Perfetti, 1994). Bottom-up reading is a strategy used to decode and understand a text by starting with individual letters, sounds, words, and structures and then gradually piecing them together to comprehend the overall meaning. This approach is commonly employed in the lower-order reading process. As Bernhardt (2010) argued, the

bottom-up reading approach tends to be linear and sequential, and the information obtained during the initial stages of reading is often consistent among individuals with similar abilities. However, this approach also gives rise to issues such as fragmentation and memory overload because the reader attempts to store numerous distinct pieces of information without any higher-order relationship between them (Carrell, 1988b). Despite these deficiencies, the bottom-up approach has remained popular in teaching English reading in Taiwan. As pinpointed by Chen and Chen (2015), the high school English curriculum often adopts a textbook that emphasizes the development of reading skills, with a specific focus on vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar. The content mainly employs articles containing tasks aimed at expanding vocabulary and sentence patterns. In addition to the English teaching methods students receive in school, education in Taiwan also lays great emphasis on standardized examinations. The bottom-up approach is well-suited for students' exam preparation, since it prioritizes developing fundamental language skills, such as grammar and vocabulary, which are assessed in these exams. Consequently, the popularity of the bottom-up approach can be attributed to its alignment with exam-oriented teaching culture and preferences for precision and effectiveness in controlled learning contexts.

### **Higher-Order Processes and the Top-Down Approach**

Conversely, higher-order processes extend beyond the mere act of deciphering the words written on the page. It entails utilizing the reader's prior knowledge and critical thinking abilities to interact with the text more profoundly. Higher-order processes involve activities such as making inferences between referents in a text, accessing prior knowledge, and analyzing the objectives of texts and the significance of the information (Tywoniw, 2020). In addition to the bottom-up approach employed by psycholinguists to define the reading comprehension process, top-down processing is another widely accepted cognitive approach that depends on the reader's schemata and background knowledge. It assumes that the reader comprehends the components of the text, including the actual words they read, by drawing on their prior knowledge and expectations (Wilson, 2008). This process includes techniques such as using background knowledge, integrating information, skimming, inferencing, and predicting (Abbott, 2006).

Top-down or bottom-up instruction is closely linked to an individual's cognitive learning style. Xu (2011) categorized cognitive learning styles as follows: focuser and scanner, serialists and holists, divergent and convergent thinkers, and field-dependence (global learner) and field-independence (analytic learner). According to Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), less proficient readers have a greater concentration on individual words, and the intended meaning often becomes unclear at the individual word level. Therefore, they often prioritize vocabulary acquisition and rely on less effective word-by-word processing, employing a bottom-up processing approach. In contrast, proficient readers often obtain content previews because they are less vulnerable to lexical and structural challenges while reading. Consequently, these highly skilled students are motivated to engage in broader, predictive, and more effective cognitive processing in the top-down processing mode. As concluded by Kakvand et al. (2022), learners who

employ the top-down process demonstrate greater reading proficiency than those who utilize the bottom-up method. However, it is worth noting that some researchers have argued that some poor readers utilize the top-down process in a similar manner to good readers. Poor readers tend to rely excessively on the top-down process because of inadequate bottom-up skills, such as word recognition (Perfetti, 1985; Eskey, 1988). According to Carrell (1988a), over-dependence on either top-down or bottom-up processing might result in inadequate reading comprehension. As a result, the integration of these two processes can genuinely boost the reader's reading comprehension (Nuttall, 1996).

### **A Description of TOEIC Inferencing Questions**

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is an English language proficiency examination specifically tailored for non-native speakers of the language. It focuses on assessing the English proficiency required for daily life in an international workplace. The TOEIC test is widely recognized around the world by businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies. The TOEIC test typically consists of two sections. The listening comprehension test evaluates the test-taker's ability to understand spoken English in various workplace situations, and the reading comprehension test assesses the test-taker's ability to comprehend written English in workplace-related documents. According to Trew (2007), the TOEIC reading test is divided into four different question types, including specific information questions (positive and negative), vocabulary questions, main idea questions, and inference questions. Inferencing is essential for readers to surpass explicitly stated ideas, as the connections between ideas in an article are frequently implied rather than expressly stated (Oakhill & Garnham, 1988). The inference questions ask about information strongly suggested or hinted at in the passage. In order to provide answers to these questions, the test-takers must draw logical conclusions that are not clearly mentioned (Anderson, 2017). According to *Skills for the TOEIC Test: Reading* (2013), there are two subtypes of inference questions: general inference questions and intended audience questions. Details of the subtypes are demonstrated in Table 1. As Anderson (2017) has observed, questions regarding inferences typically involve verbs like *imply*, *infer*, *expect*, and *suggest*, along with adverbs like *probably* or *most likely*.

According to Craven (2019), students are advised to establish links between information presented in various text sections or, in the case of multiple readings, establish linkages between information in two different passages. As Trew (2007) indicated, the answers to inference questions will not be stated directly in the passage but will relate to or paraphrase ideas from it. Therefore, it is recommended that test-takers tackle easier questions, such as those related to specific information and vocabulary, before attempting inference questions. This approach allows them to gather relevant information to answer higher-order-level questions.

**TABLE 1. Subtypes of TOEIC Inference Questions**

Descriptions of Subtypes	Answer Choices	Examples
<b>General Inference</b> Ask students to draw conclusions about facts that are strongly implied but not stated outright in the passage.	nouns, noun phrases, complete sentences	<i>What is suggested about X?</i> <i>What can be inferred about X?</i> <i>What will most likely occur?</i> <i>What will X probably do?</i>
<b>Intended Audience</b> Ask students to infer who the passage is written for.	nouns, noun phrases referring to people or groups of people, job titles	<i>Who is the memo written for?</i> <i>Who will likely read the notice?</i>

Note. Adapted from *Skills for the TOEIC Test: Reading* (2013, p. 69) by HarperCollins.

## METHOD

### Participants

The present study was conducted at a private technology university in northern Taiwan. The participant sample included 246 students enrolled in the Applied Foreign Languages Department and the Applied English Department. As demonstrated in Table 2, the school offers three primary categories of vocational education: a five-year junior college program, a two-year technical college program, and a four-year technical college program. These programs emphasize practical and vocational skills, offering students a more hands-on and applied education. Among the three educational programs, the five-year junior college program offers a thorough integration of theoretical and practical training for students. During the initial three years of education, students primarily focus on their studies within the confines of the classroom. Subsequently, they engage in internships and other hands-on learning opportunities throughout the last two years. The participants are classified into two groups based on age and educational focus: the theoretical training-oriented junior group consists of students in the first to third years of the five-year junior college, and the vocational training-oriented senior group includes students in the fourth and fifth years of the five-year junior college, as well as those in two-year and four-year technical colleges.

**TABLE 2. Characteristics of the Participants**

	Age	Training Orientation Educational System	Education Length	Degree Received	Number of Participants	
5-Year Junior College (Year 1-3)	$16 \leq \text{age} < 18$	Theoretical	5 Years	Associate Degree	29	Subtotal: 29
5-Year Junior College (Year 4-5)	$19 \leq \text{age} < 20$	Vocational			100	
2-Year Technical College	$21 \leq \text{age} < 22$	Vocational	2 Years	Bachelor's Degree	84	
4-Year Technical College	$19 \leq \text{age} < 22$	Vocational	4 Years	Bachelor's Degree	33	Subtotal: 217
					Total Participants: 246	

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

From May 2018 to December 2022, the research subjects participated in the TOEIC official campus tests and obtained their English language proficiency test reports from the exam organizer, Educational Testing Services (ETS). The TOEIC test score report provides an in-depth evaluation of an individual's performance on the exam. The score report contains elements of the total score, listening and reading sectional scores, proficiency descriptors, and the percent correct of the ability measured. Since language skills are multifaceted and cannot be entirely captured by a single metric, the percent correct of ability measured section in the students' TOEIC test reports provides valuable insight into the test-taker's proficiency level in different English language skill domains. It is a useful indicator of their proficiency level in English language skills, offering detailed information about the test-taker's abilities in grammar, vocabulary, connecting intertextual information, locating specific information, and making inferences covered by the TOEIC test. To standardize scores across various test forms and ensure fairness, the raw score of each language skill domain is converted into a scaled score. The percentage represents the ratio of right answers given by the test-taker to the total number of questions in the specific domain of language skill on the test. By collecting the participants' score reports and analyzing the scaled scores in the sections of grammar, vocabulary, and making inferences, the study serves the purpose of exploring the contributory role of vocabulary and grammar in students' ability to make inferences while reading.

This study employed Microsoft Excel for data analyses, including descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum values of their TOEIC scaled scores, were computed to gain a preliminary understanding of the students' reading comprehension abilities. To address the research question, multiple linear regression was further employed to test whether students' vocabulary and grammar scores significantly predicted their competence in making inferences.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Descriptive Statistics and Comparison**

The junior and senior groups exhibited different performance on the three reading comprehension ability measures. As shown in the data provided in Table 3, the students obtained the highest scores on the grammar questions, followed by the vocabulary questions, and the lowest scores were obtained on the inference-making questions. The average scores for the grammar, vocabulary, and inferencing test questions in the junior group were 47.10, 43.21, and 33.93, respectively. In the senior group, the average scores for the grammar, vocabulary, and inferencing test questions were 46.92, 40.97, and 35.60, respectively. Surprisingly, the students in the junior group outperformed the students in the senior group in terms of their performance on the grammar and vocabulary exam questions. However, they received lower scores on the inferencing questions. Furthermore, the standard deviations of the junior group's three measures were

lower than those of the senior group. This indicates that there is a reduced level of variation in the scores among the junior students, who are focused on theoretical instruction, but an increased level of variation in the scores among the senior students, who are engaged in vocational training.

**TABLE 3. Descriptive Statistics for Participants' Scaled Scores**

Measure	Educational System	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Grammar	Junior Group	29	47.10	15.33	19	81
	Senior Group	217	46.92	19.82	0	100
Vocabulary	Junior Group	29	43.21	12.37	13	73
	Senior Group	217	40.97	15.62	4	100
Making Inferences	Junior Group	29	33.93	13.61	4	63
	Senior Group	217	35.60	15.49	8	86

*Note.* *n* = number of participants, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation, Min = minimum, and Max = maximum.

### Exploring the Contributory Roles of Grammar and Vocabulary

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed on both groups to ascertain the extent to which grammar and vocabulary abilities contributed to students' inferencing competence. As shown by the data presented in Table 4, the statistical analysis produced intriguing results that improve our understanding of how grammar and vocabulary contribute to students' ability to make inferences. The analysis consisted of two separate models: one for the junior group and the other for the senior group. According to the statistical data, there was a positive correlation between grammar and students' inferencing competence in both groups. The coefficient in the junior group was 0.353 (*SE* = 0.159, *t* = 2.221, *p* < 0.05), whereas in the senior group, it decreased to 0.124 (*SE* = 0.057, *t* = 2.177, *p* < 0.05). The contributory effectiveness of grammar was marginally greater for the juniors (0.353) compared to the seniors (0.124). As for the vocabulary variable, it elicits a wider range of effects. The coefficient for the junior group was 0.190 (*SE* = 0.197, *t* = 0.962, *p* > 0.10), indicating that there is no significant relationship between vocabulary score and inferencing score in this particular group. On the contrary, the senior group had a coefficient of 0.440 (*SE* = 0.072, *t* = 6.103, *p* < 0.01), which indicates a more significant contributing effect.

**TABLE 4. Results for Multiple Linear Regression**

Variable	Junior Group			Senior Group		
	Coefficients	Standard Error	<i>t</i> -Statistic	Coefficients	Standard Error	<i>t</i> -Statistic
<b>Intercept</b>	9.100	9.992	0.911---	11.766	2.601	4.524***
<b>Grammar</b>	0.353	0.159	2.221**	0.124	0.057	2.177**+
<b>Vocabulary</b>	0.190	0.197	0.962---	0.440	0.072	6.103***

*Note.* Significance levels: \* *p* < 0.10, \*\* *p* < 0.05, \*\*\* *p* < 0.01.

The results confirmed a statistically positive relationship between the grammar score and the inferencing competence in the junior group. However, the vocabulary score does not have a statistically significant effect. As for the senior group, both the scores in grammar and vocabulary exhibit a positive influence on the development of inferencing reading skills. These results offer valuable insights into how grammar and vocabulary enhance inferencing reading competence, elevating our understanding of the contributory roles grammar and vocabulary play in English reading comprehension. The noteworthy distinction between the junior and senior groups regarding the contributory role of vocabulary further complicates our understanding of why vocabulary emerges as a significant predictor for the senior group but not for the junior group. The results obtained can be accounted for by variables related to the training they received and the particular setting in which they applied their linguistic skills.

The theoretical training-oriented juniors shared identical educational backgrounds before entering the junior college program. This homogeneity can lead to a reduced level of variation among them, beginning their learning on a comparable basis. Additionally, students in the junior group received focused instruction that prioritized essential skills in grammar and vocabulary, resulting in a more concentrated and standardized learning experience. This targeted theoretical training-oriented instruction can contribute to lower standard deviations in their grammar, vocabulary, and inferencing scores. Furthermore, the content of the course for the juniors may prioritize understanding concepts and principles, with an emphasis on grammatical structures and theoretical frameworks. In this particular setting, the importance of vocabulary may be diminished as the emphasis is primarily on understanding theoretical concepts rather than applying them in practice.

On the other hand, the vocational training-oriented senior group consisted of students from the last two years of the five-year junior college, two-year technical college, and four-year technical college. These students came from diverse academic backgrounds, educational experiences, and English reading proficiency. Owing to the seniors' heterogeneous curriculum paths, they had varied exposure to grammar and vocabulary training. This diversity can contribute to a wider range of scores and higher standard deviations of the three measures. Additionally, vocational training-oriented seniors may engage in real-world situations where industry-specific vocabulary becomes essential. In order to effectively communicate and apply knowledge, it may be necessary to use a broader and more specialized vocabulary in practical situations. Although seniors' grammar and vocabulary skills both play a significant role in their ability to make inferences, improving students' vocabulary ability may make a more pronounced contribution to their inferencing proficiency.

## CONCLUSIONS

Considering the participants' age and diverse educational backgrounds, this study explored the contributory roles of grammar and vocabulary in students' competence to make inferences and provided valuable information that enhances our understanding of the correlation between students' grammar, vocabulary, and

inferencing skills. As revealed by this research, linguistic variables, including grammar and vocabulary, can significantly predict students' inferencing competence. For theoretical training-oriented juniors who have established adequate lower-order reading skills like vocabulary, enhancing their grammar ability can significantly promote their ability to make inferences in reading comprehension. By utilizing grammar instruction, teachers can facilitate the cognitive growth of young learners and propel them toward the acquisition of higher-order reading abilities. For vocational training-oriented seniors who come from heterogeneous curriculum paths, reinforcing their grammar and vocabulary knowledge can effectively facilitate the bottom-up process, enabling students to possess higher-order reading skills like inferencing.

In addition, the differences in the functions that vocabulary plays in the two groups add a fascinating perspective to comprehending why vocabulary becomes a strong indicator for seniors but not for juniors. For juniors, mastering grammar skills is essential for them to decode sentences and comprehend the connections between words. As students progress and their grammar knowledge solidifies, vocabulary development takes center stage. Although maintaining grammar knowledge is still essential, profound vocabulary proficiency becomes a more powerful indicator of reading proficiency for senior students.

The research findings shed light on how grammar and vocabulary skills affect student's ability to make inferences. The findings illuminate the importance of linguistic variables, including grammar and vocabulary, throughout various stages of education. English teachers should shift away from a hierarchical and rigid teaching approach to embrace a method of employing grammar and vocabulary as interdependent partners. By utilizing this approach, proficient grammar is like a sturdy frame and serves as the fundamental basis for sentence comprehension. It is essential, but it is not the only factor. Additionally, vocabulary acts like bricks and mortar. An extensive vocabulary enriches comprehension and unveils the text's underlying significance. Both components are essential for cultivating a genuinely skilled second-language reader.

## THE AUTHOR

**I-Juan Ting** is an English lecturer with 25 years of teaching experience in the Applied English Department at HungKuo Delin University of Technology in Taipei, Taiwan. Her focal research interests include, but are not limited to, English reading strategies, language proficiency assessment, and English for business correspondence. Email: marina@mail.hdut.edu.tw

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# College Adjustment of Mainland Chinese Sub-Degree Students in Hong Kong

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Jing Deng and Helen Guo

*The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China*

Wenli Wu

*Aston University, Birmingham, United Kingdom*

This study addresses a research gap by examining the learning experience of mainland Chinese sub-degree students in Hong Kong. With a mixed-method approach, quantitative and qualitative data were collected through reflective accounts, questionnaires, and interviews. The study focuses on students' motivations, language adaptation, and academic adaptation. The findings highlight motivations such as education quality, international exposure, unique location, and family influences. The main challenges identified include English-medium instruction, Cantonese communication, active learning, and diverse assessments. Despite these challenges, the majority of students displayed adaptability and resourcefulness in their adaptation processes.

## INTRODUCTION

In the recent decade, Hong Kong has emerged as a prominent study abroad destination for mainland Chinese students. According to recent research, mainland Chinese students are one of the largest and fastest-growing student groups at university campuses in Hong Kong (Yu, 2021). Statistics have also shown that mainland students constitute 68 percent of non-local students in Hong Kong universities (University Grants Committee, 2019). Many studies have explored the experiences of mainland Chinese students in university settings in Hong Kong, shedding light on various aspects of their lives and learning (e.g., Wu et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2021; Yu & Zhang, 2016; Zeng, 2016). However, there exists a research gap when it comes to understanding how mainland Chinese students adapt to studying in sub-degree programs.

Sub-degree programs in Hong Kong, which include associate degrees and higher diplomas, serve as an alternative pathway for students who do not gain direct admission to university degree programs. Among the limited studies available on this topic, Wong's publications (2015, 2020) provide narrative insights into Hong Kong associate degree students and emphasize the transfer function of associate degrees. The significance of studying the adaptation of sub-degree students also stems from the notable differences between degree and sub-degree students. As observed by Wong (2015), sub-degrees are often perceived

as a less-favored option for those unable to secure university admission, while government-funded degrees are seen as a preparatory path for elite groups. Existing literature predominantly focuses on the academic and psychological adjustments of mainland students in degree or postgraduate programs, leaving little discussion about the adaptation journey of sub-degree students.

The present study aims to narrow this research gap by addressing two research questions:

- RQ1. What drives mainland Chinese sub-degree students to select Hong Kong as their destination for higher education?
- RQ2. What are the specific challenges faced by mainland Chinese sub-degree students during their studies in Hong Kong, and what strategic responses do they employ to navigate these challenges?

It is believed that understanding the adaptation experiences of sub-degree mainland Chinese students can inform policymakers, researchers, and educators, enabling better support for this student cohort. The findings can also aid mainland Chinese students in adapting to life in Hong Kong and assist parents in making informed decisions regarding overseas higher education options.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have provided diverse definitions of adjustment, reflecting different aspects of the experience. Baker and Siryk (1984) conceptualize college adjustment as the process of adapting to the demands and challenges of the college context, including academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional aspects. Black and Gregersen (1991) describe adjustment as the psychological comfort experienced by sojourners in the host culture. Focusing on the academic domain, Ramsay et al. (1999) view it as the fit between students and the academic environment.

The literature on adjustment experiences of non-local students highlights three key themes: pre-arrival concerns, on-arrival experiences, and returning home experiences. Pre-arrival concerns encompass the motivations and expectations that students have before moving to the host country. Wu (2008) found that East Asian students pursuing master's degrees in England are motivated by factors such as improving English proficiency, exploring a new culture, and enhancing career prospects. These pre-arrival motivations significantly influence students' initial adjustment processes and their overall study abroad experiences. On-arrival experiences often involve coping with culture shock and adapting to a new academic and social environment. As noted by McNamara and Harris (1997), many international students encounter culture shock upon arriving in host countries. While culture shock frequently leads to negative consequences, such as feelings of disorientation and stress, it can also foster personal growth and development if managed constructively. The initial adjustment period is crucial, as it sets the foundation for students' long-term adaptation. In returning home experiences, the adjustment process does not end when students complete their studies abroad and return home. Research by Gaw (2000) highlights the

phenomenon of reverse culture shock, where returnees struggle to readjust to their home culture after adopting new behaviors and perspectives abroad. The re-adaptation upon re-entry, as pointed out by many researchers (Gaulee et al., 2020; Gaw, 2000; Hao et al., 2016; Tyers, 2021; Walling et al., 2006), can be equally challenging and may lead to negative psychological or behavioral changes.

The broader literature highlights the multifaceted nature of adjustment experiences for non-local students. While the existing research provides valuable insights into the adjustment of degree and postgraduate students, it reveals a significant gap in understanding the experiences of sub-degree mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong. Therefore, an investigation of how mainland Chinese students taking sub-degree courses in Hong Kong adapt to the new environment will enhance the understanding and recognition of the diversity of non-local students and help researchers, instructors, and policymakers in tertiary institutions better serve different cohorts of students.

## **METHOD**

This study adopted a mixed-method approach to explore the adjustment experiences of mainland Chinese sub-degree students in Hong Kong. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. However, given the relatively small sample size, the current research primarily uses qualitative case study methodology. Data collection was conducted at one community college in Hong Kong through multiple sources of information, focusing on the participants' pre-arrival and on-arrival experiences.

### **Participants**

This study involved 20 active participants, of which 15 were Year 1 and Year 2 mainland Chinese students enrolled in sub-degree programs in Hong Kong, and 5 were recent mainland Chinese graduates from these programs. The participants, aged 18 to 25, came from diverse academic backgrounds, including business, science and technology, social sciences, and the humanities. All participants began their associate degree courses between 2021 and 2023, aligning them with current educational trends and policies in Hong Kong. They reflect the adaptability and aspirations of non-local Chinese students navigating the complexities of cross-border education.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection for this study consisted of three key components: reflective accounts, questionnaire-based surveys, and individual interviews. The participants were first invited to introspect and articulate their adaptation journeys through reflective accounts. They were provided with guiding questions related to their pre-arrival and on-arrival experiences. The length of the 20 reflective account submissions averaged around 1300 words. These narratives provided deep personal insights, offering a window into their individual experiences and challenges. In addition to the reflective account, structured surveys were

administered to capture quantitative data on the participants' experiences, attitudes, opinions, and backgrounds. The survey data were combined with the reflective accounts to identify common patterns and variations in the participants' adjustment experiences. Based on an initial analysis of the reflective accounts and questionnaire surveys, five participants were selected for one-on-one semi-structured interviews. These 40-minute interviews allowed the selected participants to discuss their language adjustment, academic adjustment, and social-cultural adjustment experiences in more detail, which provided a deeper understanding of their adaptation journeys.

The questionnaire responses were entered into an Excel spreadsheet program to facilitate the examination of trends and correlations within the data. As for the reflective accounts and interviews, a thematic analysis approach was employed. The responses were initially coded, and these codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes. This method enabled the extraction of meaningful insights from the extensive qualitative data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Findings of this study address two crucial issues of sub-degree mainland Chinese students' experiences: the motivations behind their choice of Hong Kong as a study destination and the challenges they faced during their adaptation, along with the strategies employed to navigate the challenges. The identified challenges and strategies are further categorized into two main areas: language adaptation and academic adaptation in the following section.

### **Motivations for Choosing Hong Kong**

There are four primary factors that underlie students' decision to enroll in sub-degree courses in Hong Kong. The foremost motivation is the educational advantages offered by Hong Kong. As reported by 80 percent of the participants, Hong Kong's tertiary education provides various benefits. Specifically, in comparison to the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong has a less competitive study environment, abundant educational resources, flexible assessment methods, and a higher chance of admission to world-class universities. Alongside the educational benefits, Hong Kong's status as a cosmopolitan city with a diverse culture also serves as significant motivation for students. In the reflective accounts of 60 percent of the participants, Hong Kong was described as an international city that embraces both Eastern and Western cultures. Students chose to study in Hong Kong in order to "meet new people" and "experience new cultures." The third major attraction of Hong Kong was its geographic proximity to mainland China. For 40 percent of the participants, Hong Kong's proximity to their hometowns meant not only a shorter distance from their families, but also familiarity in social, cultural, and linguistic aspects, providing a sense of security and comfort. Family influence emerged as another notable motivating factor. In the accounts of 30 percent of the participants, "parental expectations," "family support," "influence of relatives," "staying with the family," and "fulfilling tasks assigned by the family" were cited as main reasons for studying in Hong Kong.

It is noteworthy that the above motivating factors, particularly the first three, often complement each other and function as an integrated whole. Previous studies (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2016; Savicki & Cooley, 2015; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012) have also pointed out that motivations for studying abroad are multifaceted and involve the interplay of various factors. These factors typically emphasize the positive aspects of the study abroad experience, such as personal growth, academic development, and career prospects. However, the current study reveals that student decisions regarding the study destination are based on a comprehensive consideration of both the positive and negative aspects of the experience. Undoubtedly, studying abroad entails not only new opportunities and prospects but also difficulties and challenges. In their pursuit of advanced educational resources and international perspectives, sub-degree students from mainland China take into account the manageability of a study destination. This notion of manageability can be interpreted in different ways, including financial, linguistic, academic, cultural, and psychological aspects. Hong Kong emerges as an ideal place for these students because it represents a balanced compromise between the positive and negative sides of the study experience. Many of the students did not perform well in the National University Entrance Examination in mainland China and have limited English proficiency. Considering their own limitations and the “increasingly competitive educational context and the prominent role of English” in mainland China (Gao, 2010, p. 36), Hong Kong, as a Chinese society with a multi-channel, English-medium higher education system, offers a viable solution to their concerns. Additionally, the geographical proximity of Hong Kong to mainland China enhances the city’s manageability, as students can easily receive support and find comfort from their families and home culture during the adaptation process. In short, the decision of mainland Chinese sub-degree students to choose Hong Kong as their study destination reflects a careful balance between the benefits and challenges of studying abroad, taking into account both the opportunities and the manageability of the host city.

### **Language Adaptation**

Language emerged as a major hurdle for the participants. The predominant use of English as the primary medium of instruction in higher education in Hong Kong presented substantial challenges for students who were accustomed to Putonghua-based academics. Most of the participants encountered difficulty in comprehending lectures and learning materials, responding to teachers and classmates in classroom activities, and articulating their opinions in assignments and examinations, which inevitably hindered their academic progress. In addition to these concrete problems, the language barrier also caused psychological discomfort. One interviewee was shocked by the pervasive use of English on campus at the beginning of her first semester in Hong Kong: “I felt totally out of place to note that the textbooks, examination papers, lecture notes, case study illustrations, campus notices and posters were all exclusively in English.” Consequently, she was even less confident in using English publicly. Similarly, another participant expressed reluctance to speak English to unfamiliar people in Hong Kong as he was concerned about his accent.

For students not from Cantonese-speaking regions, learning Cantonese was an

additional challenge. Cantonese is the predominant dialect spoken in Hong Kong. It differs significantly from Putonghua in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Several participants reported that it took them around one semester to acquire basic Cantonese, which was only adequate for routine communication. The limited Cantonese ability also affected their school experience, as lecturers might switch from English to Cantonese during lectures, and classroom discussions were frequently conducted in the local language. This added to the difficulty of comprehending the lecture contents. Some participants expressed a preference for listening to English over Cantonese, as they found the local dialect more difficult to understand. Furthermore, similar to English, Cantonese proficiency could also be a source of psychological stress. Speaking Putonghua in Hong Kong sometimes led to unfriendly treatment, so students with limited Cantonese proficiency would “feel shameful” of their accented Cantonese and opt to use English instead to avoid potential discrimination.

In line with Tao and Gao’s (2017) findings, the majority of mainland Chinese students recognized the importance of English and Cantonese proficiency in the educational environment of Hong Kong. They adopted various strategies to tackle language challenges. For English-medium courses, they heavily relied on written materials such as textbooks and lecture notes, utilized translation software, accessed online resources, engaged in discussions with peers, and sought guidance from lecturers when necessary. An interesting aspect of their adaptation strategies was their preference for independent problem-solving. They often resorted to reading course materials or conducting internet searches to enhance their understanding of the subject matter, reaching out to the lecturer only as a last resort. The reasons behind this were typically a belief that consulting the teacher was unnecessary or feeling nervous in their presence. Regarding Cantonese learning, out of the 15 non-Cantonese speaking participants, 14 (93.3%) displayed a positive attitude, while one (6.7%) had a neutral attitude. In addition to common learning strategies such as watching Cantonese videos, listening to local radio, and conversing with local students, the students capitalized on the “hybrid” style of Cantonese (Chan, 2007) and flexibly employed language mixing strategies to facilitate communication with locals. They would consciously switch to English when they struggled to express themselves in Cantonese. They would also unconsciously incorporate English vocabulary for concepts they had learned in English (such as academic terminology), practicing translanguaging to facilitate meaning-making. Notably, code-switching and translanguaging have been widely acknowledged for their positive impact on language acquisition (Baker, 2011; García & Li, 2018; Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2019), which aligns with the findings of this study. As one participant candidly admitted, “I can mix English words when speaking in Cantonese. This is a primary reason why I’ve been able to develop my Cantonese skills.”

### **Academic Adaptation**

*Academic adaptation* refers to the process of adjusting to the academic environment, practices, and expectations of a new educational system. It involves familiarizing oneself with the teaching methods, learning strategies, assessment formats, and other aspects that may differ from one’s previous educational

experiences. As language-related issues have been discussed above, this section will focus on other important aspects of academic adaptation.

The educational systems in Hong Kong and mainland China differ significantly, posing challenges for many sojourning students as they adapt to the new environment. In addition to language challenges, they must navigate unfamiliar teaching approaches and assessment methods. In Hong Kong, the teaching approach is mostly student-centered, emphasizing active learning, critical thinking, and collaborative engagement, while mainland China tends to employ a more teacher-centered approach, often relying on standardized and sometimes rigid teaching methods. As expected, in line with previous research findings (Cheung, 2013; Dimmock & Leong, 2010), many students in this study encountered difficulties in adapting to the active learning approach. They exhibited hesitance in participating in in-class group discussions with local students and tended to be passive in compulsory group work. Moreover, adjusting to the changes in assessment methods required considerable time and effort. These students were accustomed to a high-stakes examination-based assessment system that prioritized individual abilities. However, in Hong Kong, the evaluation system includes both coursework and examinations, with each component carrying specific weights towards the final grade. Consequently, students had to learn how to manage diverse types of assignments, such as essays, presentations, group projects, and practical assessments, throughout the semester. Among all the assessment components, group projects were most challenging, especially for first-year students. The challenges of group work were highlighted by one participant who candidly described his personal experience as “a particularly negative experience encountered in Hong Kong.” In his account, apart from concerns about free riding, there was a range of factors contributing to his anxiety regarding group work, which included language barriers, interpersonal relationships, communication methods, disparities in work styles, and differing expectations.

In response to the challenges they faced, the students implemented a variety of strategies, with two key themes emerging: self-discipline and time management. A notable 65 percent of the participants recognized the significance of self-discipline in their academic adaptation, and 50 percent emphasized the role of time management. Almost all the students acknowledged the increased flexibility and lighter academic timetable in their new college life. To adapt effectively, many of them established a consistent study routine. They devoted specific time slots on their schedule for attending classes, reviewing notes, completing assignments, and engaging in self-learning, and they tried to adhere to their routine as much as possible. When confronted with unfamiliar assignment types, students consciously invested extra time and effort to understand assignment guidelines and grading standards. They sought assistance from various sources, including internet resources, peers, and teachers. Additionally, they implemented effective measures to bolster self-discipline. These measures included setting realistic goals, organizing study materials, creating a favorable study environment, allocating time for sports and relaxation, and exploring new study techniques.

It should be noted that not all the strategies adopted were positive in nature. In this study, 25 percent of the participants employed negative or passive strategies in their adaptation. With the flexibility of their schedules and reduced

supervision from parents and teachers, some students experienced a decline in motivation and found themselves becoming “lazier” compared to their previous levels of engagement. Instead of maintaining regular study habits, they resorted to last-minute cramming and relied heavily on rote-learning just a few weeks before examinations. Regarding group assignments, prior research (Cheung, 2013) suggests that mainland Chinese students tend to collaborate with other mainland students rather than their local peers. However, this study revealed that a portion of the students (20%) adopted a “go-with-the-flow” attitude towards group formation. They did not actively seek out Mainlanders or Hong Kongers as partners and instead preferred to be approached by other students. Interestingly, besides a common dislike for group work, another influential factor contributing to this behavior was the presence of a “caring culture” within the students’ college. The students felt confident that they would be able to form their groups without worry. As one interviewee commented, “the teacher will surely step in” if there was a lack of initiative in finding partners.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the learning experience of mainland Chinese sub-degree students in Hong Kong, focusing on motivations, language adaptation, and academic adaptation. The main motivations for studying in Hong Kong included the perceived quality of education, international exposure opportunities, the city’s unique location, and family influences. These motivations reveal a consideration of the pros and cons of studying abroad. Language adaptation posed significant challenges, with students struggling to adjust to English-medium instruction and Cantonese communication. To overcome these challenges, students employed self-directed strategies and practiced code-switching to facilitate communication. Academic adaptation involved difficulties with active learning and diverse assessments, particularly in group work. However, most students demonstrated resilience through self-discipline and time management.

Overall, mainland Chinese sub-degree students demonstrated adaptability and resourcefulness in the face of significant challenges. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the presence of anxiety and the use of negative or passive learning strategies during adaptation. To enhance the students’ learning experience, the host institution and course instructors may consider the following recommendations. Firstly, implementing tailored language support programs, such as English and Cantonese courses, tutoring services, and social activities with native speakers, can effectively facilitate language adaptation. Secondly, cultivating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that encourages students to seek assistance and express concerns can alleviate anxiety and foster active engagement. Thirdly, providing comprehensive guidelines for assessment components, particularly in the context of group projects, can bring clarity to expectations, responsibilities, timelines, and evaluation criteria. Lastly, instructors can proactively monitor and intervene during group work, offering timely guidance and support to students. By implementing these practical strategies, the institution and instructors can significantly enhance the academic journey and promote the overall success of mainland Chinese sub-degree students.

The study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. These include a relatively small sample size, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. The research design relied on self-reported questionnaires, reflective accounts, and interviews, which might introduce biases and provide a limited understanding of the students' experiences. Additionally, all the participants were from a single college in Hong Kong, raising questions about the representativeness of the findings and the influence of specific institutional factors. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples, utilizing a mixed-methods approach, would be valuable in enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by a grant from the College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

## THE AUTHORS

**Jing Deng** is an English lecturer at the College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She holds a PhD in translation studies from the University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include translation studies, English language education, and bilingual communication. Email: jing.deng@cpce-polyu.edu.hk

**Hua Guo** is an English lecturer at the College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She holds a master's degree in professional communication in English from the University of Sydney and a master's degree in translation and interpreting from Macquarie University. Her research interests include translation studies and English language education. Email: helen.guo@cpce-polyu.edu.hk

**Wenli Wu** is currently a teaching fellow at OnCampus Aston, Aston University, England. She received her PhD in education from the Institute of Education, University of Warwick, England. Her current research interests include using new technology in teaching and learning, motivation studies, cross-cultural and intercultural communication, and English for academic studies. Email: w.wu8@aston.ac.uk

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# The Usefulness of Authentic Materials for EFL Vocational High School Students: An Accidental Ethnography

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Eunjeong Park

*Sunchon National University, Suncheon, Korea*

While there is merit both for and against the use of authentic materials, it is obvious that the positive aspects of authentic materials in English language learning and teaching will be highly advantageous for EFL learners in helping them acquire English language abilities, communication skills, and cultural sensitivity. Authentic materials can also be used as an opportunity to discuss the ways English is used in practice. This researcher employed accidental ethnography to support the merit of using authentic materials within the context of content and language integrated learning, which is not only beneficial and valuable but also works fruitfully for teaching EFL students in a specialized vocational high school. According to the results, the participants really benefited from the given activities and enhanced their English proficiency as well as learned career-related terms that will be useful for their future careers. This study suggests the potential of authentic materials in the EFL context.

## INTRODUCTION

Textbooks play a pivotal role in attaining educational objectives within the realm of learning. Effective English resources have the capacity to enhance the acquisition of the language, enabling students to grasp English with greater efficiency. These resources encompass both linguistic and substantive components, carefully tailored to accommodate diverse needs and proficiency levels. In the contemporary digital age, possessing a robust linguistic command is imperative. Consequently, textbooks need to be adaptive, addressing individual, societal, and global requisites. From this standpoint, it is contended that the integration of authentic materials proves highly efficacious in fostering practical application of the target language. This, in turn, bolsters learners' enthusiasm towards mastering the language and confers significance to the process of language instruction (Kodirova, 2021; Widdowson, 2003). The utilization of appropriate materials for learning English satiates learners' requirements, encompassing the cultivation of communicative adeptness and the nurturing of future occupational avenues. Preparation for real-life scenarios and contexts assumes paramount importance. Frequently, vocational schools in Korea, focused on English as a foreign language, fall short in providing pragmatic textbooks that cater to the distinct needs of vocational students. Moreover, vocational students appear disinclined towards aligning their learning with the national or institutional curriculum. To inject efficacy and purpose into English pedagogy, educators specializing in the English

language have the ability to conceptualize and furnish materials that harmonize with students' career trajectories. Therefore, incorporating authentic materials into English language lessons enables EFL language teachers to include relevant, real-life sources such as newspaper articles, social media, advertisements, and music. This method allows students' language skills to be practical in students' daily lives, in academic work, and in their future careers. In addition, the use of authentic materials provides students with real-life cultural experiences or views. Not only does it enhance cultural sensitivity, it also augments global understanding, which makes language learning experiences enriched and fun.

## **AUTHENTIC MATERIALS**

Authentic materials encompass items tailored for genuine language usage within their corresponding communities (Jacobson et al., 2003; Kilickaya, 2004). Jacobson et al. (2003) characterized authentic materials as printed resources employed in classroom settings just as they would be utilized in real-world scenarios. Materials of authenticity are defined by their depiction of actual-life contexts and occurrences, replete with genuine language application (Wulandari & Waloyo, 2018). Consequently, students are exposed to bona fide settings through authentic materials, encompassing texts, images, video selections, and real-world artifacts. These are employed in instruction without being specially crafted for pedagogical intent (Richards, 2001). Several researchers (Kilickaya, 2004; Lang & Jiang, 2008; Oguz & Bahar, 2008) have postulated that authentic materials elicit a positive response from learners. These resources have a positive influence on learner motivation (Lang & Jiang, 2008). Using authentic materials also fosters meaningful learning because they adapt the students to an actual use of the target language (Kilickaya, 2004). Thus, according to Oguz and Bahar (2008), authentic materials do indeed fit students' needs and expectations. Choosing appropriate instructional materials is a rather difficult but always a relevant activity in the context of educational processes for students and teachers. This means that to optimize the use of authentic materials, care must be taken to make sure that such materials are appropriate to the proficiency level of the learners. It is important to point out that using authentic materials is especially helpful for students in vocational high schools. They enable language learners to have an easier and more interesting experience compared to using other tools (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014; Richards, 2001; Wulandari & Waloyo, 2018).

## **METHOD**

### **Context and Participants**

This study took place within a specialized vocational high school situated in an urban region of Korea. The student body of this school was comprised of a uniform assembly of Korean male students. The school consisted of five distinct departments: Electrics, Electronics, Food Processing, Machine, and Manufacturing. Each of these departments contained two class groupings, each with around 40

students, resulting in a total of approximately 400 tenth-grade students. This study concentrated on two particular departments: Food Processing and Manufacturing. The students in these departments were the main focus of the research, with their low-intermediate level of English proficiency. Although career-focused instruction using authentic materials was introduced in all departments, the primary data was collected from the Food Processing and Manufacturing Departments.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Numerous data were gathered to articulate pedagogical experiences, methodologies, and substantial contributions to the educational domain. The data consisted of semi-structured interviews with the participants, logs reflecting on teaching experiences, and tangible artifacts such as lesson plans, students' work, and materials fashioned by the instructors. The interview pool consisted of four participants, with each interview lasting for approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

The interview conversations focused on details concerning the participants' learning processes and their attitudes toward the integration of authentic materials into learning and teaching. For example, the questions posed in the interviews included questions regarding their overall feelings and thoughts towards instruction using authentic materials and the efficiency of the materials in the promotion of language learning. The interviews were audio-recorded, and handwritten notes were also taken during the interviews conducted in Korean, which were then translated into English. In addition, after every instructional instance, the instructor was required to prepare reflective accounts wherein she explained how each class met the intended educational outcomes. Interview transcripts and pertinent data were analyzed in this research by means of document analysis. Document analysis is a "systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents" (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). This allows the researcher to remain neutral to the changes in the data or anything else around them during the course of the study. This approach is a type of qualitative research that focuses on the interpretation and analysis of documents to derive the represented meanings of given topics.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Exploring Vocational High School Students' Perspectives on the Utilization of Teacher-Crafted Authentic Materials**

The students taking part in the instructional sessions, who were enrolled in high school EFL courses, articulated their perceptions and outlooks with regard to the integration of authentic materials into their lessons. Most students extolled the instructional approach and found the materials captivating. The Food Processing students specifically lauded the acquisition of culinary-related terminology and expressions, exhibiting diligence in completing the assigned tasks. They exhibited enthusiasm towards a task that involved designing their personalized ice cream flavors. Nevertheless, the overall positive reaction to the

use of authentic materials can be questioned by separate opinions of students. For instance, there was high anxiety among Manufacturing students because of the difficulties of learning in English lessons. The reasons that some students sought enrollment in a vocational school was for a specific livelihood career, but they were discouraged by boredom with traditional academic programs. Thus, EFL instructors have to understand the rationale for such a divergence. In their attempts to deliver high value in education, language teachers should be aware of students' needs and interests in the classroom setting.

In light of linguistic and non-linguistic perspectives in teaching a foreign language, authentic materials in teaching improve EFL students' pragmatic competencies (Harmer, 1994; Richards, 2001). Richards (2001) describes these materials as exposing learners to real language and real-life situations that are useful in learning contexts they need for academic purposes. Also, relevant language content and contextual materials increase intrinsic motivation (Gilmore 2007, Kilickaya 2004) and cultural sensitivity (Sherman 2003). Specifically, where learners are exposed to actual materials, their language learning is enhanced (Guariento & Morley, 2001). Hence, EFL teachers should determine specific teaching and learning objectives and employ procedures that involve real-life authentic materials in language learning and teaching processes.

### **Insights from Vocational High School Students**

Several students were queried about suggestions for enhancing and refining the use of authentic materials. In contrast to conventional English instruction, the specialized English sessions incorporating authentic materials yielded noteworthy outcomes. Hence, it can be inferred that the curriculum tailored for vocational high school students should demonstrate flexibility to accommodate their distinctive needs and interests. Besides gathering reactions from the students, the teacher reflection logs were helpful in collecting ideas on enhancing the use of authentic materials. Document analysis revealed two key themes. First, the need for the continuous production of career-related authentic materials has to remain evident, and second, the role of authentic materials as a core has to be manifested for the successful harmony of teaching and learning. The second idea focuses on the belief that the use of authentic teaching and learning materials can act as a pedagogical bridge that supports teacher–student communication despite the relatively large size of vocational classes. These seem rather clear, and yet their application is possible only with the help of the teacher's dedication and time.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This investigation delved into the varieties of genuine materials integrated into the EFL language classroom context and the viewpoints of both instructors and learners regarding their utilization. The participants regarded the application of authentic materials as a pragmatic approach to kindling curiosity and enthusiasm, while also immersing them in authentic English language use. Guariento and Morley (2001) lent credence to the potency of authentic materials in instruction by fueling learners' motivation to learn and providing them with a tangible sense

of genuine language use. It is imperative for EFL educators to not only craft authentic materials but also tailor their implementation to match the learners' requisites, interests, and levels of language ability. Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) can emerge as an effective instructional strategy when harnessed in conjunction with authentic materials. This study underscores that the amalgamation of authentic materials within CLIL instruction can amplify EFL students' language proficiency and their grasp of vocation-related subject matter.

In the realm of research, the promotion of accidental ethnography emerges as a valuable conduit for bridging the gap between research and practical application (Fuji, 2015; Levitan et al., 2017). This study sought to leverage existing data to engender novel insights and data for educational exploration. The research finds that accidental ethnography can help educators and practitioners enhance effectiveness of their teaching and actually participate in communities of practice. This means that the purpose of English language education lies in a focus on the active student engagement in the process of language learning and development. The use of authentic materials enables teachers to look at their approaches and resources from a critical viewpoint in a bid to engage students and help them to improve in various language skills. Such opportunities should be sought to establish new avenues that will create a welcoming environment in which learners can fluidly and dynamically use the target language.

## THE AUTHOR

**Eunjeong Park** is an associate professor in the Department of English Language Education at Sunchon National University. Her research interests include second language writing, mixed methods research, and the interdisciplinarity of multiple language learning in education and applied linguistics. Email: parkej@sncu.ac.kr

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# Flipping the Script: Neuroscientific Insights into Flipped Learning

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Maria Teresa Martinez Garcia  
*University of Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain*

Daniela Trinks  
*Myongji University, Yongin, Korea*

This study investigates the impact of flipped learning (FL) on EFL instruction and the role of neuroscience in advancing this approach. FL involves students engaging with course content independently before participating in interactive classroom activities. By aligning FL with neuroscientific principles, educators can create environments that improve cognitive processes and learning outcomes. A case study conducted at a Korean university revealed that FL addresses diverse proficiency levels and increases engagement, promoting effective learning. The research highlights the need for further investigation into the potential of FL to optimize EFL instruction through a neuroscience-informed approach.

## INTRODUCTION

Flipped learning (FL), an educational approach where students explore the class content independently before engaging in learning activities in the classroom, has gained significant traction in recent years (Bergmann & Sams, 2014; FLGI, 2024). While the benefits of flipped learning have been documented through educational research, neuroscience offers a deeper understanding of why this approach can be so effective. By examining how the brain learns and retains information, we can create flipped classroom environments that optimize cognitive processes and improve student outcomes.

This study explores the intersection of neuroscience and flipped learning, highlighting how specific neurological principles can inform the design and implementation of flipped classrooms, and providing a case study to better understand students' responses to this type of learning. The panel discussion "Bridging the Gap: Blending Online with Offline Teaching in Language Education" featured contributions from the authors who covered neuroscience in language education and flipped learning, alongside three other panelists: Sarah Slagle, Reece Randall, and Rhett Burton, with Victor Reese as the moderator. Each presenter offered a ten-minute talk, providing diverse insights into blended learning. Burton discussed his approach to private English education for young learners, Slagle explored challenges and solutions for limiting AI usage in higher education, and Randall emphasized the importance of teachers engaging in

professional development to keep up with technological advancements and adapting their teaching strategies.

## **FLIPPED EFL CLASSROOM: INSIGHTS FROM A CASE STUDY**

During Covid, all teachers were suddenly urged to transfer from offline to online teaching. Instructors had to suddenly learn many technological skills, such as video lecture recording, editing, and managing live online classes. Returning to in-person teaching in 2021 provided the opportunity to reflect on both online and offline teaching and investigate new teaching methods, such as flipped learning, which attempts to combine the strengths of both approaches.

For many EFL teachers, the greatest challenge lies in addressing the wide range of English proficiency levels among learners. Tailoring lessons or materials to match the diverse skill levels is often nearly impossible, resulting in some students feeling excluded and the class becoming less relevant to them. Flipped learning offers a potential solution to bridge this gap. However, it is important to understand that FL involves more than just having students watch recorded lessons before class and continue their learning in the classroom. It encompasses a broader approach that includes interactive, student-centered activities designed to enhance engagement and deepen understanding.

When introducing new educational approaches, it is essential to explain the rationale behind employing new methods and technologies in the classroom. In FL, an orientation session is ideal for briefly introducing the class method and highlighting its benefits, such as allowing students to learn at their own pace, at their preferred time and place, by watching recorded lecture videos. This approach enables teachers to facilitate learning and provide timely assistance and feedback during in-class practice, allowing all students to engage in activities regardless of their proficiency levels. Additionally, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of fulfilling pre-class requirements, like watching lecture videos to avoid reduced attendance points and to ensure effective learning outcomes during class practice. Another effective technique is administering weekly vocabulary tests based on the words taught in the video lessons. Using a vocabulary learning app like Quizlet to provide the vocabulary list for each class can further aid students in their preparation.

After making use of the FL method for two years, we conducted a study to evaluate its success from the learners' perspective. Due to length constraints, more detailed results of this case study cannot be fully described in this manuscript; we will focus on highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of flipped learning in an EFL university classroom. Seventeen students from a major EFL class at a Korean university participated, including 15 Korean and 2 Chinese students, with 15 males and 2 females. They reported their English proficiency levels as 37.5% basic, 37.5% intermediate, 18.75% beginner, and 6.25% advanced. When asked about their preference, 81% favored the FL method over traditional teaching for this EFL course, and 75% expressed a desire for FL to be applied to other subjects beyond English language learning. Despite this clear preference for the new approach, it is important to acknowledge and address some of its shortcomings.

When asked about their preferred length for video lectures, students showed

no consensus: 50% preferred lectures of 30 minutes or less, while the other 50% favored lectures longer than 30 minutes. Additionally, students were asked to evaluate suggested improvements. Among the responses, 56% preferred a bilingual approach, 44% requested Korean subtitles, and 25% wanted English subtitles. These findings indicate that incorporating native language support, such as subtitles, can improve learning effectiveness compared to a solely English lecture without subtitle options.

Based on the survey results, we implemented several improvements in the course. We divided the lectures into segments of 15 minutes or less and named each segment specifically to facilitate selective review during exam preparation. Additionally, we uploaded the video lectures on YouTube and edited the automatic English subtitles, allowing students to enable Korean or Chinese subtitles if needed. For in-person classes, weekly vocabulary tests were conducted on previously studied words to ensure students were familiar with new terms, enhancing their engagement in subsequent reading, listening, writing, and speaking exercises. We also reviewed grammar bilingually in class, followed by exercises with the teacher providing individual feedback.

In summary, this case study indicates that flipped learning holds significant potential for enhancing EFL learning, particularly in classes with diverse proficiency levels. By reducing direct teaching to concise lecture videos, students can choose when, where, and how often to watch them, with the option to use subtitles. The in-person classroom sessions were student-centered, emphasizing minimal direct teaching while prioritizing exercises and individual feedback. However, due to the small sample size, more research is needed to expand on the results of this pilot study.

## **NEUROSCIENCE AND FLIPPED CLASSROOMS**

One of the core strengths of flipped learning lies in its emphasis on prior knowledge. In this regard, neuroscience tells us that learning involves the formation of new neural connections, or synapses, between neurons in the brain. When students encounter new information, these connections are weak and require reinforcement to become permanent. Flipped classrooms address this by having students engage with introductory content outside of class, often through video lectures, readings, or online resources. This independent learning allows students to build a foundational understanding at their own pace. During class time, the instructor can then focus on deepening this understanding by using active learning strategies such as discussions, problem-solving activities, and collaborative projects. This approach aligns with the concept of spaced repetition, a learning strategy that involves revisiting information at spaced intervals to strengthen neural connections (for a review, see Rohrer & Taylor, 2007). By encountering key concepts before and during class, students are more likely to retain the information and build stronger neural networks (Bahrick & Popovic, 2006).

Flipped learning goes beyond simply delivering content to emphasize active learning in the classroom. This shift is crucial from a neurological perspective. The prefrontal cortex (PFC) is the brain region responsible for higher-order

thinking skills such as critical analysis, problem-solving, and decision-making (Diamond, 2004). During passive learning activities like lectures, the PFC is less engaged, leading to weaker memory consolidation. In contrast, flipped classrooms promote active learning by encouraging students to apply their knowledge through discussions, group work, and hands-on activities. These activities stimulate the PFC, fostering deeper understanding and encouraging students to make connections between new and existing knowledge. Studies have shown that active learning can lead to increased student engagement, improved problem-solving skills, and better retention of information (Prince, 2004). This aligns with the neuroscientific understanding of the PFC, suggesting that flipped classrooms create an environment that optimizes the brain's natural learning processes.

Flipped learning also provides opportunities for consolidation and retrieval, both vital for long-term memory formation. Consolidation refers to the process by which short-term memories are transformed into long-term memories through repeated exposure and practice (McClelland et al., 1995). Retrieval, the act of bringing information back to mind, further strengthens memory pathways and aids in future recall (Karpicke & Roediger, 2008). Flipped classrooms facilitate consolidation by allowing students to revisit key concepts through homework assignments, quizzes, or discussions in class. Retrieval is promoted by activities that require students to apply their knowledge in new contexts, such as problem-solving exercises or open-ended discussions. These exercises activate the brain's memory networks, making it easier for students to access and retain information in the long term.

While neuroscience offers a compelling case for flipped learning, it is important to acknowledge potential challenges. Students with varying learning styles or prior knowledge levels may struggle with independent learning outside of class. To address this, flipped classrooms should incorporate scaffolding techniques, which provide temporary support to help students complete tasks until they can do so independently (Wood et al., 1975). This might involve providing additional resources, breaking down complex concepts into smaller steps, or offering opportunities for peer collaboration. Furthermore, neuroscience emphasizes the importance of differentiation in educational settings (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Different students have different learning needs and cognitive strengths. Flipped classrooms should provide options for students to engage with content in ways that resonate with them. This could involve offering a variety of learning materials in different formats (e.g., text, video, audio) or allowing students to choose the activities that best suit their learning styles.

## CONCLUSIONS

Neuroscience elucidates the mechanisms of brain learning, facilitating the development of flipped classrooms that optimize cognitive processes. Comparable to a symphony, flipped learning orchestrates various elements to foster a productive environment. When integrated with students' perspectives and opinions, it has the potential to create an ideal learning setting. Independent study lays the groundwork for foundational knowledge, priming students for

deeper engagement. Active learning strategies build upon this foundation, enhancing comprehension and promoting long-term retention. By recognizing individual learning styles and offering tailored support, flipped classrooms ensure inclusive participation. Despite inherent challenges, the application of brain-based principles can yield dynamic and effective educational experiences. The findings of this study demonstrate how flipped learning can enhance EFL teaching while highlighting the need for more research to add to these findings.

## THE AUTHORS

**Maria Teresa Martinez Garcia**, PhD, is an associate professor in the English Department at the University of Valladolid, Spain. She specializes in teaching advanced English and linguistics courses. Her research focuses on speech perception, language acquisition, and innovative pedagogical approaches to language instruction. Email: mariateresamg@uva.es

**Daniela Trinks**, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Go Studies at Myongji University where she has been teaching Go English, culture, and education since 2015. She also currently serves as the president of the Korea TESOL Yongin-Gyeonggi Chapter. Email: dtrinks@mju.ac.kr

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# Laughter for Interactional Management: Analysis of Novice Learners' Peer Interaction

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Akie Fukushima

*Kio University, Nara, Japan*

Fostering positive communication attitudes is crucial in Japanese secondary EFL teaching and CEFR, with interactive language activities emerging as effective learning strategies. However, novice learners face challenges in interaction management and require appropriate teacher intervention. This study analyzed 525 minutes of peer conversations among high school students, to explore how lower-level learners create laughable moments in paired activities and utilize them to manage persistent problems. Laughter serves as a tool to maintain ongoing topics, repair pragmatic problems, and avoid highlighting asymmetry in L2 language competence and epistemic authority. Shared laughter orients participants toward the same referent, indicating shared troubles and opportunities for mutual support. This helps create mobilized interactional frameworks, and enables learners to engage in the ongoing task. This study underscores the importance of classroom relationships, suggesting possible teacher support in the preparation and reflection stages, and the necessity of promoting students' agency to enhance interactional dynamics.

## INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is an indispensable element in foreign language learning, and peer-to-peer learning provides significant opportunities for in-depth learning. Several studies have underscored the benefits of interactive language activities as effective strategies, showing that post-reading discussions (Saricoban, 2002) and peer interactions (Griffiths, 2003) enhance reading and vocabulary skills. Both the CEFR and the Japanese Course of Study (2019) emphasize the importance of "interaction" in language learning. The latter expects teachers to facilitate students' impromptu-speaking activities. A survey by Benesse (2022), a Japanese educational and publishing company, also indicates a positive correlation between output activities and learner motivation.

Despite these guidelines and findings, interactive speaking activities are not frequently implemented in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes in Japan. Novice learners often struggle to continue speaking in English because they have limited opportunities to manage their interactions (Galaczi, 2014). This low implementation rate is largely due to teachers' anxiety about the unpredictable nature of students' performance, as many fear losing control of the classroom environment (Benesse, 2016). Moreover, peer talk activities in authorized textbooks are often confined to introductory sections and rely on model dialogues

that lack detailed practical steps and sufficient instruction for teachers. This has resulted in a gap between the theoretical benefits of interactive activities and their practical implementation in EFL education. Therefore, it is essential to analyze how students can effectively connect interactions, thereby informing the design of teacher support and activity structures that encourage interactive learning. This study aimed to explore how low-level learners create laughable moments in interactions, use humor to handle ongoing troubles, and succeed in in-class peer discussion activities. Using ethnomethodological conversation analysis (EMCA), this study systematically analyzed talk-in-interaction to inform activity settings, class rules, and potential teacher support strategies to enhance learners' interactional competencies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Interactional Challenges and Strategies for the Novice: A CA Perspective**

Novice foreign language learners often produce minimal responses because of their limited language resources, which can hinder smooth turn transitions (ten Have, 2007) and inhibit the mutual development of topics (Gan, 2010). Delays in the next speaker's turn among L2 speakers are typically attributed to linguistic knowledge or language competence, rather than dispreferred actions (Wong, 2000). With such minimal engagement with partners, learners tend to engage in a "parallel" style of interaction (Galaczi, 2013) resulting in conversations that fail to develop, display difficulty in maintaining continuity, and lead to abrupt topic shifts.

Despite these difficulties, and novice learners' limited linguistic resources, they employ several interactional strategies to manage them. Precision timing (Carroll, 2000) helps maintain the flow of turns, allowing learners to construct minimal turns with little syntactic complexity. Vowel-marking (Carroll, 2005) is used for repair or word search initiation, demonstrating its dual role in managing turns. Additionally, learners utilize recycled turn beginnings and increments (Carroll, 2004) similar to those used by native English speakers. As Wong and Waring (2010) emphasized, focusing on turn-taking practices among foreign language learners, such as projecting turn completions, self-selecting turns, and building multi-unit turns, allows learners to utilize available resources to address such issues. However, interactional activities still pose significant challenges for novice learners, indicating the need for intervention and support in classroom settings to facilitate improved communication and interaction. Conversation analysis (CA) research has identified key strategies; however, further research is required to explore how these strategies can be better supported and developed in classroom settings to help learners navigate conversational dynamics more successfully and thereby enhance interactional competence.

### **The Role of Laughter in Interactional Frameworks: Insights from CA**

Analyzing laughter in interactions can provide insights into how individuals manage social relationships, establish group membership, and negotiate meaning

through laughter. It also reveals how creating laughable moments influences communication. As an indexical marker, laughter signifies that a conversational item is laughable, as either explicitly stated or inferred by the participants (Attardo, 2020). It also creates a “member’s category” by indicating a referent about which someone laughs (Glenn & Holt, 2013). Therefore, shared laughter can enhance solidarity, with some humorous performances designed to include certain individuals while excluding others. Laughter can even signal a change in the participation framework, serving as a test to determine whether participants understand the joke and gauge their inclusion in a social event (Glenn, 2003). Considering these elements, laughter not only marks humorous moments but also plays a crucial role in social dynamics and group solidarity.

These features play distinct roles in various interactional contexts. Patients with language impairments often laugh during repair sequences when they cannot successfully produce an utterance, although listeners typically do not respond to the laughter (Wilkinson, 2007). In doctor–patient interactions, patients use laughter to express embarrassment or discomfort in dispreferred situations, such as refusals, contradictions, resistance, or disagreement (Fatigante & Orletti, 2013; Haakana, 2002). Aphasic speakers may use small jokes or “humorous noticing,” by highlighting errors through repetition or noting incongruous similarities with other words (Wilkinson, 2007). However, the specific ways in which EFL learners with limited language resources use laughter have not been fully explored. If laughter helps navigate language barriers, build rapport, and create a supportive learning environment, analyzing it within peer interactions can indicate learners’ comfort levels, engagement with the material, and ability to use language creatively. By examining laughter, educators can gain insight into students’ social dynamics and tailor their teaching strategies to foster more effective and inclusive communication.

## **DATA CORPUS**

The data corpus comprised approximately 525 minutes of peer talk activities conducted in EFL classes at a private high school in western Japan. These recordings were made between October 2019 and February 2021, when the students were in Grades 9 and 10. During this time, they engaged in peer talk activities on topics presented by the teacher. To ensure naturally occurring talk, the students were paired a few minutes before beginning the task. They recorded their conversations using their own devices and presented them to the teacher. All recordings were analyzed for educational and research purposes after obtaining consent from the head of the institution and the participating students.

## **ANALYSIS**

Two segments were chosen to illustrate how one participant uses laughter to co-construct the conversation while the other faces difficulty in speaking, focusing on strategies for managing interactional challenges. In Figure 1, students M and Y are introducing their favorite books to each other. The conversation begins when

Y urges M to read or buy a book that he likes, and M displays trouble responding to the offer. When M refuses the offer, citing financial reasons, Y displays trouble responding. In this context, laughter is strategically used to maintain rapport; M uses laughter to soften the dispreferred response, mitigating the pragmatic trouble from the face-threatening act. Additionally, laughter is used to initiate a meta-assessment, which leads to shared laughter between M and Y, alleviating immediate turn-taking difficulties and creating a smoother interaction.

**FIGURE 1. Y (Male Student) and M (Female Student) [05:43:16–06:03:06]**

```

01 Y I like (.5) this manga
02 &(.3)& (1.1)
    m &nod-&
03 Y let's (.) read the book
04 (.3)%(.)%
    y %nod%
05 M HHhh
06 (.2)
07 Y $buy books$=
    y $wave right hand toward himself$
08 M =.HHh Hhh
09 Y [%please%
    y %lean backward%
10 M [f°bu:y°f HHhh
11 (.6)
12 M *I don't have money ye==
    m *wave right-hand side to side-->
    m &gaze to Y ((to 1.22)) ----->
13 Y =HHHhh (.) $foka:yf °oka::y°*
    m ----->*
    y $nod several times-->
14 (.3)$(.)
    y --->$
15 M >°so°<
16 (.3)
17 M Hhhh [&HHhhh
    m &point at Y-->((to 1.21))
18 Y [HHHhh
19 M [fkoma tte ru£ =
    in trouble
    "you are in trouble"
20 Y [%hhhh%
    y %hit desk with pencil%
21 M =[AHHHhhh .hhh
22 Y =[hhhhh
23 M [.hhh
24 Y [a.
25 *(.3)*
    m *avert gaze*
26 M I want to: (.3) baito- (.) baito suru
    part-time job parttime job do
    "I want to do a part-time job"
27 HH[hh
28 Y [$oka:y °yes yes°$=
    y $nod several times$
29 M =.Hh HHHHh[hhhh
30 Y [fo:ka::y£
31 M [hhh
32 Y [fni::ce£

```

Y displays his preference for a particular manga, and suggests that M read it (Lines 1 and 3). M responds with laughter, indicating that she has trouble responding (Attardo, 2020; Glenn & Holt, 2013) and the unacceptability of the request. Y upgrades the request to read (Line 8) by asking M to buy the book using a request marker (Line 10). Y's multiple attempts to prompt "reading the book" are followed by M's laughter with a heightened tone, which displays her upgraded alignment but disaffiliates with the burden. In Line 10, M reuses part of Y's utterance and provides a minimal response, which implicitly refuses the proposed action by citing a financial and practical reason ("I don't have money ye-": Line 12). This is followed by Y's laughter and the repetition of "okay," displaying the acknowledgment of M's previous response. Laughter here displays Y's pragmatic trouble, indicated by the pause in Line 14, but it also serves to mitigate the seriousness of the previous face-threatening act. The laughter-oriented sequence prompts M to take an additional turn (Line 15), indicating that laughter is used throughout the interaction to maintain a sense of rapport and ease the tension caused by face-threatening requests.

After a brief pause (Line 16), when M gets her turn, she points at Y, evaluating that he is "in trouble," and uses laugh tokens (Lines 17 and 19). M's code-switched utterance, which displays Y's previous utterance as a laughable problem, functions as a meta-assessment of the sequence. This marks M's earlier refusal to be humorous, while still displaying disapproval of the proposed request from Y. This leads to both sharing in laughter, which prompts Y to respond. At Y's turn, followed by a brief pause (Line 24), he acknowledges that he is in trouble. M then clarifies her previous statement about not having money, suggesting a potential solution to the problem, which helps Y approve the ongoing sequence (Line 28) and positive assessment (Line 32).

In this situation, laughter serves multiple important functions within a participatory framework. First, it acknowledges something as laughable, which for EFL students could refer to the interactional or pragmatic problems they are currently facing. Second, by making something laughable and humorous, laughter mitigates face-threatening situations, thus enhancing solidarity among the participants. Finally, laughter allows for a meta-commentary, which provides a way to comment on the interaction itself. This meta-commentary enables participants to put the ongoing trouble in the background, while signaling their thoughts or feelings about what has been said or done. It adds an extra layer of meaning to the exchange and maintains the flow of the conversation. Overall, laughter helps to create a supportive and engaging environment, fostering better communication and mutual understanding between participants.

Another example shows how laughter helps maintain equal participation and extends ongoing interactions. In Figure 2, during a talk between students F and S, F displays trouble constructing her turn and S abruptly orients his action to the camera, creating a laughable moment. S and F then use this laughter to adjust their epistemic asymmetry and ensure that both maintain equal access to participation. Shared laughter helps balance epistemic authority when S holds it.

S signals the completion of his turn by creating a hand-shaking gesture (Line 1), to which F aligns with repeated nods, thus avoiding taking further turns. S then again attempts to complete his turn by upgrading the importance of his previous utterance and specifying the agent from "each (country)" to "all countries."

Following S's upgraded turn completion, F again aligns with S's utterance with an upgraded repeated acknowledgment in Japanese ("I understand"), and withholds her subsequent turn (Line 4). Failing to allocate his turn to F, S then gestures by pointing at the camera and displays his turn completion to the audience (YEAHs,

**FIGURE 2. S (Male Student) and F (Female Student) [02:50:45–03:16:42]**

```

01 S:  &help each $other (.)
      f          $avert gaze from S --> ((to 1.5))
      s          &create hand gesture --> ((to 1.3))
02 F:  %un un un un%
      "yes, yes, yes, yes."
      f          %nod-----%
03 S:  all coun&try
      s          -->&
04 F:  %un >wakaru waka[ru%<
      understand understand
      "I understand, I understand."
      f          %nod----->%
05 S:  [ah (.) *yes$ %i th- YEAHs*
      s          *create hand gesture to camera*
      f          -->$ %gaze at S-->
06 F:  yeah% &.hhh
      f          -->%
      s          &move toward camera-->
07     (.9) & *(.5)
      s          -->& *look into camera-->
08 S:  AAah*&h.
      s          -->*&go back to chair-->
09     (.7)%(.5)&*(.5)&(.4)&(.3)* *(.3)
      s          -->& &point at camera&
      s          *sit on chair-* *make sad face--> ((to 1.13))
      f          %gaze at S-->
10 F:  $oh.%$
      f          $nod-$
      f          -->%
11     %(.9)%
      f          %gaze at camara%
12 F:  %e::[::
      f          %gaze upward -->
13 S:  [*&fthree minutes% (.) $nowf&
      s          -->*&gaze at camera and create hand gesture&
      f          -->% $gaze at S--> ((to 1.16))
14     *(.4)
      s          *gaze at camera-->>
15 S:  HH[hhhhh
16 F:  [AHHhhh$ %.hh Hhhhh
      f          -->$ %gaze at camera-->
17     (.7)%
      f          -->%
18 S:  ah::[e::
19 F:  [$E::e::: (.3) u::::::m
      f          $look upward and put both hand under chin-->
20     (1.3)$
      f          -->$
21 F:  %fhis passionf is very great [future (for) people Hhhh
      f          %look at camera-->>
22 S:  [HHhhhh

```

Line 5). His utterances, with enhanced tones directed toward the camera, create another participation framework, directing the audience as listeners. This helps F take a turn with laughter tokens, making the previous action laughable.

In Lines 6–8, S looks into the camera, returns to his chair, and displays a negative emotional state by producing a downward token. During the subsequent pause in Line 9, S makes a pointing gesture to the camera with a sad face, indicating an unfavorable situation. This is followed by F's downward uptake token and her gaze shifting toward the camera in Line 10. The subsequent pause in Line 11, with F's gaze toward the camera, shows that she has trouble understanding S's previous actions, and interpreting them as an indication that she needs to take a turn. In Line 12, F attempts to withhold her turn, signaled by an extended continuation token, an upward gaze shift, and hand gestures of a thinking pose. S then shifts his gaze back to the camera and announces the time spent with a hand gesture, indicating that they have spent only three minutes on the activity, which means that two more minutes are left to work on the task (Line 13). This sequence of actions, accompanied by laughter, helps F understand the current status and alleviates any pressure or anxiety she might experience. This sequence leads F to reattempt her turn with an upward gaze shift and a hand gesture under her chin (Line 19), followed by her further talk about the main character of the story they read during class (Line 21). The laughable moment created by S makes the ongoing situation laughable, mitigating turn-taking problems and ensuring equal participation rights.

The shared laughter of the learners in this context has several important functions. First, it orients both participants toward the same referent, indicating that ongoing trouble is shared through solidarity. This shared orientation accounts for subsequent actions to be viewed as an opportunity for mutual support. Second, it mitigates ongoing troubles, whether linguistic or pragmatic, thereby enabling another conversational framework. Sharing laughable moments also helps avoid foregrounding asymmetry in English language competence and epistemic authority. Finally, it adjusts epistemic authority and ensures that both participants have equal participation rights. Ultimately, laughter encourages active engagement among both participants, fostering collaborative and inclusive dialogue.

## CONCLUSIONS

Shared laughter among novice EFL learners during peer talk activities plays a vital role in serving multiple functions within a participatory framework. It acknowledges interactional or pragmatic troubles, like turn-taking problems, as laughable. This helps mitigate face-threatening situations and enhances solidarity among the participants. Laughter also allows participants to comment on the interaction by providing meta-commentary, demonstrating learners' orientation toward the ongoing task, and ensuring their engagement in the interaction. In particular, shared laughter orients both participants to the same referent, indicating shared trouble and opportunities for mutual support, while avoiding foregrounding asymmetry in language competence and epistemic authority. It adjusts epistemic authority, ensures equal participation rights, and fosters more collaborative and inclusive dialogue. Overall, shared laughter enhances interactional

dynamics among novice learners, facilitating more effective communication and collaboration in EFL settings.

These findings suggest how teachers can support learners in classroom pair-talk. For novice learners with limited linguistic resources, silences attributed to individuals often impede conversation progress. The analysis highlights that laughter functions as a means of demonstrating mutual engagement during trouble and promoting conversation flow. It is important to note that those learners with limited English proficiency can achieve mutual understanding by utilizing their current available resources. Teachers need to be aware that laughter serves as a resource for sustaining interactions among learners and should be conscious of creating an atmosphere where laughter is encouraged and accepted. Incorporating laughter into classroom talk, such as during preparation and feedback sessions, can model positive interactions. Adjusting pairings and groupings to foster such interactions can cultivate a more inclusive and cooperative classroom environment. Students' actual interactions illustrate how utilizing nonverbal resources, which may appear unrelated to learning and are often underestimated, fosters students' interactional competencies. Incorporating such dynamics into classroom activities provides hands-on learning opportunities that text-based dialogue practice cannot offer.

## THE AUTHOR

**Akie Fukushima** is an associate professor in the Department of Modern Education at Kio University, Nara, Japan. Her research interests include analyzing interactions among novice learners in high school English education. Using conversation analysis (CA), she examines how novice learners sustain conversations and construct logical discourse in EFL classes. Email: a.fukushima@kio.ac.jp

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## APPENDIX A

### Transcription Conventions

Transcription symbols follow the conversation analytic conventions established by Jefferson (2004).

[yeah]		why	Stress or emphasis	
[good]		Overlapping talk		
=		Latching		
(0.5)		Gap / Pause	WORD	Loud talk
(.)		Micropause	°°	Quiet or soft talk
.		Falling intonation	↑	Upward in pitch
?		Strongly rising intonation	↓	Downward in pitch
/	Slightly rising intonation	> <	Compressed or rushed talk	
		£ £	Smiley voice	

## APPENDIX B

### Transcription Convention for Multimodal Aspects (Mondada, 2018)

- ° ° Descriptions of embodied conducts (gaze, body movements, etc.) are delimited between two identical symbols, and synchronized with corresponding stretches of talk or time indications.
- ° -> The action described continues across subsequent lines...
- >° ...until the same symbol is reached.

# University Students Utilizing English Picture Books in Elementary School Lessons

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Yoko Kita

*Kyoto Notre Dame University, Kyoto, Japan*

This study explores how university students in a teacher training program course in Japan are experimenting with the use of English picture books in elementary school education, which is recommended by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). This research focuses on the strategies that these pre-service teachers develop for storytelling sessions using picture books in English learning. The study includes initial training on the educational value of picture books and the demonstration of storytelling techniques. The students independently select English picture books and creatively conduct storytelling sessions. The study examines the outcomes of these demonstrations and shares reflections and results from surveys, indicating improvements in teaching methods.

## INTRODUCTION

In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) introduced significant reforms to foreign language education in elementary schools with the release of the new Courses of Study in 2017. Consequently, in the 2020 school year, English officially became a compulsory subject for Grades 5 and 6 in elementary schools, while foreign language activities were introduced to Grades 3 and 4 (MEXT, 2017a, 2017b). In the 3rd and 4th grades, foreign language activities focus on developing listening and speaking skills. In the 5th and 6th grades, foreign language learning expands to include all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Courses of Study for Elementary Schools, foreign language activities, and foreign language learning editions encourage the use of English picture books. In foreign language activities for 3rd and 4th graders, MEXT recommends that teachers engage in storytelling with English picture books as an effective method for helping children infer the general content of short stories that capture their interest (MEXT, 2017c). Unit 9 of the supplementary textbook for 3rd graders features a storytelling activity using the English picture book *Who Are You?* conducted by the teacher. In the 5th and 6th grades, reading activities involve storytelling with picture books, during which teachers interact with students to help them identify vocabulary and basic expressions within the text. Regarding the use of English picture books in reading activities, it notes that “picture books abundantly employ illustrations and photographs to help comprehension, and they are characterized by clear themes and storylines” (MEXT, 2017c, p. 108). Shin and Crandall (2014) asserted that storytelling not only introduces children to both foreign and domestic cultures,

but also enhances their critical thinking skills, listening abilities, and speaking skills. Pinter (2009) discussed how elementary school English teachers can utilize storytelling as supplementary listening practice. Furthermore, Pinter highlighted the effectiveness of storytelling, noting that children enjoy listening practice through storytelling, and repetitive sections facilitate easier input and acquisition of new expressions.

Given the recommendation to utilize picture books in elementary school English education, it is also important for university students in elementary school teacher license courses to learn about storytelling with English picture books. In the following, we begin with a literature review to highlight previous research on picture books and storytelling. This led to the identification of the research questions for this study. The study's methodology is outlined, and its findings are introduced. In the next section, the results of the implementation are discussed, along with their pedagogical implications.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Effects of Storytelling with English Picture Books**

The effects of storytelling with English picture books for children learning English as a foreign language include the ability of children to learn while having fun, the introduction of new cultures to the children, and the enhancement of their critical thinking skills (Shin & Crandall, 2014). From the perspective of learning while having fun, engaging stories encourage children to listen repeatedly, which helps them learn the rhythm and sounds of English. Since elementary school students have short attention spans and tend to learn through play and enjoyable activities, the use of English picture books is considered appropriate for their developmental stage. Kinugasa (2017), in discussing the usage of English picture books in foreign language teaching, stated that they serve as a listening activity that allows children not only to listen to coherent English but also to develop the ability to infer the meanings of vocabulary and expressions and to grasp the gist. She also mentioned that through the content and illustrations of picture books, children can be exposed to diverse cultures, which can enhance their interest and curiosity in these cultures. This exposure also means encountering different worldviews and values. Furthermore, she discussed the effect of generating interest in the letters of the English alphabet and reading the written words in English picture books. Several studies have discussed the effectiveness of incorporating English picture books into Japanese elementary school English education: Ogawa and Higashi (2017), Shishijika (2017), and Tanaka (2020).

### **Selecting Appropriate Books**

Curtain and Dahlberg (2010) stated that selecting appropriate picture books is the key to successful storytelling. As key points for selecting stories suitable for children, they highlight stories with predictable plots, those that include repetition or predictable patterns, and those that contain content familiar to the children's

own culture. Kinugasa (2017) mentioned the importance of selecting picture books that are appropriate for the developmental stage of the children, as what they can learn from picture books varies with age. This is based on the perspective that the messages from picture books help foster the emotional growth of children. In addition, choosing developmentally appropriate picture books aligns with Krashen's (1982) argument for comprehensible input.

According to Sakai et al. (2017), the following criteria should be considered for selecting English picture books: having rhythm and simple, everyday words; matching sentences with illustrations; a title that hints at the content; a clear and predictable story development; text that is visually easy to read with appropriate spacing; and content that is similar to children's life experiences (p. 166). Additionally, Kamata (2015) highlighted the significance of considering Japan's unique classroom culture when selecting picture books. She notes that picture books are frequently used in Japanese classrooms to impart important societal behavioral lessons. This usage is considered an educational effect. She emphasizes that for children to be prepared for and cognizant of diversity, it is essential to expose them to picture books featuring diverse characters in everyday situations.

### **University Students' Storytelling with English Picture Books**

Ochante (2019) asserted that storytelling with English picture books is an effective English teaching method. He conducted practice teaching sessions in his English teaching methods class, where university students in teacher license courses used English picture books. Then the impact of university students reading English picture books to children on both their English skills and emotional aspects was investigated. The study found that the university students gained confidence by reading with correct pronunciation and proficiency, which motivated them to communicate in English and enjoy the storytelling activity. This is important for learning English. The study also pointed out that accumulating successful experiences contributes to language acquisition. Similarly, Joichi (2015) examined how university students in teacher license courses, who had no prior experience in storytelling, perceived their experiences of storytelling with English picture books. The study considered their preference for storytelling with English picture books, their attitudes toward storytelling, and their recognition of the importance of skills related to storytelling. As a result, the study found that university students who experienced storytelling became aware of the importance of storytelling skills, such as reading speed and expressive reading with emotion. Furthermore, by being conscious of the audience, they developed an awareness of effective storytelling that resonated with the listeners. Ochante suggested that "being mindful of the child audience and aiming for better storytelling can lay the foundation for enjoyable communication activities" (p. 7).

As previous research indicates, storytelling with appropriately chosen picture books in children's English education brings various positive effects to their English learning. Therefore, university students who aspire to be teachers should be encouraged to learn how to effectively utilize picture books and enhance their storytelling skills.

In light of the above research, this study sets out to address the following research questions:

- RQ1. What lessons are appropriate for helping university students to understand the usage of picture books and for enabling them to engage in storytelling for elementary school English education?
- RQ2. From what perspective do university students choose English picture books?
- RQ3. What strategies do university students use for storytelling?

## **METHOD**

This study employed the following methodology to address the research questions.

### **Participants**

In this study, the participants were twenty-two second-year female university students from the Department of Child Education. Their English proficiency levels ranged from CEFR A1 to B1. The practical research was conducted during the first and second semesters of the 2023 academic year in the course Foreign Language (English) Education – Method of Instruction.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and percentages, were used to analyze trends and relationships among the survey data. Additionally, keywords and sentences were extracted from the qualitative data, which included comments and reflections, to gain insights into the participants' perceptions of storytelling. User-local AI text mining was also used to analyze comments and reflective descriptions.

### **Procedure**

At the outset, detailed planning of the lecture content was undertaken to enable the participants to conduct storytelling using English picture books. Subsequently, the participants engaged in storytelling demonstrations, followed by a reflective session. The following outlines the planned lecture content aimed at helping the participants grasp the importance of incorporating English picture books into elementary school English learning. It includes selecting appropriate books based on children's developmental stages and effectively conducting storytelling sessions.

As an initial step, the participating university students participated in a lecture on the use of English picture books. The lecture covered the following:

1. Explanation of the skills targeted by using English picture books, as outlined in the Course of Study for Foreign Language Activities and Foreign Languages by MEXT (2017c), focusing on listening and reading skills, along with activities suitable for mid- and upper-elementary grades.
2. Discussion on how the use of English picture books enhances elementary school students' English learning.

3. Overview of lesson examples incorporating English picture books.
4. Introduction to some sample English picture books and a discussion on their educational effects. Following this, students discussed and evaluated English picture books suitable for elementary school English learning.
5. Instructional examples of storytelling with English picture books, covering before, during, and after reading activities.

Next, students were informed about conducting storytelling sessions in class, including details on the schedule and duration. The participants borrowed English picture books from the university library, the iSpace (International Exchange Room), and local libraries. They were instructed to consider the following points when selecting books: the age and English proficiency of the elementary school students who would be the audience for the storytelling and the educational effects of the English picture books. They were required to write a short report about these perspectives.

As the third step, students practiced storytelling for two weeks. The participants selected English picture books appropriate for the developmental stages of the elementary school students they assumed as their audience and practiced storytelling. They also had the task of considering what storytelling strategies they should use to help children enjoy learning English through English picture books. Given the varying levels of English proficiency among the participants, we advised them to request assistance with pronunciation, intonation, and other language skills if needed. This was to address concerns that inadequate English proficiency might negatively impact their storytelling. Storytelling in elementary schools primarily tends to involve listening and reading activities. However, it is also necessary for teachers to ask students questions about the content during storytelling sessions. This approach is based on the theories of Long (1990), who emphasized the importance of interaction. It may pose a greater challenge for university students to think about interactive questions alongside considering storytelling strategies and practicing reading, given their varying levels of English proficiency. Therefore, we encouraged the participants to consider interactive questions but indicated that it was optional, aiming to alleviate undue pressure.

### **Storytelling Implementation**

Each participant conducted a storytelling demonstration in front of their classmates. Initially, they provided an explanation of the appropriate grade level for the storybook's use and the anticipated educational benefits of the English picture book they chose. Subsequently, the participants performed the storytelling using the strategies they had developed. After the storybook reading, they received feedback from their peers. Finally, each participant engaged in reflection on their storytelling experience, documented their observations, and completed a survey.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Student Reflections and Evaluations

The participants completed reflections and a survey following their storytelling demonstrations. Students chose these picture books for storytelling activities: *Dear Girl*; *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*; *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*; *What Do You See?*; *Where's Spot?*; *Dear Zoo*; and *From Head to Toe* among others. The following excerpts present the participants' thoughts regarding the appropriate age and English proficiency of the elementary school students for the chosen picture books, as well as the educational effects of these books:

*Dear Girl* is the perfect book to turn to when confidence wanes. It reassures girls that it is always okay to be themselves and that perfection is not necessary. Its short and accessible sentences make the book particularly well-suited for third-grade students. The educational impacts are particularly notable; the book engages girls with its content and provides boys with insights into understanding girls. The book's layout – one sentence per illustration – helps communicate the context effectively, aiding comprehension during reading or listening, even if readers do not grasp every English word. [Participant O]

The *Very Hungry Caterpillar* is a well-known picture book in Japan and is suitable for third- and fourth-graders. The English used in the book contains repetitive patterns, which help children learn new phrases and words. For example, it includes everyday words such as the names of foods, fruits, days of the week, and numbers. Children become accustomed to the rhythm and sounds of the English language. [Participant N; These thoughts were originally written in Japanese and translated by the author.]

It was inferred that the participants selected English picture books they deemed appropriate for elementary school students, considering both educational benefits and language proficiency.

The following excerpts are the participating students' reflections on their storytelling. These include descriptions of the strategies they employed:

I varied the tone of my voice, read at a fast pace where possible, and used gestures where appropriate. The book was quite lengthy, so I aimed for a slow and steady pace to avoid monotony. Although I was nervous and not everything may have gone smoothly, I endeavored to make the reading enjoyable for the children in my unique way and placed slight emphasis on the repeated phrase. [Participant A]

Each character had many lines, I added inflections to clarify whose lines they were and took time to understand the content during pauses. I also made sure to read with the correct intonation and pronunciation. [Participant K]

During my readings, I deliberately went slowly to ensure comprehension. I made sure to keep everyone's focus on the picture book while I read. I held the book so that all the children could see it. Speaking aloud does not come naturally to

me, but I pushed myself to project my voice more than I did in the first semester. Additionally, I consciously read with a smile, aiming to improve upon my previous semester's performance. [Participant M; These reflections were originally written in Japanese and translated by the author.]

From these reflections, it is evident that each participating student conscientiously devised storytelling strategies aimed at delivering clear and engaging experiences for their audience. The reflective descriptions of all the participants were also analyzed using user-local AI text mining. Words with high scores were selected and illustrated with sizes corresponding to their values; these included *understandable*, *creative*, *enjoy*, *emotion*, *strategies*, and *gesture*.

The following are the survey results of the storytelling presentation. The survey consisted of five questions. The author developed these questions based on question items from Joichi's (2015) study. Question 1 inquired about the strategies used in storytelling with picture books and allowed for multiple selections. Questions 2 to 4 utilized a four-point Likert scale with the options: *agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, and *disagree*. Question 2 asked whether the participants enjoyed the storytelling activity. Question 3 explored whether the participants believed storytelling with picture books would benefit children's English learning. Question 4 investigated whether the participants were motivated to improve their storytelling skills. Question 5 asked whether the participants were inclined to conduct storytelling sessions for children using picture books if given the opportunity. The students used various strategies, such as reading with emotion.

The responses to Question 2 were as follows: *agree* 50%, *somewhat agree* 42.9%, *somewhat disagree* 7.1%, and *disagree* 0%. This indicates that the participants actively engaged in and enjoyed storytelling with English picture books. The responses to Question 3 were as follows: *agree* 78.6%, *somewhat agree* 21.4%, and both *somewhat disagree* and *disagree* 0%. This demonstrates that the participants perceived the use of English picture books as beneficial for children's English education. The responses to Question 4 were *agree* 50%, *somewhat agree* 50%, and both *somewhat disagree* and *disagree* 0%. This result suggests that the participants were interested in storytelling and were willing to continue enhancing their skills in the future. However, the responses to Question 5, which asked if the participants would conduct storytelling sessions for children if given the opportunity, were *agree* 28.6%, *somewhat agree* 50.0%, *somewhat disagree* 14.3%, and *disagree* 7.1%. It is necessary to explore the reasons why some of the participants responded that they would not want to conduct future storytelling sessions.

## CONCLUSIONS

The participating university students in the teacher education programs developed strategies for effective storytelling and demonstrated their use. In addition, each student selected appropriate picture books, considering not only the narrative and educational benefits but also the developmental appropriateness for the target elementary school students, including English proficiency. The

participants gained a broader understanding of the role that picture books play in English language acquisition. This also indicated that the detailed planning of the lecture content was appropriate. Upon reviewing the results of the reflections and surveys, it was found that this practical approach, crediting a blend of lectures and practical storytelling sessions, was effective and enjoyable, enhancing the learning experience for the participating university students. Through their storytelling observations, the participants engaged deeply and enthusiastically in the art of storytelling. They went beyond mere reading to bring stories to life, demonstrating a crucial storytelling skill. From this perspective, it is evident that this experience has enhanced their pedagogical skills. However, one limitation of this study is that it does not include reading to actual children, which should be explored in future research.

## THE AUTHOR

**Yoko Kita** is an associate professor at Kyoto Notre Dame University. Her articles include an essay on Ruth Bader Ginsburg. A former Fulbright scholar, she earned an MA in TESOL from Seattle Pacific University. Her research interests include the use of ICT in language teaching and learning gaps. Email: kitayoko@notredame.ac.jp

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## Tune In to Podcasts: Creating Interest in Podcasts Through Genres

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Edward Cooper Howland, Andrej Krasnansky, and  
Ashton E. Dawes

*Kanda University of International Studies, Chiba, Japan*

Podcasts have opened up a range of opportunities for how listening could be taught in various classroom settings in order to encourage student engagement (Yeh, 2013). To enhance English skills among university students, it is crucial to connect them to global conversations and authentic language. A podcast unit in a second-year media studies course at a Japanese private university was designed to use students' interests to promote podcasts as a language learning tool. Before beginning the unit, content preferences, listening habits, and interest in podcasts outside of the classroom were surveyed. Students then analyzed a variety of English-language podcasts before creating their own episode. Preliminary findings reveal changes in students' perceptions of podcasts and how exposure to different genres can boost their interest in autonomous listening. The discussion highlights podcasts as a catalyst for global awareness and their role in authentic, autonomous listening in language education.

### INTRODUCTION

The recent explosion in the popularity of podcasts is undeniable. Despite existing since 2004 (Cochrane, 2005) podcasts never broke into the cultural mainstream until the 2020 coronavirus pandemic (Grunow, 2021). Research on the positive effects of knowledge output, listening comprehension, and speaking ability from podcast listening and creation validates the usefulness of student podcasting for language education (Azizi, et al., 2022). So while it is understood that podcasts are a good tool for listening practice and a good project for speaking practice, the extent to which students are willing to listen to podcasts outside of class requirements is yet to be researched. Before any researcher can hope to understand for how long students are willing to listen to podcasts, students need to be introduced to podcasts in a manner that piques their interest. This paper aims to begin bridging the gap between podcasts as a tool for listening practice – intensive or extensive – as a fun, autonomous listening experience. To try to understand what catches students' interests and how that connects to their preferred listening experiences, we, the authors, designed a podcast unit focused on the various formats and genres of podcasts. The four- to five-week unit culminates in the creation of 10-minute podcasts by groups of about four students. Before asking students to create a podcast, we felt it was necessary to introduce them to the great variety of podcasts available in the Anglosphere.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction to Podcasts in Education

Podcasts are a treat to the ear, and for those who are learning English, a potential delight. Their popularity took off at an exponential rate during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic (Grunow, 2021), and so too did their use in the classroom, leading to positive results and ongoing discussions (Cao & Bui, 2023).

How podcasts, a streamable audio recording (Cochrane, 2005), are used in education varies, but ever since their introduction into the classroom, they have largely been used by teachers as asynchronous study material or lesson refreshers (Frydenburg, 2008; Heilesen, 2010). It is only recently that educators have begun exploring the student-production side of using podcasts in the classroom.

So far, the education sector has incorporated student podcasting and other media creation in the following capacities: summarizing lectures, flipped-classroom style teaching, and audio reports (Earp et al., 2006; Frydenburg, 2006; Heilesen, 2010; Lazzari, 2009). These approaches have proven beneficial for students (Jain & Hashmi, 2013), but comparatively little research has been into student preference of genre, either in listening or production.

### Authentic Materials and Extensive Listening

Appropriate exposure to authentic materials (Kozhevnikova, 2019) increases student motivation and engagement (Shirai, 2013). Podcasts offer that exposure, serving as “boundary objects,” allowing students to enter figurative rooms where non-native speakers are usually not invited (Cory & Boothby, 2021). Moreover, the use of podcasts in extensive listening lessons has been shown to improve students’ listening skills (Gönülal, 2020).

Extensive listening, or listening for pleasure, has been posited to increase both students’ global language skills and their motivation (as explored in Bozan, 2015). Renandya (2012) points out that extensive listening is most effective when students “do a lot of meaningful listening practice” (p. 2). The key words here are “a lot” and “meaningful.” In an ideal world, students exposed to English language podcasts in a classroom situation will continue listening outside of the classroom context, exposing themselves to more and more authentic language. In order for students to do this, the material must be meaningful to them.

Yeh (2013) found that choice is a major factor in student engagement with authentic materials. When students are able to choose their materials for extensive listening, their overall satisfaction increases. If students can listen to materials that align with their interests, then podcasts may be an ideal medium for extensive listening, provided the materials are appropriate.

### Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

One of the most common theories in motivation research is the concept of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation (Dornyei, 1998). Intrinsic motivation deals with “behavior performed for its own sake, in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction,” while extrinsic motivation is “performing a behavior as a means to

an end, that is, to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g., good grades) or to avoid punishment” (Dornyei, 1998, p. 14).

One of the negative influences on student motivation is lack of contact with the desired second language (Doiz et al., 2014), but podcasts are able to provide authentic and semi-authentic language that students can freely access.

There is evidence that understanding and negotiating the intricacies of genre and medium, particularly in the realm of digital media and media creation, can increase student motivation (Henry, 2018; Reinhardt et al., 2014). This motivation may be key in promoting long-lasting habits of interaction with the target language.

## Genre

In reference to writing, Hyland (2007) defines *genre* as “abstract, socially recognized ways of using language” (p. 149). He goes on to say that “members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily” (p. 149). This definition is equally applicable to other forms of creative work. In the context of podcasts, a *genre* refers to a categorical classification that organizes content based on its thematic choices, stylistic approach, or formal characteristics.

Major podcast platforms generally organize podcasts into “categories” denoting general topics or themes (such as “society and culture” or “true crime”) or take the stylistic approach (typified by “fiction” or its sub-genre “drama”). The labeling of podcasts as one genre or another has been inconsistent across platforms. Spotify puts podcasts into genre categories through multiple methods, including editorial curation and self-selection (Spotify, n.d.), whereas Apple Podcasts more simply asks the uploader to set it themselves (Apple, n.d.). For convenience, when referencing specific genres in this paper, we will refer to the genre categories that match podcast designations in Apple Podcasts.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our interest in this project was to explore the points where extrinsic motivation crosses over into intrinsic motivation. It seems to us that genre interest is a crucial point of intersection: Language students’ personal and cultural interests are key to unlocking an interest in podcasts, which would then be beneficial for their long-term learning. For this reason, we, the authors, aimed to discover if teaching students about podcasts and introducing them to different genres of podcasts, rather than solely asking them to produce one, would encourage them to view podcasts as the aforementioned “enjoyable listening experience.” As an exploratory first step in understanding how to encourage students in these ways, we decided to investigate the following research questions:

- RQ1. What genres of podcasts (English and Japanese) are interesting to Japanese university students?
- RQ2. In what way (if any) does studying/creating podcasts alter student genre

preferences?

In attempting to answer the second research question, a follow-up question arose:

RQ2a. Are the alterations different for Japanese podcast genre preferences and English podcast genre preferences?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

In a second-year media literacy course at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan, 102 students in the authors' five class sections were chosen through convenience sampling to trial a new podcast-focused unit. All students were enrolled in English degrees; three sections belonged to the International Business Communication degree program and were mixed-level classes, and two sections were studying for English degrees and had been placed in "mid-tier" levels. The media literacy course is a required credit for both degree programs and consists of media analysis and media production. The authors created and piloted this unit for ultimate inclusion as an optional unit of this mandatory course.

### **The Podcast Unit**

The designers of this research simultaneously designed the podcast unit with the belief that the creation of media both fosters understanding and deepens interest in that media. With that in mind, the eight- or nine-lesson unit was created to introduce students to the history, various genres and formats, and the fundamental elements of the structure of the podcast medium. The students were required to record and produce an episode of their own in a group. Students were allowed to choose any genre and format and to focus on any topic in which the group members shared an interest.

While class time was taken up with activities analyzing clips, investigating podcast structural elements in groups, or creating the episodes for their final projects, students were also asked to research and listen to podcasts on their own outside of class sessions. Each teacher in this study modified the activity slightly differently for their classes. During the four weeks of the podcast unit, students were asked to listen either to one podcast and report on it in a multi-paragraph form or listen to three podcasts (almost weekly) and report on them in a few sentences for each.

### **Instruments**

In the first lesson of the podcast unit, students were asked to fill out a consent form allowing the authors to collect data regarding their classwork and projects, as well as the answers to a series of surveys. The first (pre-unit) survey was also administered in the first class, before any activities began. The pre-unit

survey asked students about their current listening habits, and their genre interests. We inquired about Japanese-language and English-language podcasts due to the Japan context and our students' degrees.

In the last class (the eighth class for two sections; the ninth class for the other three), students were given a post-unit survey. The structure of the survey and the questions were slightly altered from the pre-unit survey, asking instead about students' *intent* to listen to podcasts in the future, the amount they *intended* to listen to, and genres they *intended* to listen to. The rationale for changing the questions was that students might not have had time to adjust their listening habits while working on their projects; therefore, an intention to do so was thought to possibly be more reflective of any changes.

Finally, two authors were able to survey four of the five sections of students in January 2023 at the end of the academic year, approximately 60 or 90 days after the post-unit survey. This will be referred to as the "delayed post-unit survey." In this third survey, we asked about students' listening habits at the time. The specific survey questions from each survey that are related to this study are shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. Survey Questions Regarding Student Podcast Listening and Genre Interest**

Pre-Unit Survey	Post-Unit Survey	Delayed Post-Unit Survey
How much time do you usually spend listening to Japanese podcasts in your free time?	How much time do you intend to spend listening to Japanese podcasts in the future?	How much time do you usually spend listening to Japanese podcasts in your free time?
What kind of Japanese podcasts do you listen to, and why? What do you think about them?	What kind of Japanese podcasts do you intend to listen to, and why?	What kind of Japanese podcasts do you listen to, and why? What do you think about them?
How much time do you usually spend listening to English-language podcasts in your free time?	How much time do you intend to spend listening to English-language podcasts in the future?	How much time do you usually spend listening to English-language podcasts in your free time?
What kind of English-language podcasts do you listen to, and why? What do you think about them?	What kind of English-language podcasts do you intend to listen to, and why?	What kind of English-language podcasts do you listen to, and why? What do you think about them?

## RESULTS

### Interest in Podcasts

At first, in the pre-unit survey, we asked students if they had ever listened to podcasts before the first class and whether they had listened to Japanese or English podcasts. Seventy-one out of 101 students responded that they had listened to a podcast before. Forty-four responded that they had listened to Japanese podcasts, and fifty-one said they had listened to podcasts in English.

In the post-unit survey, we inquired about students' intent to listen to podcasts in the future. Ninety-one out of 98 students indicated interest in

listening to podcasts, with increases in interest in both Japanese and English podcasts.

We were able to contact 76 students for the delayed post-unit survey on their usage of podcasts at that point in time (two months after the end of the unit for 43 students and three months after the end of the unit for 33 students). Compared to stated interest in the post-unit survey, the number of students listening to podcasts a few months later was much lower, but the interest in English podcasts was still higher than that of Japanese podcasts. See Table 2 for a summary of these numbers.

**TABLE 2. Students’ Usage and Interest in Using Podcasts Across Three Surveys**

	<b>Pre-Unit (n = 101)</b>	<b>Post-Unit (n = 98)</b>	<b>Delayed (n = 76)</b>
	Usage before unit	Future interest	Usage 2–3 mo. later
Any podcast	71 (70%)	91 (93%)	35 (46%)
Japanese podcasts	44 (44%)	75 (77%)	18 (24%)
English podcasts	51 (51%)	87 (89%)	27 (36%)

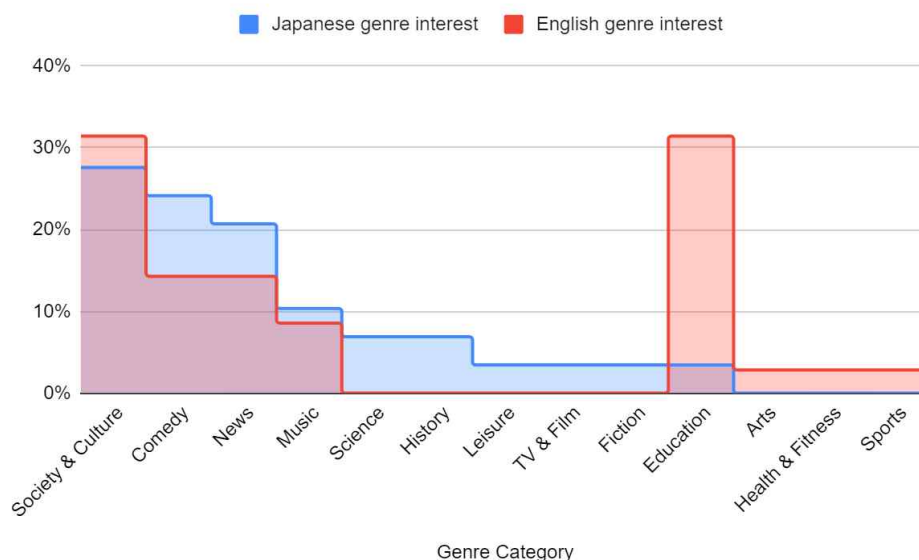
### Genre Interest

In this section, we will examine results chronologically, combining survey results and collated data from student assignments. Within this results section, we will focus on survey answers comparing Japanese genre interest and English genre interest. Thus, we have broken down each survey’s data and compared genre interest for each collection time. (For full descriptive statistics of genre survey answers, as well as easy comparison of the three surveys’ data across time, see Appendix A.)

In the pre-unit survey ( $n = 102$ ), we asked students what kinds of podcasts they had listened to or were listening to at the time, both in Japanese and in English. Twenty-nine students reported interest in 10 Japanese-language genres. The top four Japanese genres were society and culture (28%), comedy (24%), news (21%) and music (10%). The genre of education was only referenced by one respondent (3%) when discussing Japanese podcasts.

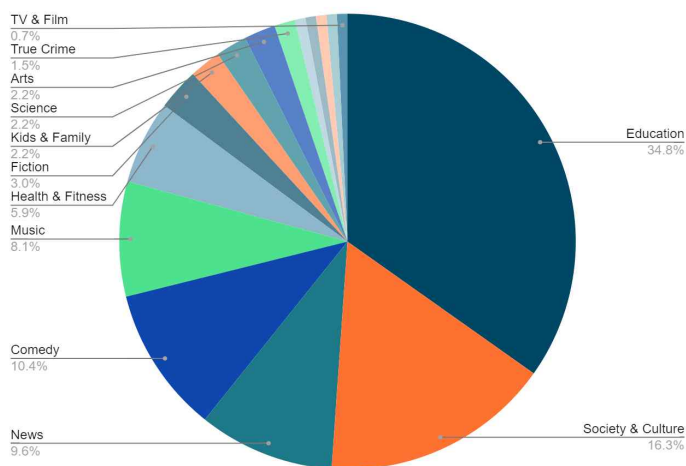
In contrast, results from the pre-unit survey regarding English podcast genres showed only eight categories of interest. Among the 35 students who responded to this question, education (31%) and society and culture (31%) were the top genres, followed by comedy (14%) and news (14%), with music in fifth place (at 9%). See Figure 1 for a comparison of the interest in Japanese genres and English genres.

**FIGURE 1. Comparison of Interest in Japanese Podcast Genres and English Podcast Genres**



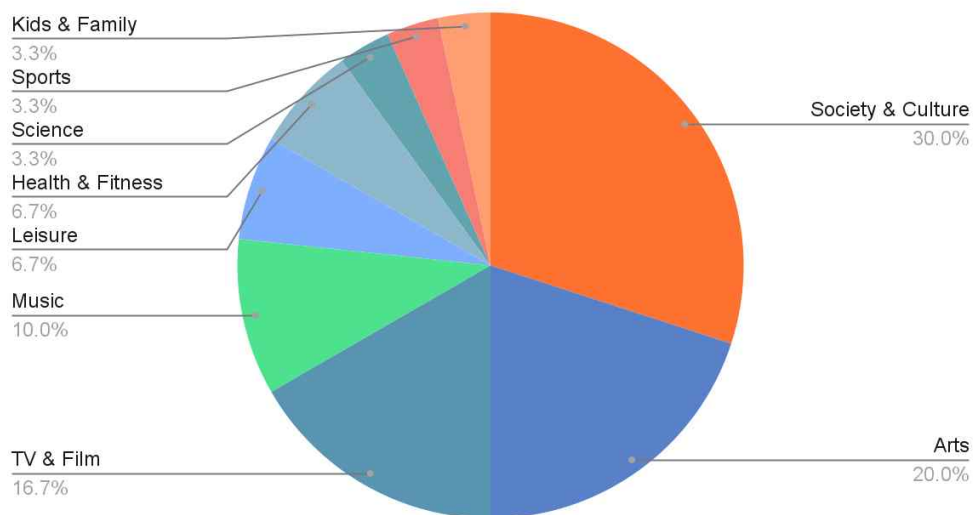
After the pre-unit survey and until the end of the unit, students were instructed to choose and listen to English podcasts outside of class. Three groups of students ( $n = 43$ , including only those who completed the assignment) were asked to report about one English-language podcast during the approximately four weeks of lessons, and two other groups ( $n = 43$ , including only those who completed the assignment at least partially) were asked to report about listening to three podcasts. For both groups, the most popular English genres were education, society and culture, news, and comedy. Music was also popular among the group that was asked to listen to three podcasts, but it was not well represented among the group that was asked to listen to only one podcast. Combining all student entries, Figure 2 shows the prominent genres.

**FIGURE 2. Podcast Genres Students Chose to Listen To in English Outside Class ( $n = 86$ )**



At the end of the unit, we asked students to collaborate with their group members to create an episode of a podcast. Genre was left to them to decide. From the 30 groups, nine distinct genre categories were produced. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the genres among the 30 student podcasts.

**FIGURE 3. Genres of Student-Made Podcasts (*n* = 30)**

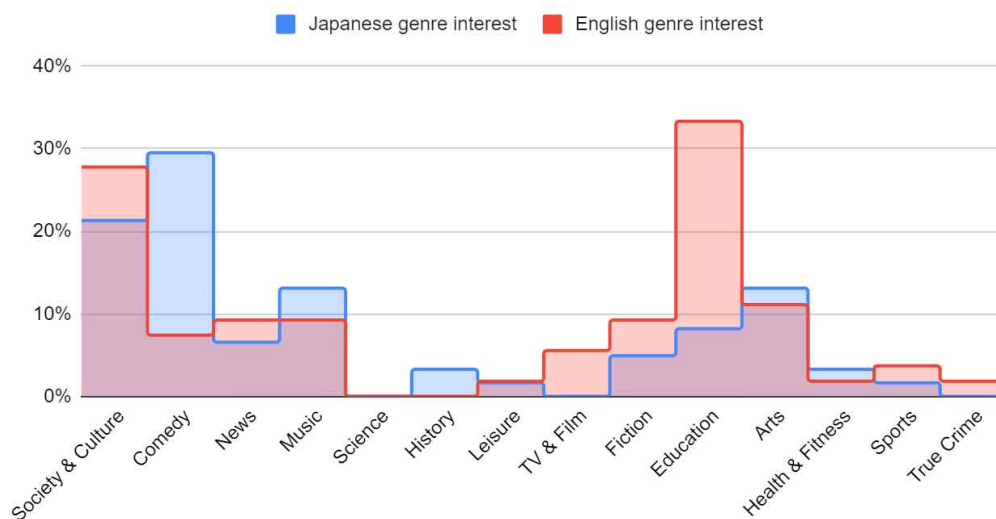


In the post-unit survey, we asked students about what they would like to listen to in the future, regarding both Japanese and English podcasts. In both cases, the variety of genres widened, but a similar pattern of top interests could be observed.

Regarding Japanese podcasts, 61 students professed an interest in 11 different genres, including three genres not mentioned in the pre-unit survey equivalent. Comedy (30%) was now the top genre pick, followed by society and culture (21%), music (13%) and arts (13%). Education was only popular among five respondents (8%) in the Japanese-focused question.

English genre interest was again different from Japanese podcast interest, as 54 students indicated interest in 12 genres (up from eight in the pre-unit survey). Top genres were education (33%), society and culture (28%), and arts (11%), with music and news tying for fourth place (9% for each). Figure 4 shows a comparison of Japanese and English interests for this round.

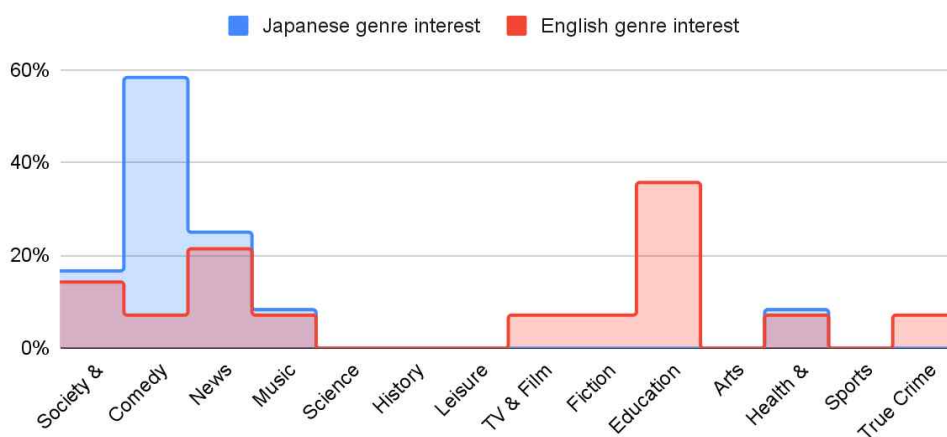
**FIGURE 4. Comparison of Interest in Japanese Podcast Genres and English Podcast Genres**



Finally, in the delayed post-unit survey, we were able to get responses from 12 students who were listening to Japanese podcasts with regard to the genres that they were listening to two or three months after the unit had ended. Even with such low numbers, we could see that the most common genres were still popular: seven students (58%) were listening to comedy podcasts, three (25%) were listening to news podcasts, two (17%) to society and culture podcasts, and one each (8%) to music and health/fitness podcasts.

Fourteen students revealed that they were listening to English podcasts of nine different genres. Five (36%) were listening to education podcasts, three (21%) to news podcasts, and two (14%) to society and culture podcasts. The full results of the genre questions can be explored in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5. Comparison of Interest in Japanese Podcast Genres and English Podcast Genres**



## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Research Question 1 (RQ1), regarding what genres are interesting for our learners, has been answered in the results section: Society and culture podcasts were on the top for both languages, and interest in education podcasts in English increased and stayed number one through the end of the observation period, partially answering RQ2.

Students' interest in podcasts in general was raised, at least temporarily, by a great deal over the course of the unit. While it is difficult to determine what aspect of the unit raised this interest, the implication is that some combination of analyzing and creating podcasts may have helped.

Students' interest in different podcast genres was also broadened. They were encouraged to try new genres in their outside-class extensive listening assignments, and they experimented with new genres in the episodes they produced.

Regarding RQ2a, we found that, though many genre interests overlapped, students gravitated towards comedy podcasts in their native Japanese, whereas they were drawn to educational podcasts in English. Most comedy is inherently cultural, therefore students who gain pleasure from listening to Japanese comedy podcasts, for which they have the necessary reference points, may not find English comedy podcasts funny enough to be interesting, or they may simply be too incomprehensible for students to enjoy listening to.

We can infer that students were not intrinsically interested in podcasts in the education genre category from the fact that they typically do not listen to educational podcasts in their native language. None of the group-created podcasts for their projects were centered around educational topics, either. And yet, educational podcasts, such as 6 Minute English or podcast versions of TED talks, remained king in the English genre sector when students self-selected podcasts to listen to.

The participants were university students studying English for their degree and for proficiency tests that may determine their academic and future careers. It is expected that educational podcasts, especially English-learning podcasts, would remain in high demand among this group, due to extrinsic motivation. However, the concept of extensive listening, and the purpose thereof, may need to be reintroduced to the students.

Researchers and teachers may believe that practicing listening strategies with intrinsically interesting and authentic listening materials can have good results for students, but students may not believe that such time investment would be beneficial. They may see the educational podcasts as delivering results more quickly and in a more classroom-esque manner. Therefore, another possible implication of this research is that instructors ought to address, in class, the importance of listening in a target language for pleasure, just as reading instructors tend to do with reading for pleasure.

## LIMITATIONS

Surveying the students before, just after, and 2–3 months after the podcast unit was not sufficient to understand its effect on their interest in different kinds

of podcasts. First, our survey questions varied, asking alternately about current use of podcasts and intent of use. Second, our delayed post-unit survey was not delayed enough, and students were in the final weeks of a hectic end of their academic year; their listening for pleasure in their free time would understandably have been constrained. To remedy this and hopefully learn more about students' long-term podcast usage, we plan to survey our students again at the end of their summer break, a bit less than a year after they did the unit and about nine months after they took the delayed post-unit survey.

Furthermore, our survey questions did not encourage students to respond separately with regards to which genres they preferred and why they liked them. Thus, we did not receive enough quantitative data about the popularity of genres, nor did we receive nearly enough substantive qualitative data about students' perspectives on them. We have revised our survey questions to separate the collection of these data and hopefully receive better feedback from students on both points.

Finally, a significant limitation of this study was that we had no way to accurately measure the quantity and quality of students' listening activities beyond self-report. Students may have reported listening to comedy and music podcasts twice a week, but the durations of those podcasts or even of those listening sessions are not precisely known, nor is the attentiveness of the students while listening to them. Likewise, in the outside-class assignment, students reported contact with various kinds of podcasts, but they did not report how long they listened to them, nor how much of them they comprehended. We encouraged students to listen to authentic materials without regard to students' English levels, which certainly may have led to lower comprehension and thus less motivation to continue listening to these kinds of materials. We acknowledge that mismatches in L2 ability and difficulty of material may work against motivating our students to build listening habits with podcasts, but we believe that exploring personally meaningful genres could still lead to higher intrinsic motivation and thus better habit-formation.

## **CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

Podcasts are a potentially limitless source of authentic, meaningful input for students studying a language. Given that the average American listener consumes eight episodes of podcasts per week (Edison, 2024), English language podcasts could easily become source material for endless hours of extensive listening. The difficulty lies in sparking student interest in the medium. In this study, we investigated our belief that genre could play a role in that interest.

It seems clear from our results that, at least in the short term, the process of studying about and then creating podcasts does indeed inspire passionate podcast listeners. Moreover, with the perhaps understandable exceptions of education and comedy, student interest in Japanese and English language podcast genres tend to closely overlap. This supports our hypothesis that genre identification, listening to podcasts on topics that they find personally meaningful, contributes to student interest in and engagement with the medium.

The research on podcasts in SLA and extensive listening as a whole remains

scarce. The clear next step is to check back with the same students in a longitudinal manner. We plan to contact as many of our participants as possible on a yearly basis, at least until graduation, to ascertain if they continue to consume podcasts for pleasure and at what frequency. We also intend to more thoroughly investigate students' beliefs and reasons for listening to various genres of podcast. As podcasting continues to spread out of the Anglosphere and into the rest of the world, we hope that others will look into the unique possibilities it offers for increasing student engagement with target languages. We welcome other researchers' investigation into this vital topic.

## THE AUTHORS

**Edward Cooper Howland** is an English teacher from Massachusetts, USA, currently residing in Chiba, Japan. His research interests revolve around the intersection of prosody, podcasting, and predictive language processing. In his spare time, he enjoys riding his bicycle in the countryside. Email: howland-e@kanda.kuis.ac.jp

**Andrej Krasnansky** is a lecturer at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan. His research interests are in media literacy, multimodal input, L2 writing instruction, CALL, and classroom engagement. Currently, his free time is taken up with his newborn and practicing his Spanish by making a podcast. Email: krasnansky-a@kanda.kuis.ac.jp

**Ashton Dawes** is a lecturer at Kanda University of International Studies from the southeastern United States. Her research interests include L2 writing instruction and feedback, AI feedback, student expectations and media in conflict. Email: ashtondawes@gmail.com

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## APPENDIX A

### Descriptive Statistics for Genre Questions Across Three Surveys

We report here the full descriptive statistics results of our questions regarding genre as seen in Table 1 of this paper. Table A1 details what genres of Japanese podcasts were reported in all three surveys, and Table A2 shows the reported genres of English podcasts that students were interested in or listening to. Numbers of student responses and the percentages are reported, and changes in percentages (6% or higher) are noted in parentheses.

A note about the numbers of responses: Although more students reported listening to both Japanese and English podcasts, only a selection of them responded to our questions about genre with identifiable genre categories. Furthermore, as explained above in the Methods section, only four out of the five sections of students were available to take the delayed post-unit survey, so student responses were even lower for the third survey.

**TABLE A1. Japanese Genre Interest: Pre-Unit, Post-Unit, Delayed Post-Unit**

Genre Category	Pre-Unit		Post-Unit		Delayed Post-Unit	
	<i>n</i> = 29		<i>n</i> = 61		<i>n</i> = 12	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Society & Culture	8	28%	13	21% (↓7%)	2	17%
Comedy	7	24%	18	30% (↑6%)	7	58%
News	6	21%	4	7% (↓14%)	3	25%
Music	3	10%	8	13%	1	8%
Science	2	7%	0	0%	0	0%
History	2	7%	2	3%	0	0%
Leisure	1	3%	1	2%	0	0%
TV & Film	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
Fiction	1	3%	3	5%	0	0%
Education	1	3%	5	8%	0	0%
Arts			8	13%	0	0%
Health & Fitness			2	3%	1	8%
Sports			1	2%	0	0%

**TABLE A2. English Genre Interest: Pre-Unit, Post-Unit, Delayed Post-Unit**

Genre	Pre-Unit		Post-Unit		Delayed Post-Unit	
	<i>n</i> = 35		<i>n</i> = 54		<i>n</i> = 14	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Education	11	31%	18	33%	5	36%
Society & Culture	11	31%	15	28%	2	14%
Comedy	5	14%	4	7%	1	7%
News	5	14%	5	9%	3	21%
Music	3	9%	5	9%	1	7%
Arts	1	3%	6	11% (↑ 8%)	0	0%
Health & Fitness	1	3%	1	2%	1	7%
Sports	1	3%	2	4%	0	0%
Leisure			1	2%	0	0%
True Crime			1	2%	1	7%
Fiction			5	9%	1	7%
TV & Film			3	6%	1	7%



# Transition from Traditional Pedagogy to Self-Regulated Learning for Lifelong Success

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Sayma Ahmed

*North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

Beyond the conventional emphasis on linguistic acquisition, the effectiveness of English as a second language (ESL) education lies in empowering learners by nurturing overall competencies in order to achieve academic brilliance, problem-solving and critical thinking aptitudes, and to apply the language in real-world contexts. This holistic success is best achieved through the incorporation of self-efficacy and self-regulated learning methodologies to prepare learners for a complex environment, enabling them to develop autonomy, take on a teacher-like role, and step out of a passive learning role. In this approach, learners and educators collaborate as a team. This paradigmatic shift is validated through a mixed-methodology, incorporating in-depth interviews and surveys with university educators and learners. The data analysis employed a descriptive thematic analytical approach. The findings suggest that the active and thoughtful participation of students not only facilitates successful language acquisition but also confirms lifelong competencies, going beyond momentary academic achievements.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper critically examines the antiquated role of educators within traditional pedagogy in perpetuating passive learning through structured curricula and solution-centric methods. It argues for a transition towards self-directed learning, prioritizing the skills of problem-solving, critical thinking, and autonomy as crucial for lifelong success in ESL education. Educators are encouraged to equip learners with the skills needed to become self-directed, enabling them to rely on their problem-solving capabilities. This shifts the focus away from traditional pedagogy, where learners depend solely on external guidance, to a model where learners take on more active roles in their learning, with educators serving as facilitators toward autonomy. Nevertheless, this progression towards autonomy does not diminish the significant role of educators, who act as mentors by modelling skills, supporting growth, and instilling confidence, during the initial stages of learning. As learners progress in proficiency, educators gradually recede, granting learners increasing autonomy and responsibility. Thus, self-directed learning empowers learners while educators ensure their preparedness for academic and professional success on the global stage without constant supervision.

RQ1. How does the integration of self-regulated learning contribute to the

- enhancement of lifelong competencies and academic success among ESL learners in Bangladesh?
- RQ2. What are the perceived challenges encountered by instructors and learners in adopting a self-regulated learning approach in ESL instruction?
- RQ3. What are the perceptions of learners and educators about self-regulated learning?
- RQ4. How does the transition from conventional pedagogy to a self-regulated learning approach facilitate the development of student autonomy in language acquisition?

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Lifelong Success with Self-Regulated Learning Strategies**

Nurturing self-regulatory learning (SRL) habits among students yields advantages for a multitude of reasons. Students exhibiting strong SRL skills showcase elevated academic achievements and are inclined to enroll in advanced courses, exposing themselves to more complex academic challenges (De Corte, 2011). There exists a prevailing consensus with regards to a strong positive correlation between students' learning, academic achievement, and life beyond, with self-regulation (De Corte, 2019; Schunk & Greene, 2018). The proficiency of SRL holds significance in shaping students' lifelong learning habits, facilitating sustainable educational development for their overall growth. (Coklar & Yurdakul, 2017; Kotaman, Balci, & Aydin, 2018).

Cohen (1990) defines self-directed learning as a pedagogical method in which “learners make decisions, alone or with the help of others, about what they need or want to know, how they will set objectives for learning, what resources and strategies they will use, and how they will assess their progress” (p. 10). Self-regulation is characterized by “self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 14).

Given the inherent variety in learners, characterized by differences in their cognitive abilities and preferred learning approaches, learners must skillfully structure their own learning and use “specific abilities to navigate different (learning) environments” (Reinders & White 2011, p. 2). According to Bandura (2006), learners should utilize three essential mechanisms: self-observation, self-judgment, and self-reaction, enabling them to monitor and adapt their learning behaviors accordingly.

Language learners, driven by clear goals, actively take charge of their learning journey through self-regulated language learning strategies, directed toward the attainment of linguistic proficiency (Oxford, 2011). Self-regulated learners master the art of self-regulation by employing a variety of SRL strategies encompassing metacognitive self-regulation, cognitive methodologies, and environment and resource management, to proficiently regulate their learning endeavors (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

## **Self-Efficacy and Motivational Beliefs in Academic Achievement**

Motivational beliefs involve how much importance students place on the material or skills they are acquiring, their belief in their own capabilities, and the driving forces behind their academic success (Wolters & Rosenthal, 2000). Self-efficacy, task value beliefs, and goal orientation are the three main elements of motivational beliefs, according to Pintrich (1999).

Wolters (1998) emphasizes that the predominant focus in self-regulation studies lies within its cognitive aspects; however, the importance of SRL extends beyond the cognitive realm, particularly emphasizing motivational and affective aspects. Pintrich (2000) took Bandura's classification of SRL a step further by asserting that SRL encompasses four key factors. To achieve a holistic perspective, it is crucial to move beyond cognitive considerations and give due consideration to motivational, affective, and contextual factors. Research suggests that motivational beliefs play a crucial role in nurturing and perpetuating SRL, thereby constituting a direct academic achievement (Pintrich, 2003).

Self-efficacy denotes an individual's confidence in their capacity to effectively execute a particular task, based upon a genuine assessment of their own skills. Self-efficacy plays a significant role in the realm of learning, exerting a considerable impact on one's motivation, affective states, and behavioral patterns (Bandura, 2006). Students characterized by a strong sense of self-efficacy were observed to employ more cognitive and metacognitive strategies, demonstrating heightened perseverance in challenging circumstances, in contrast to their counterparts possessing lower levels of self-efficacy (Pajares, 2009). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy refers to how individuals hold their own capacity to structure and implement all the actions necessary for achieving predetermined accomplishments.

Researchers have consistently sought to identify elements that impact students' achievements in acquiring English language skills in EFL/ESL settings (Bai, 2018; Muñoz, 2017; Wang & Bai, 2017). The crucial determinants influencing students' learning encompass motivational beliefs, such as self-efficacy and intrinsic value. Studies investigating motivation aim to address the factors influencing individuals' actions and understanding the cognitive processes influencing their thoughts and behaviors (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Wigfield & Cambria, 2010; Wigfield et al., 2015).

## **Autonomy and Active Engagement in the Learning Process**

Students with strong SRL skills acquire additional academic and professional advantages. Students who excel in tasks such as organization, self-reflection, and self-monitoring tend to score better on exams (Becker, 2013).

Those language learners who possess stronger self-efficacy beliefs demonstrate greater self-regulation (Liem et al., 2008; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Good language learners prioritize acquiring effective communication skills and adhere to the belief that the best approach to language acquisition lies in active usage of that language (Ellis, 1989). Instead of depending solely on the guidance of the teacher, they are inclined to take risks and control their own learning (Ellis, 1989; Rubin, 1975). Effective language learners display a capacity to endure uncertainty

and vagueness within language, sustain persistence in the pursuit of their goals, and possess awareness of the intricacies involved in the learning process (Ellis, 1989). They have a tendency to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context and often employ circumlocution and gestures for effective communication (Rubin, 1975). They engage with the language structure by employing processes such as analysis, categorization, and synthesis in terms of cognition (Rubin, 1975). Effective language learners integrate conscious learning strategies not only into formal classroom settings but also into their everyday activities (Chamot, 1987).

Learning strategies in the realm of language acquisition are characterized as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8; see Appendix B). Learners with a robust belief in their ability to control their own learning processes were strongly linked to their self-efficacy beliefs. These beliefs demonstrated a positive correlation with the utilization of self-regulated strategies and a negative correlation with seeking assistance from adults (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990).

Developing SRL skills is crucial for students in higher education because of their enormous benefits. There has been a misconception that university students already possessed SRL skills, but many are not adequately prepared to handle challenges, especially in terms of autonomy and independence (Bjork et al., 2013).

## **METHOD**

The research employs a mixed methodology, which refers to the integration of qualitative and quantitative research approaches within a single study or research project. Qualitative and quantitative research methods have distinct strengths. Qualitative methods are valuable for exploring complex phenomena, capturing in-depth insights, and generating rich descriptions and explanations. On the other hand, quantitative methods provide statistical rigor, generalizability, and the ability to measure relationships and patterns. By combining these approaches, researchers can capitalize on the strengths of each method and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Utilizing mixed methodology enables researchers to explore research questions more thoroughly and from multiple perspectives.

### **Participants Characteristics**

The participants in this study consisted of two distinct groups. The first group was comprised of 19- to 25-year-old male and female undergraduate students studying at various universities located in Dhaka. Most importantly they all had to do English language courses at the beginning of their studies at their university.

The second group was comprised of 30- to 48-year-old male and female teachers, both native and non-native speakers, teaching at various private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. They all majored in English literature or TESOL.

## **Data Collection Process**

The data collection process for this study involved the use of survey questionnaires and interviews to gather the perceptions of students and teachers. The specific details of the data collection process are as follows:

### **Survey Questionnaires**

The author utilized survey questionnaires to collect data from the participants. The questionnaires were administered using Google Forms, and the link was shared with the authorities of various universities. The authorities then forwarded the link to different departments to reach the target population. In total, 183 students responded to the questionnaire, providing their perceptions and insights.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

To gain more in-depth insights into the teachers' and students' perceptions, sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. The author made appointments with teachers and students and scheduled the interviews accordingly. The interviews aimed to explore the details and nuances of the teachers' and students' perspectives on the research topic. The interviews were conducted in English, and the author transcribed them for further analysis.

It is important to note that the selection of participants for interviews was based on their willingness to participate and their responsiveness. The interviews were scheduled with the teachers and students who responded first and agreed to take part in the interview process.

The use of a combination of survey questionnaires and interviews allowed the author to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaires provided a broader perspective from a larger sample size, while the interviews offered more detailed and nuanced insights from a smaller group of participants.

By clearly outlining the data collection process, including the methods used, the number of participants, and the mode of data collection, the research ensures transparency and replicability of the study.

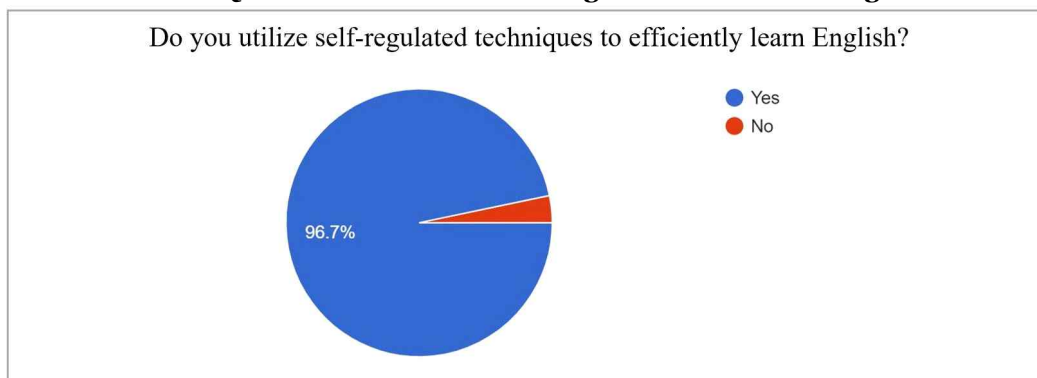
## **QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **Learners' Perceptions About Self-Regulated Learning**

#### **A Strong Preference for Self-Regulated Learning**

Out of the 183 respondents, approximately 96.7% ( $n = 177$ ) indicated their utilization of self-regulated techniques to efficiently learn English. The high mean percentage (96.7%) suggests a significant and consistent preference towards utilizing self-regulated methods (see Figure 1).

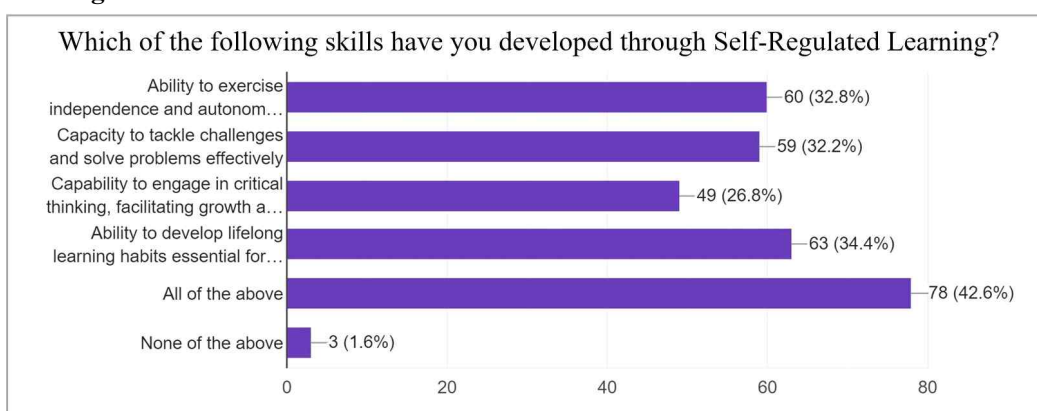
**FIGURE 1. Learner Questionnaire Results: A Strong Preference for Self-Regulated Learning**



### Skills Developed Through Self-Regulated Learning

Derived from the responses regarding the skills developed through self-regulated learning, 32.8% ( $n = 60$ ) opted for “ability to exercise autonomy in taking charge of the learning process”; 32.2% ( $n = 59$ ) selected the option “capacity to tackle challenges and solve problems”; 26.8% ( $n = 49$ ) emphasized capability to engage in critical thinking, facilitating growth as a more skilled and analytical thinker”; 34.4% ( $n = 63$ ) opted for “ability to develop lifelong learning habits”; 42.6% ( $n = 78$ ), the majority of respondents, chose the option “all of the above”; and 1.6% ( $n = 3$ ) selected the option “none of the above.” The mean percentage is approximately 33.76%. The findings highlight the varied benefits of SRL (see Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2. Learner Questionnaire Results: Skills Developed Through Self-Regulated Learning**

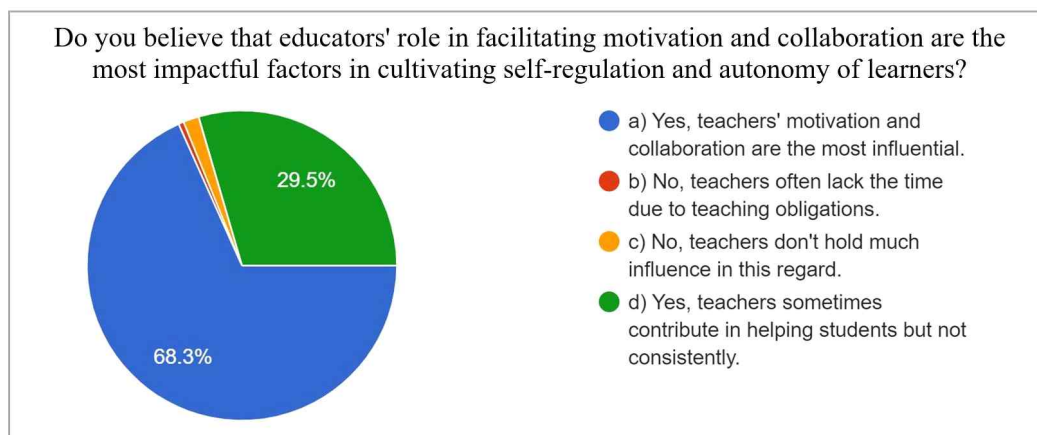


### Educators’ Role in Facilitating Motivation and Collaboration to Promote Self-Regulation

Participants varied in their views on the impact of educators’ motivation and collaboration in fostering self-regulation and independence among learners. The majority of the participants (68.3%,  $n = 125$ ) strongly believed that educators’ motivation and collaboration are the most influential factors in promoting

self-regulation and autonomy among learners, while a tiny minority (0.5%,  $n = 1$ ) echoed the sentiment that educators often lack the time, due to teaching obligations, to effectively contribute to learners' self-regulation. Similarly, a small fraction (1.6%,  $n = 3$ ) expressed doubts about educators' influence. Additionally, some (29.5%,  $n = 54$ ) acknowledged educators' contributions but indicated inconsistency in support.

**FIGURE 3. Learner Questionnaire Results: Educators' Role in Facilitating Motivation and Collaboration**



## Findings and Discussion

### Embracing Autonomy Through Self-Regulated Learning

The majority of learners were naturally drawn towards SRL skills, signaling a strong sense of autonomy in their academic pursuits. They eagerly took on the responsibility of guiding their own educational journey. This affinity for SRL skills reflects their deep motivation, wholehearted engagement, and a desire for autonomy in their learning journey.

### Self-Regulated Learning for Holistic Growth and Lifelong Success

SRL contributed to the holistic development of ESL learners by promoting autonomy, problem-solving, critical thinking, and a mindset for lifelong learning habits. These competencies prepare learners to succeed not only in academic pursuits but also in their professional spheres.

### Academic and Professional Success Through Self-Regulated Learning

Success in academia and the professional realm is intricately interconnected. SRL helps learners develop a range of skills that are valuable in both academic and professional contexts, thus establishing a solid foundation for their future ambitions.

### Educators' Vital Role in Developing Learner Self-Regulation

The motivational influence exerted by educators on learners can significantly boost learners' self-efficacy, and self-efficacious learners are more likely to engage in

metacognitive activities and perseverance amid challenges. Despite the recognized importance of educator motivation and support, various obstacles hinder its consistent application. The demanding teaching workload limits educators' time and effort for personalized learner assistance.

## **QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **Learner Perception**

#### **Mastering English Through Self-Regulation**

Learners demonstrated a strong grasp of the SRL methods and conscious endeavor to enhance English skills. One respondent, initially aiming for fluency, redirected focus to foundational elements:

At the start of learning English, my goal was fluency, but I soon shifted to a foundational approach, focusing on the basics, like pronunciation and vocabulary. By engaging in daily English conversations, my skills improved dramatically, transforming early stumbles into confident communication.

Another respondent emphasized the significance of self-regulation in preparing for standardized tests, like the IELTS or GRE, crucial for academic and professional success: "I put a long list of GRE vocabulary at the top of my reading table to memorize and use them in daily communication." Another learner adopted an innovative approach to enhance listening and comprehension skills: "Whenever I encounter a word or phrase I don't comprehend, I google it and find the Bengali translation. This practice not only aids in memorization but also deepens comprehension within context." Moreover, setting clear learning goals and employing diverse instructional strategies emerge as common activities.

#### **Challenges and Expert Support for Self-Directed Effort**

Mastering English through SRL poses notable challenges, particularly in speaking and writing. Forming sentences and overcoming stage fright during speaking can be daunting. Respondents set specific, measurable goals; tracked their progress; and sought educators' assistance to overcome these challenges. Respondents enhanced their vocabulary, sentence structure, and spelling by reading English books and watching series. Educators were crucial, with one emphasizing, "Translate your thoughts from Bengali to English and make learning less intimidating." One instructor was reassuring: "It's okay to speak broken English as long as you can express yourself." These strategies and educator support were essential for overcoming linguistic barriers.

#### **SRL as a Cornerstone for Ongoing Success**

Respondents articulated the transformative power of SRL in both mastering English and developing lifelong skills. As one individual remarked, "Successfully mastering English requires dedication, consistent practice, and a positive mindset." By taking ownership of their learning, setting goals, monitoring progress, and seeking resources, learners enhance language proficiency and essential skills, such

as self-discipline and critical thinking. Another reflected, “I experienced a remarkable transformation from being a hesitant and uncertain speaker to becoming more articulate and self-assured,” illustrating SRL’s psychological benefits. Another concluded, “Self-regulated learning, coupled with patience and persistent practice, holds the key to success not only in mastering English but also in realizing ambitions across my educational and personal pursuits.” This underscores SRL’s essential role in developing critical competencies, such as problem-solving, adaptability, and motivation, crucial for life and career advancement. The confidence gained from SRL is invaluable throughout learners’ lives.

## **Educators’ Perceptions**

### **Integrating Self-Efficacy and SRL Strategies in ESL Teaching**

Educators integrated self-efficacy within classrooms by creating a supportive ambiance and delivering constructive feedback. They prioritize goal-setting and progress acknowledgment, showcasing that language acquisition success is attainable. Acknowledging learners’ cultural backgrounds over rigid adherence to American or British norms boosts confidence. One educator explained, “I encourage students to embrace cultural context when articulating in English rather than feeling obligated to speak in a very American or British manner.” Educators employed videos featuring proficient non-native English speakers to alleviate pressure: “I exhibit videos displaying French people conversing in English with confidence.” Learners applied SRL skills across activities encompassing note-taking, summarizing, role-playing, and peer feedback.

### **English Course Case Studies: SRL Challenges and Outcomes**

Respondents noted that weaker learners gained increased motivation and confidence, while stronger learners attained a profound understanding and greater efficacy. An educator remarked, “Learners lack familiarity with self-regulated learning because their pre-university education emphasized rote memorization. Nonetheless, with sustained guidance, they progressively take charge and conquer initial fear.” In English 111, focused on Public Speaking, learners overcame shyness and anxieties through optimism and nonverbal communication strategies. In English 103, focused on writing, feedback emphasized clarity over complexity, facilitating language learning. Positive feedback is crucial for building confidence, as noted by another educator: “When learners lack confidence, it poses hurdles to believe in their capability to advance.”

### **Suggestions for Autonomy Enhancement**

Educators advocated for clear and attainable expectations to reduce ambiguity and sharpen learners’ focus. Gradually reducing assistance as proficiency improves cultivates autonomy and confidence. Consistent introspection and feedback through journaling, peer reviews, or self-assessment help learners grasp progression and identify areas for refinement. Integrating technology and real-world tasks, such as language apps and virtual simulations, enhances learning. Role-playing activities align with learners’ goals, while self-assessment tools, such as rubrics and checklists, promote ownership.

### **Assessing ESL Success Through Lifelong Language Mastery**

Mastery in language acquisition is marked by a learner's ability to self-regulate and take charge of their learning journey. This entails acknowledging the long-term importance of English, setting and achieving goals independently, learning from mistakes, and consistently seeking opportunities for improvement. Educators guide learners towards autonomy, yet success ultimately lies with learners integrating English proficiency into personal and professional life. This ability is crucial as learners transition from academic to professional realms, where English proficiency frequently determines success.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The qualitative analysis underscores the diverse impact of self-regulated learning within the realm of ESL education. Firstly, it demonstrates how SRL amplifies learners' proficiency and fundamental lifelong competencies. Furthermore, it uncovers effective learner engagement with SRL methodologies, offering insights that can shape future research and pedagogical methodologies in the field of English language education. Notably, it illuminates educators' viewpoints on SRL and self-efficacy strategies, offering valuable insights into their integration and impact on ESL teaching.

Learners' narratives illustrate a profound understanding and recognition of SRL methods and their transformative impact. The substantial impact of SRL on language acquisition and lifelong competencies beyond language and beyond linguistic abilities is underscored. Respondents describe SRL as groundbreaking, necessitating dedication, persistent effort, and a positive mindset. By taking ownership, setting goals, tracking progress, and seeking resources, learners elevate their linguistic expertise. Additionally, SRL contributes to self-confidence and articulateness, amplifying its psychological benefits.

Moreover, the findings illuminate the fusion of self-efficacy and self-regulated learning within ESL pedagogy to nurture learner autonomy and confidence. Educators are depicted as fostering supportive atmospheres, establishing attainable goals, and embracing cultural diversity. Strategies such as role-playing and peer feedback are employed to enhance engagement, while explicit guidelines and progressive withdrawal of assistance instill assurance.

Furthermore, the positive impact of implementing SRL strategies in English language courses is evident, enriching learners across different skill levels in motivation, confidence, and proficiency. Despite challenges, persistent mentorship triumphs over initial reluctance, resulting in heightened motivation and confidence. Case studies demonstrate varied impacts on learners, with weaker learners gaining confidence and stronger learners attaining heightened comprehension, notably in public speaking and writing courses.

Finally, the analysis highlights that successful language learning transcends academics. It emphasizes the incorporation of English proficiency into personal and professional domains for success across various contexts. Thus, learners must confidently navigate real-world challenges and communicate proficiently in English.

Concluding the qualitative examination, profound revelations emerge regarding self-regulated learning within ESL environments, pertinent for pedagogues,

scholars, and policymakers alike. By owning their learning, setting goals, and seeking resources, learners enhance their linguistic competence and critical faculties essential for personal and professional success. The findings serve as a guide for refining ESL pedagogies and advocating perpetual language expertise.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores that mastery of self-regulation skills profoundly influences academic achievement and subsequent professional success among learners at Bangladeshi universities. The study highlights essential competencies and practical experiences, such as problem-solving acumen, critical thinking, analytical aptitude, and language proficiency, crucial for learners transitioning from academia to the complex realities of the professional sphere amid modern challenges and uncertainties. It advocates for a collaborative approach among educators, university leaders, and curriculum developers to prioritize the cultivation of self-regulation skills. The study also demonstrates a strong correlation between improved learner performance, heightened self-confidence, and enhanced intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, the research strongly recommends integrating a comprehensive focus on self-regulated learning into curriculum design to nurture holistic learner development, prioritizing not only academic advancement but also personal growth.

## THE AUTHOR

**Sayma Ahmed** is a lecturer and coordinator in the Department of English and Modern Languages at North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. She possesses a total of fourteen years of teaching experience, encompassing ten years at North South University and an additional four years at other universities. Her research interests primarily center around teaching methods, second language acquisition, and testing and assessment within the field of language education. She has presented research papers at international conferences and has published in international journals. Email: nomi2011@gmail.com // sayma.ahmed@northsouth.edu

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# Student Perceptions of Online Intercultural Collaborations in the IVEProject

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Edo Forsythe

*Hirosaki Gakuin University, Hirosaki, Japan*

English-major students at a Japanese private university participated in the IVEProject online intercultural collaboration project in their third year of study. A total of 28 participants recorded their impressions of the online collaborations after a semester-long project. This paper reports on the qualitative findings of participants' spoken reflections of the IVEProject. This study analyzed the participants' responses to identify overall perceptions of the effectiveness of online collaborations as well as how the students shared and learned about cultures. The data showed perceived improvements in participants' language skills – they learned new slang and other vocabulary – and a greater understanding of cultural similarities and differences among the participants in the IVEProject, specifically in the areas of music genres, holiday practices, and food culture habits. The students' perspectives generally demonstrated that online intercultural collaborations such as the IVEProject provide an excellent opportunity for language learners to expand their cultural horizons without traveling abroad.

## INTRODUCTION

Language teachers have taken advantage of the opportunities for intercultural exchange afforded to them by the development of the internet and collaboration technologies for decades using email-based penpal exchanges, live video chats, and web-based asynchronous written exchanges, to name a few. O'Dowd (2016) highlighted the increasing role that online intercultural exchanges (OIE) have been playing in foreign language classes as technology has developed to enable learners to collaborate with those in other countries with ease. Lawrence (2013) stated that OIEs are “rich opportunities to build language acquisition [and] intercultural knowledge, develop meaningful relationships and build curiosity to extend intercultural and language learning beyond the class, and opportunities to build 21st-century communications skills” (Slide 20). This author has included online intercultural collaborations in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes for over a decade (see Forsythe, 2014) and currently participates in the International Virtual Exchange Project (IVEProject; [iveproject.org](http://iveproject.org)) as a platform for enabling learners to interact with other English learners to improve their language, intercultural communication skills, and cultural awareness.

The IVEProject was begun in 2015 using a Kaken grant from the Japanese government and provides a platform for English learners to interact primarily asynchronously via text and other media shared on a dedicated website

(IVEProject FAQ). Hagley (2016) provides detailed background into the IVEProject. Participant interactions are related to quite a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to cultural questions, fashion, festivals, food, free-time activities, games, homes and hometowns, movies and TV, music, school life, sports, travel, or any other topic a participant is interested in discussing. Participants could post an original comment about a topic and then interact with those who respond to their post, or they could begin a conversation with another participant by replying to that person's posted comment. Participants were encouraged to try to continue communicating with a small number of others across a longer time frame, thereby hopefully leading to more in-depth communications rather than making shorter comments on a large number of others' posts. Posts could include images, videos, music, or links to other multimedia content that the learners wanted to share, and participants were told that doing so might make their posts more engaging. Having included IVEProject participation in classroom activities for two years, the author considered it important to investigate how the participants felt about joining the IVEProject as part of their EFL studies. The research question that drove this study is

RQ. What are the perceptions of the project participants on the IVEProject after having completed the online intercultural collaboration?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The IVEProject**

While virtual exchanges have taken many forms in a variety of situations around the world, this review of the literature will focus primarily on those conducted with Japanese participants to ensure a comparison of like sample populations. An extensive list of publications pertaining to the IVEProject in a variety of settings and with various foci can be found on the Research on the IVEProject page of the IVEProject.org website.

Hagley (2016) has reported extensively on the IVEProject from its inception, and Hagley and Cotter (2019) jointly investigated their students' perceptions of the IVEProject. Using a post-project questionnaire, Hagley and Cotter found that participants thought the project was beneficial to learning English (p. 165), generated interest in other countries, and had positive aspects, such as intercultural understanding and linguistic improvement. Due to this successful feedback, Hagley and Cotter supported the incorporation of virtual exchanges in all EFL classrooms.

Bissett (2020) explored students' perceptions of participating in the IVEProject using post-project interviews and found that most of the comments showed a developed interest in other cultures and a willingness to improve their English skills. The participants' confidence in communicating in English also increased through the IVEProject – a finding that was also reported in Hagley (2020). Bissett found that the IVEProject was “a great way to motivate students to become more aware of their own culture while learning about others', too” (p. 46).

Post-project interviews conducted by Donnery (2022) found that participants reflected more deeply on topics that were relevant to their current lives and future existence, and that virtual exchanges like the IVEProject helped students to overcome negative language learning experiences of the past. Additionally, Donnery's data showed that learners developed their experience with intercultural communication competencies.

Matsumoto (2023) used a mixed-methods approach to investigate participants' areas of development after participating in the IVEProject and found that students significantly improved their cultural knowledge and cognitive cultural intelligence. Additionally, participants stated most commonly that their intercultural and communicative knowledge developed from the project activities; specifically highlighting a feeling that they could communicate more freely and expressively in English than in their native language. Finally, Matsumoto concluded that "it is evident that virtual exchange plays a role in fostering students' intercultural competence" (p. 23).

Finally, Remmerswaal (2023) also explored students' perspectives of participating in the IVEProject and found that they responded to a questionnaire with overwhelmingly positive comments about enjoying the experience. Students reported that they felt their English writing fluency improved as well as their grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Remmerswaal concluded from the data that writing exchanges with students from around the world were beneficial for most, if not all, EFL students.

### **Other Virtual Exchanges**

Ottoson (2021) reported on the student perspectives of participating in a collaborative online international learning (COIL) project between EFL students in Japan and China. Post-COIL questionnaire data revealed that participants developed in three areas: their intercultural attitudes, their understanding of the importance of communication skills, and in personal ICT and research skills. These findings align with those investigating IVEProject collaboration perceptions, so it could be surmised that the format is not as important as the fact of doing the online intercultural collaborations.

Reviewing the literature about virtual exchanges in an EFL learning environment has revealed some common themes: participants improved their English language skills (Bissett, 2020; Hagley & Cotter, 2019; Matsumoto, 2023; Remmerswaal, 2023), and their intercultural communications competence and cultural awareness developed (Donnery, 2022; Hagley & Cotter, 2019; Ottoson, 2021; Remmerswaal, 2023). Finally, all of the literature reviewed showed that the vast majority of participants enjoyed the IVEProject and found it a beneficial endeavor.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample**

A sample of 28 English majors in their third year at a Japanese private

university in northern Japan were assigned to participate in the IVEProject as part of their graded activities in a required English language course. The data reported on in this study was from the students' second semester of participating in the IVEProject. The students were assigned to post comments or replies to the IVEProject site over the course of the eight-week project term, and grades were based on the number of posts/replies, the total number of words written, and the level of engagement (as set by the metrics on the IVEProject website).

The author's goals for the project were to provide opportunities for the participants to interact with other English language learners in their target language, to have opportunities to practice English in an authentic situation, and to discuss cultural topics with one another. To encourage deeper interactions, it was suggested that the students post on the project website three times per week with each post to be approximately 100 words in length. The students were encouraged to conduct longer-term discussions with a few partners instead of a wide variety of posts with numerous other participants so that the engagements could achieve a more substantial level of communication. The students were graded on their progress toward achieving these goals.

No demographic data was collected from the participants as part of this study. Informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the study by the author explaining that the participants' recorded audio would be used for research purposes and the participants were given the opportunity to opt out of their audio being used in the research study, but none of the participants opted out.

## **Data Collection**

After completing eight weeks of participation in the IVEProject during their second semester, the participants were assigned an examination in which they recorded themselves telling about what they thought about participating in the IVEProject. They were asked to discuss the following:

- Favorite discussion topics
- Discussion topics they did not like
- What they learned about other cultures
- What they shared about Japanese culture
- Whether they liked or disliked participating in the IVEProject and why

Upon completion of the course and after grades had been assigned, the audio recordings were transcribed using Whisper AI technology, which was double-checked by the author, and video recordings submitted by participants were transcribed by the author. The participants' transcript comments were coded by the author to find common themes using grounded theory data analysis methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify emerging themes in the qualitative response data. The results of the grounded theory analysis are detailed below.

## **RESULTS**

The coding of the comments was organized by questions being responded to

(see the exam assignment above) and will be elaborated on separately below. The quotations of student comments are presented as they were spoken, so the linguistic errors in the comments below are presented as they were in the original text and are not flagged as being “[sic]” as would normally be expected in citations.

### **Favorite and Least Favorite Topics**

The participants’ favorite topics of discussion in the IVEProject ranked as follows:

1. Food
2. Sports (soccer, tennis, basketball, baseball)
3. Music
4. Festivals
5. Travel

The comments that accompanied the discussions of participants’ favorite topics also shed some light on the cultural knowledge they gained from their interactions: “I found out that matcha is one of the most popular flavors in the world” and “My favorite topic is about stinky tofu, which was taught to me by a Taiwan person. I didn’t know about stinky tofu, so I wanted to try it when I went to Taiwan.”

There were fewer comments about participants’ least favorite topics (and some students had no response to this question), but two common themes emerged from the data. Self-introductions was mentioned three times and this comment expresses the common sentiments: “I was not really interested in the topic of self-introduction because I didn’t think it would make sense to listen to the self-introduction of people I had not met face-to-face.” Additionally, the topics of games, sports, and fashion had equal numbers of mentions with two each, but there were no expository comments to explain why the participants did not like those topics. The lack of comments about topics that the participants did not enjoy is mainly due to the fact that they could choose whatever topic they wanted to discuss and the only required discussion topic was the self-introduction at the beginning of the IVEProject. One participant captured this understanding well: “There wasn’t a topic I didn’t like. I only chose topic that I liked.”

### **Learning About and Sharing Culture**

The participants were asked to discuss what they learned about other cultures through the IVEProject. This iteration of the project had over 3,274 active participants from 12 countries in the October–December 2023 iteration (E. Hagley, personal communication, June 30, 2024), so there were plenty of opportunities for them to learn and share cultural information. The participants mentioned learning about the following foreign cultural topics:

1. Food in Taiwan, Columbia, Mexico
2. Popular sports

3. Music
4. Festivals
5. Travel

Considering that food was the most favored topic of discussion, it is not surprising that the most comments about what participants learned about other cultures through the IVEProject pertained to food. Mostly, the comments focused on the types of foods that were not common in Japan – Taiwanese stinky tofu, for example. Participants also mentioned sharing information about how they spent holiday time and what music was popular in their countries. Considering that this iteration of the IVEProject was held in the fall, participants naturally discussed Christmas traditions and events and how they differ. One student remarked, “I realized that in other countries people don’t spend Christmas with their friends or boyfriends but with their own families.”

In addition to the differences between cultures that were often focused on, the data revealed that participants were surprised to find similarities among the varied cultures of non-Japanese IVEProject participants. Several comments showed that participants were unaware that matcha green tea was popular around the world and that festivals in different countries have similar aspects, such as lanterns being used. One student captured this idea in their comment: “Surprisingly, I realized that the culture that exists in Japan is practiced in other countries as well.”

In sharing cultural ideas and practices, the participants also told their partners about various aspects of Japanese culture. The most commonly shared ideas were

1. Food (sushi)
2. Travel and hometowns
3. Festivals

Explaining Japanese food culture – both commonly eaten foods and those served on special occasions – allowed the participants to find similarities and differences across cultures. They also told about their hometowns and the specialties they are proud of: “I shared about my hometown, Odate, in Akita. My hometown specialties are Hinai chicken and Odate Magewappa.” Discussions of the festivals that the participants enjoyed and celebrated throughout the year were also related to the hometown topics. Students shared information about what people do during the festivals, explained why they are held, and posted pictures of the festival floats and characters to deepen the partners’ understanding. The large volume of the response data regarding the learning and sharing of cultural topics demonstrates that the IVEProject was truly a source of intercultural collaboration for its participants.

### **Participants’ Overall Perceptions**

The overall perception of the participants in the IVEProject was positive. Sixty-four percent of respondents ( $n = 17$ ) reported that they liked or enjoyed participating in the project. Of these, three positive comments were about liking

the project versus personal enjoyment from participating. One such comment was “IVEProject is a great way to improve my English skill, and we can learn a lot of things about other countries.” Four of the participants failed to respond to the question about their perceptions of the project, and four respondents gave negative or qualified responses, such as “I’ve never been a fan of online cultural exchanges ... I would like to do more” and “IVEProject was so nice activity in itself, but I’m not good at this project.” [“I’m not good” is common Japanese mistranslation of the Japanese phrase “nigatte desu” and would be better translated as “I don’t like.”]

### **Research Outcomes**

There were four research outcomes identified through the grounded theory coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of the participant response data. These outcomes identify areas where the students stated that they benefited from participating in the IVEProject. The first area was language improvement. The students reported learning new slang and new words as well as seeing the project as a good chance to practice English. The second area of improvement was in understanding cultural similarities and differences. The students learned about the comparability of music genres of various countries, holiday celebration traditions, and food culture habits. The third area identified by the participants was in personal development. The students learned more about their own Japanese culture through explaining it to others in English. They also developed their personal communication skills so that they could make themselves understood in English to other English language learners. The final area of growth from the project was in the students’ global perspective. The students gained a better understanding of the interconnectedness of the global society – one example being that students learned that sports fans share the same ideas and feelings the world over. Considering these four areas of growth that the participants identified as being gained through participation in the IVEProject, the overall success of the project can be clearly estimated.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study generally align with previous research into students’ perceptions of participating in online intercultural collaborations like the IVEProject. Looking at the overall outcomes of the data analysis, this study’s participants experienced similar growth in the areas of intercultural development, communicative skills, and personal growth as did participants in studies by Bissett (2020), Hagley and Cotter (2019), Ottoson (2021), and Remmerswaal (2023). Participants’ understanding of cultural similarities and differences grew as well – for example, by learning that even though many different cultures celebrate the same holiday, the way of celebrating is different. These developments in cultural understanding were also seen in Hagley and Cotter (2019), Matsumoto (2023), and Remmerswaal (2023).

Improvement in English language skills and communications confidence was also realized by the participants of this study. They cited learning more slang and

natural communications styles, as well as feeling better about their ability to communicate in English. This aligns with the linguistic and communication skill developments seen in Donnery (2022), Hagley and Cotter (2019), Ottoson (2021), and Remmerswaal (2023). This study adds to the growing evidence of the positive impact that online intercultural collaborations are having in the field of foreign language education.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study was a qualitative investigation of Japanese university students' perceptions of participating in an online intercultural collaboration – the International Virtual Exchange Project (IVEProject) – in their EFL class. The students were asked to record their answers to questions about their participation and feelings about the project. The audio recording data were analyzed to find common themes using grounded theory data analysis methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The data showed that participants in the project enjoyed discussing topics that were commonly used in EFL classroom discussions: food, sports, music, and cultural topics. The students also shared information about Japanese aspects of these topics with learners in other countries. The overall outcomes gleaned from the data revealed that students developed their English language communication skills by learning new slang and vocabulary, as well as improving their English communication competence. Participants also improved their understanding of similarities and differences among cultures, making them feel like they were part of a shared global community. Finally, the data showed that the students experienced personal development in that they learned more about their own Japanese culture and improved their interpersonal communication skills. These findings align very closely to those seen in other research into participant perceptions of virtual exchanges (see Bissett, 2020; Donnery, 2022; Forsythe, 2014; Hagley, 2016, 2020; Hagley & Cotter, 2019; Matsumoto, 2023; Ottoson, 2021; Remmerswaal, 2023).

Online intercultural collaborations have been a part of foreign language education for years and have proved to be a successful way to not only improve learners' language skills but also broaden their understanding of other cultures. This study adds to the growing research in the field and supports the incorporation of online intercultural collaborations in all language learning environments.

## THE AUTHOR

**Edo Forsythe** is the head of the Department of English Language and Literature and a researcher in the field of educational technology in foreign language education. His research has focused on mobile technology integration into the Japanese EFL classroom, and he has published and presented extensively in the field. Dr. Forsythe's recent research has focused on the efficacy of online intercultural collaborations as well as on the benefits of using free writing activities in the classroom. Email: edward.forsythe.bg@hirogaku.ac.jp

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## Examination of Interview Project Materials Design

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Junko Chujo

*Tokyo City University, Yokohama, Japan*

This study presents a pedagogically designed teach-and-learn interview project aimed at igniting Japanese university English learners' willingness to communicate by assigning an authentic communication experience fostered by everyday life. To achieve the pedagogical goals, the instructional materials were designed and developed to fit Japanese English language learners who received English education in Japan. The focus was placed on the growth of learners' affective domain and developing their communicative competence. Students planned, prepared, and conducted interviews off-campus in English with group members. The interview was followed by an in-class poster presentation sharing about their communication experience, their encounter with an English speaker in their home country, and their findings through the interview experience. This study, including the worksheet presentation, shows that incorporating in-country resources in the EFL setting has powerful potential for English instruction.

### INTRODUCTION

Most EFL educators have pondered on how to bridge classroom learning to the world in order to foster students' desire to communicate in English. As Yashima (2003) stressed, "The language learning environment needs to help students ... find personal meaning in learning English as well as in communication with dissimilar others." To help Japanese university students overcome their introverted and shy attitudes toward intercultural communication, a pedagogical project was developed for first-year engineering students. It aimed at igniting their willingness to communicate by providing an authentic communication experience project, named the Teach-and-Learn Interview Project. Taking the opposite approach of traditionally passive and knowledge-based English learning, this project was designed for students to be actively engaged throughout the course. Experiencing authentic communication within the classroom not only kept learners' attention on linguistic elements but fostered their affective phases, building confidence and interest in communication.

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

How can educators foster active engagement in English communication for Japanese university English learners learning English in an EFL setting? The

answer is to raise the interest and meaningfulness of learning English by fostering students' affective development. The OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) has been internationally examining students' emotional skills and their effect and relation with other skills. The results of OECD's survey on Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives from the Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) 2023 conference reveals that "students' social and emotional skills – or 21st century skills – are linked to better life outcomes, including academic success, greater life satisfaction, healthier behaviors, less test and class anxiety, and more ambitious career plans." The affective domain is believed to be very important in education and training (Heinich et al., 1993, p. 104) in the second language acquisition field as well. The affective domain concerns "attitudes, appreciations, values, and emotions such as enjoying, conserving, and respecting" (Heinich et al., 1993, p. 104). "The language learning environment needs to help students to become autonomous learners who find personal meaning in learning English as well as in communication with dissimilar others" (Yashima, 2003). The author has developed several affect-oriented, experiential, project-based instructional designs that place importance on the learner's affective domain (Chujo, 2000, 2021, 2023). In the research and development of this project, namely, the International Interview Project, the target students were first-year engineering students with an observed motivation for learning English as not high and with an introverted tendency in English communication. This project aimed at igniting students' willingness to communicate by providing an authentic communication experience.

## **DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT**

This project aimed to help students realize the connectivity of their daily life to the rest of the world through a cultural and language learning experience. The following were key criteria for the project design and development: use of affective activities (creating a relaxed, comfortable environment), an active classroom environment, creative involvement (allow for individuality), collaborative learning, experience-based learning, connection to the outside world, connection to daily life, easy implementation (cost, academic environment), and use of global education (a first step before tackling global issues).

For the target students to achieve the goals, the instructional materials were designed to meet the above criteria. Pedagogical decisions were made to incorporate opportunities for actual communication experiences that have a strong positive effect on igniting the learners' affective domains as the core approach of design and development.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT**

The pedagogical goals for the students were to (a) prepare for the interview fieldwork with team members; (b) conduct interviews, take a photo together, teach and learn about language or culture; (c) summarize and present their communication experience with their peers; and (d) recognize language learning implications of the experience.

The project task assignments required for the students were to

1. Choose project group members, from one to three students,
2. Interview someone in English and take a picture with the person, and
3. Summarize the communication (interview) experience using a poster presentation (place the picture on the poster).

The interviewers were required to obtain a minimum of general information from the interviewee such as their name, country, occupation, and purpose and length of stay in Japan. Presenting options where learners must make decisions helps get them actively involved and encourages them to take responsibility for the project. Therefore, the two options in Figure 1 were presented for the interview content requirements.

**FIGURE 1. Interview Assignment**

<p><b>General Information + Learning &amp; Teaching</b></p> <p>Option 1. Culture: Cultural differences in sports, music, dance, lifestyle, school (education) systems, diet, how to spend New Year's Day, etc.</p> <p>Option 2. Language: Basic greetings, song, poem, tongue twister, how to count, etc.</p>
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To have the students achieve the pedagogical goals, the project was designed in five steps. Then, a project worksheet was designed for each step's objectives. This was to enable the students to picture the project construction frame and what they needed to accomplish their project goal by grasping the procedures. The worksheets included (a) an introduction of the project (understand through interview models, role-play activities), (b) an interview plan, (c) a rehearsal form, (d) an interview form, (e) a poster presentation preparation form (plan, script, and poster design), (f) a presentation session form, and (g) a reflection on the project. The seven steps are detailed and implementation outcomes are described below.

### **Step 1. Introduction of the Project (Model Communication)**

To give participants an overview of the interview project, a model communication dialogue and comprehension questions were developed (see Appendix A). The dialogue also served for the students to do role-play practice with classmates as a rehearsal in the classroom. The dialogue protagonist was a university student who visits a local sightseeing place to meet foreign visitors and interact for an interview. Just as in the project requirements, the dialogue included a scene in which pictures are taken. The model passage provided the students with English expressions, how to start and carry on conversations, how to suggest taking photos together, and how to say a farewell.

## **Step 2. Interview Plan**

A worksheet was designed to serve as a guide for the planning of the interview (see Appendix B). It also served as a record of the project for the students to reflect on and as part of their project portfolio when finished. By completing the worksheet, the students decide on the team members for the interview, as well as the date, time, and place for the interview. Through discussion with team members, they can bond and prepare for the actual interview.

## **Step 3. Rehearsal**

Based on the questions the students composed in English, the students rehearsed with their classmates. The class was divided into two in order for them to practice their interviews: One group played the role of the interviewer and the other group played the role of a foreigner. The rehearsal session consisted of the students freely walking around the classroom and practicing interviewing and responding for thirty minutes. The students with the role of interviewer were allowed to use their scripts at first. Toward the end of the first fifteen minutes, they challenged themselves to interview without their script. Then, the students switched roles. Those who played the part of the foreign interviewee had the opportunity to be the interviewer and vice-versa. This gave students the opportunity to practice as an interviewer and to experience the feelings of an interviewee.

## **Step 4. Interview**

Students were assigned the project and given three weeks to accomplish the interview. Each group worked independently off-campus according to their plan. In the class, the instructor monitored their progress. Some groups of students needed additional assistance to get started due to their shyness and difficulty picturing themselves conducting an interview. They needed courage and encouragement to conduct interviews with international strangers, even with team members. The instructor suggested places near campus, stores, and restaurants where they could meet foreigners. As the deadline approached and some groups still had not conducted their interviews, the instructor had to make the decision to allow a few groups of students to interview on campus if they could find an interviewee. There was one case where an international student office worker notified the instructor that three Japanese students were at the entrance of the office for a while, and she felt suspicious. The office clerk ended up asking the students questions about why they were there and assisted the students by finding international students who were in the international students' lounge who were willing to be interviewed.

## **Step 5. Poster Presentation Preparation (Reflection on the Project, Script, and Poster Design)**

After the deadline for completion of the interview, a presentation-oriented

worksheet was provided (see Appendix C). The minimum requirements for the poster were to use a predetermined size sheet (1091 × 788 mm) and include a title, team members' names, a picture of the interviewee (with the group members), the interviewee's country, and the purpose of their visit. In addition, they were required to research the country of the interviewee. In cooperation with their group members, students were encouraged to show their creativity and uniqueness in the poster design and presentation.

### Step 6. Poster Presentation Session

To prepare for the presentation session, each group hung a poster on the wall in the classroom (see Figure 2). The class was divided into two groups. Group A acted as presenters first and stood in front of their posters to welcome the audience (Group B). Presentations were held concurrently. The audience had two task requirements during the session: (a) asking two questions or providing questions in English and (b) evaluating each presentation and subsequently voting on the best presentation. They were encouraged to visit all the presentations within 40 minutes. Close to the end of the first group session, the instructor assigned a higher-level task to presenters: Present without a script. This was done to help students feel that they could do a presentation without scaffolding (i.e., their script) using their own words to feel a sense of further accomplishment. At the end of the allotted time, students switched roles: Group B became the presenters, while Group A became the audience.

FIGURE 2. Poster Presentation Session



### Step 7. Reflections

After the presentation session, students voted on the best presentations. They then filled out their self-evaluation sheet reflecting on the project.

## PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of this real-world authentic project requires extra caution and instructions for the learners' safety when it is assigned, even though students are university-aged. While students are doing fieldwork, instructors cannot supervise them. Prior checking of the regulations at the institution is one thing to keep in mind. In addition, it may require broad announcements or permission within the institution. As mentioned earlier when the instructor received contact from the university office, it turns out that students may require extra support

from someone other than the instructor at the fieldwork site. The implementation also revealed that students needed an abundance of time before they were ready for the fieldwork for two reasons: One was their hesitation to try something new, the other was due to being busy with part-time work or activities after classes. In the latter case, scheduling with their group members was a challenge.

Many students discovered that even though they were just a step away from campus, they could meet foreigners. Other students unexpectedly went farther off-campus, using their weekends to travel. The reported outcome was pleasant. The questionnaire revealed that to fully achieve their goals, three weeks were not long enough. This was because they tackled the project sincerely to get the best outcome from this opportunity. Students were initially nervous. There was a tense atmosphere at the beginning of the poster presentation because the students were not used to presenting in English. However, once they finished the project, they were proud of completing and delivering their own unique group communication experience to their classmates. The pictures with their encounters in the fieldwork captured their looks of accomplishment following their communication experience via the interview project.

## STUDENTS' EVALUATION

After the project, students reflected on their experience and freely expressed their impressions in Japanese in response to open-ended questions. The instructor gave some guidance on comments to have them think about the multiple phases of their experience, what they felt, what they learned, what impressed them, improvements for better instruction, and advice for next year's students. The students' comments were categorized into four categories: (a) positive feelings, (b) English skills, (c) contacting strategies, (d) regret and requests/advice for better instruction. (See Figure 3.)

**FIGURE 3. The Reflection Results of the Project**

	Category	Students' Comments
1	Positive Feelings	I needed a lot of courage to talk to strangers; I learned all the people were very nice through the interview. / I was very nervous, but I enjoyed it very much! Since it was my first experience, I was very nervous when making first contact, but once the interview started, foreigners were very kind, spoke slowly, and were very cooperative, and we had a very enjoyable interview. / Even having one opportunity, is a very good experience. / I wanted to do more interviews if I had time. I am looking forward to going to the interviewee's country. / Up to today, I live in Japan, but today I truly realized other countries and cultures really exist. / Learning other culture interests me, and my world is wider now. / Just simply speaking to others left an impression on me. / I was more nervous talking to foreigners than to Japanese. I had almost zero chance of talking with foreigners, but speaking is enjoyable; that I found out. While I was interviewing, I felt I was talking with foreigners, and it felt very enjoyable. I was very happy when I was able to find people with whom I could talk. / It was a good opportunity to meet people from a different country. / I thought it was a very difficult assignment because I had never talked in English. I was very nervous. / I felt like English was fun. I want to speak more! / He was very nice and used simple slow English. /

		More than anything, I felt that I would like to be able to communicate in English. I want to keep studying English more. / I was very happy to meet very nice people. They like Japan and are enjoying their visit. / I found a person who turned out to be a student who is also studying engineering at XX University. We talked for the first time, but we exchanged our contacts.
2	English Skills	I learned that daily English practice is important. I want to study English more. I found my speaking ability is even more limited than I had thought, and I want to have the ability to say even basic things in English. I want to be able to speak and communicate more in English. I learned I should get use to speaking in English.
3	Contacting Strategies	In the first contact, if you ask “Do you have time?” was not a successful approach. I found out that “Could you help me with my university assignment?” was the successful approach. Once you can start talking to people, then the next time is very easy. Sightseeing people are easy to talk to. Multiple people are better to start talking (equal numbers of the interviewers and interviewees are the best). Observe people and find something little as a topic and approach; it is easier to get the first talking opportunity that way. If the interview sheet has an answer column, it is easy to take notes. Even if the person is busier than I thought, they casually did the interview. At the sightseeing place, I was asked, “Are you Japanese?” And they started talking to me. Finding a place that is not busy is important. The best way to start talking is to ask the people who are taking pictures. For success for the first contact, it’s good to start talking cheerfully. I had to talk to many people before I was able to interview anyone. I do not think I could do it on my own; if you have more than two persons, you can do it.
4	Requests and Regrets	If I knew more variations of how to approach and make the first contact, it would be helpful. / I talked to many people, but it was hard to find a person to talk to. / We only focused fully on the cultural difference, and I felt I wanted to ask more about him, and I regretted this after finishing. I needed more time to practice before the actual interview.

## CONCLUSIONS

The project began with tailored reading and listening activities centered around an English interview dialogue. After the students completed the tasks, the instructor announced the assignment. The students were given three weeks to meet someone from outside of Japan off-campus with their classmates and conduct an English interview. The requirements were to find similarities and differences by asking prepared questions, teaching the Japanese language or culture related to the question that they selected, then finally to take a picture together. The project concluded with a poster presentation session. The pre- and post-assignment questionnaires, as well as the instructor’s observations, detected that this one, project-based, authentic interaction had a strong impact on the students. Furthermore, through the experience of finding people from foreign countries to interview, the students learned strategies for starting conversations. This systematically arranged project provided an authentic communication experience and strongly fostered their affective domain. It built students’ confidence and interest, raised their awareness of what they could do with their

English ability, and broadened their worldview through their communication experience.

Throughout this project, the students experienced the following, step-by-step: planning interviews with peers, forming questions for interviews, communicating with foreign strangers and receiving answers, interviewing strangers from overseas in English, and summarizing their experience in English (written presentation script and poster). This project aimed to give the target learners a chance to bridge the classroom and the rest of the world by obtaining authentic information through communication, relating their everyday life to the rest of the world, stimulating their motivation to learn English, and increasing their interests in an international setting.

By tackling each task in collaboration with their peers and by simulating an interview with their peers, this project enabled the students to experience and complete all the tasks step-by-step through English-only instruction. This project not only built language skills but also had positive effects on affective variables, such as raising interest, motivation, and self-esteem through an experience-based project. It was easily observed that the students all met good people who shared their time, even though some students had challenges finding people to interview. While the students were preparing for their presentations, they were already expressing their special experiences casually and naturally. Even one short communication contact opportunity and experience left a deep impression on them. Many students talked as if they were already friends calling the people they met by their first names many times and sharing each other's experiences. Even though the students were in the Japanese classroom, they presented a very international atmosphere. This study, including the worksheet presentation, shows that incorporating in-country resources in the EFL setting has powerful potential for English instruction. The positive outcome of this project shows that it is possible to use local resources to further students' EFL education and experience.

## THE AUTHOR

**Junko Chujo**, PhD, is an associate professor at Tokyo City University. She has over twenty years of teaching experience that encompasses both private companies and universities in Japan. Her specialized field of study is the development of English pedagogical materials that can be implemented efficiently and effectively in Japanese university classes. Email: [jchujo@tcu.ac.jp](mailto:jchujo@tcu.ac.jp)

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## APPENDIX A

### Sample Dialogue 1

First, listen to the dialogue twice without looking at the script. Then, share the context of the dialogue with your partner. Then read the script aloud by taking roles. Check the meaning of the dialogue.

- ☆ Emi was walking around a garden park. She wanted to rest on the bench and began talking to the person sitting on the adjacent bench, who was looking at a Japanese tour guidebook.

R.: Rachele; E.: Emi

E: Hello.

R: Hi.

E: Is it okay to sit here?

R: Sure. Please go ahead.

E: Thank you. It is so hot today.

R: Yes it is. I cannot believe it's still May.

E: Yes. Are you here for a visit?

R: Yes, I am.

E: Oh, great! I am a university student. Where are you from?

R: I am from America.

E: Oh, America. Which city?

R: Seattle. Have you heard of it?

E: Oh, Seattle. Do you know Ichiro, a baseball player?

R: Yes, he was a great player for the Mariners.

E: Yes! Oh, My name is Emi.

R: I am Rachele.

E: "La..."

R: Ra..Rachele. It's R-A-C-H-E-L-E.

E: Oh, Rachele.

E: Yes.

R: What's your name again?

E: Emi. E-M-I.

R: Emi.

E: Yes. I'm Emi.

R: So, you are a university student, right?

E: Yes, I am. I am studying English education.

R: Oh, how nice. So, do you want to be a teacher?

E: Yes, I want to teach in high school. I want to show my students how wonderful it is to be able to communicate in English with people from different countries.

R: That's great! Yes, getting to know other cultures is a good part of learning other languages.

E: How about you? What do you do in your country, may I ask?

R: Oh, I am an architect.

E: Sorry?

R: Architect.

E: Architect....

R: Yes, do you know what that is?

E: Um... I think I've learned that word before...

R: I design and build houses and buildings.

E: Oh, architect! I got it now. Wow!

R: That's why I am very interested in looking at the houses and buildings in Japan. Especially old castles, temples, and shrines.

E: What do you think of them?

R: They are very different from the ones in the States, but they are beautiful.

E: I am glad to hear that. So, how long have you been in Japan?

R: It's been three days. I will stay another 10 days.

E: That's wonderful. I hope you have a wonderful trip in Japan.

R: Thank you. It was very nice meeting you, Emi.

E: You too.

R: Good luck with your studies.

E: Thank you. Good bye.

☆ Read the passage and write the information below.

Name:

Country:

City:

Occupation:

Purpose of Visit:

Period of Stay in Japan:

Interests in Japan:

Places Visited in Japan:

Places Planning to Visit in Japan:

Other Information:

## Sample Dialogue 2

☆Miki is visiting Hirosaki Castle Park in Aomori Prefecture during her Golden Week holiday. It is the beautiful *sakura* (cherry blossom) season. A lot of visitors are enjoying their day under the fully blooming sakura trees. She saw a person taking pictures who seemed to need help, and he asked her to take a picture of him against the backdrop of the beautiful trees.

A: Allen; M: Miki

A: Hi! Excuse me. Would you mind taking a picture for me?

M: Sure.

A: Just press here.

M: Cheese!

A: Thank you.

M: You are welcome.

Isn't that beautiful?

A: Yes, it's just fabulous!

M: Is this your first visit to Japan?

A: Yes, this is my first time in Japan.

M: Oh, do you have some spare time now?

I am a university student in Japan, and I would like to meet people from foreign countries. Actually, I am working on this project for the International Club, where I am trying to make interview reports along with other members to share with Japanese students to get them interested in other people and other parts of the world.

A: Sure. I am just enjoying my day here. So I am willing to help you.

M: May I have your last name please?

A: It's Thomas.

M: How do you spell that?

A: T-H-O-M-A-S.

M: And your first name is... ?

A: I am Allen.

M: Is that A-L-L-E-N?

A: Yes, it is.

M: Oh, I have not introduced myself yet! Sorry, I am Miki. M-I-K-I. Miki.

A: Miki.

M: Yes. Miki. So, are you here for a visit? What brought you here?

A: Many people I know back home have been to Japan and have recommended that I visit it.

M: Is that so? How long do you plan to remain in Japan?

A: I have been here for six days and have another week to go.

M: Oh, two weeks! How nice!

A: Yes. I have visited Tokyo, Kyoto, and here, Aomori. Tomorrow I will return to Tokyo. Then I will visit Toyama and Kanazawa. If I have time, I would like to go visit Mt. Fuji.

M: Wow! How can you visit so many places? I have never tried to travel that much in my life.

A: Well, the Shinkansen is a great mode of transportation that makes it easier to



travel around.

M: The Shinkansen! I usually use express busses since they are cheaper.

A: Busses sound like fun too. But riding the Shinkansen for us foreign visitors is not too expensive.

M: Really?

A: Yes. Do you know about the JR Rail Pass?

M: What is that?

A: Oh... here it is.

M: JR Rail Pass.

A: With this pass, once I pay, I can ride anywhere as many times as I want. I debated whether to obtain a one-week or two-week deal, but I am so glad I chose the two-week deal. It is really worth the money!

M: Um... oh 46,390 yen for two weeks, all you can ride. That is a good deal! No wonder you have been traveling to so many places in such a short time. I wish we Japanese had this deal as well!

A: Is Shinkansen really expensive?

M: Yes. Just a round trip from Tokyo to Aomori will cost close to 40,000 yen. That is why I use express busses. It is only 10,000 yen round-trip.

A: Oh, I see.

M: So, what do you do in your country? Where are you from?

A: Oh, I am a paramedic in Seattle.

M: Paramedic. Paramedic? Paramedic....

A: Oh, just a moment. Let me check. Here it is. It says that a paramedic is "a specially trained medical technician licensed to provide a wide range of emergency services (such as defibrillation and the intravenous administration of drugs) before or during transportation to a hospital." Yes, that's right.

M: Wow! That is great!

A: I have been hearing ambulance sirens in Japan, and it has been interesting. The sound is much softer here.

M: Is that so? I have never thought about that.

A: So, Miki, what's your major? What do you study?

M: I am a pharmaceutical student.

A: Really? I was too, when I was in college. After I worked as a pharmacist for four years, I decided to change my career.

M: Wow! What a coincidence!

A: Good luck with your studies, Miki.

M: Thank you. And thank you very much for your time.

A: Oh, it's my pleasure. It was my pleasure to meet you, Miki.

M: You, too. I hope you have a great stay for the rest of your time in Japan.

A: Thank you.

M: Good bye.



Name:

Country:

City:

Occupation:

Purpose of Visit:

Period of Stay in Japan:

Interests in Japan:

Places Visited in Japan:

Places Planning to Visit in Japan:

Other Information:

## APPENDIX B

Let's communicate with people from a different culture and get to know about them!

Interview Project member(s)/interviewer(s): **one to three** students

Interviewee(s): at least **one** person

**Take a picture with the person you met.**



Report your communication (interview) experience on a **poster presentation**

(Place the picture on the poster.)

**Presentation Date:**

**Presentation Rehearsal Date:**

**Presentation Preparation Dates:**

### Where?

#### Off Campus

restaurant, part-time workplace, shopping mall station, sightseeing place, hotel lobby, (hostel), city/prefectural/private party, high school ALT (assistant language teacher)

### What?

Option 1. General Information + selected topic(s)

Topic: cultural differences in sports, music, dance, lifestyle, school (education) system, diet, how to spend New Year

Option 2. General Information + learning (teaching)

Topic: language (greetings, numbers 1-10 etc.), songs, poems, tongue twisters (ex., She sells seashells down by the seashore.), how to count

### Which? / With whom?

I would like to try (option 1 / option 2 / option 1&2 ) for my project.

I will try the project (by myself / with my friend(s)).

## APPENDIX C

### — My Interview Report —

EIDN                      UID                      Name                      Other member

#### General Information

- ① Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ② Interview Time: \_\_\_\_\_ min.
- ③ Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_
- ④ Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- ⑤ Country: \_\_\_\_\_
- ⑥ City: \_\_\_\_\_
- ⑦ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
- ⑧ Purpose of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_
- ⑨ Period of Stay in Japan: \_\_\_\_\_
- ⑩ Places Visited in Japan: \_\_\_\_\_
- ⑪ Places Planning to Visit in Japan: \_\_\_\_\_
- ⑫ Interests in Japan: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Other Special Information

How was your interview experience?  
Write comments either in English or in Japanese.





# Emotional Landscapes: Japanese EFL Writers' Experiences with English Writing

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Yutaka Fujieda

*Osaka University of Economics, Osaka, Japan*

This qualitative study explores the emotional experiences of ten Japanese English as a foreign language learners while writing in English using the Thinking at the Edge method. Through analyzing participants' reflections, three major themes emerged: challenges in articulating thoughts and ideas, the importance of developing writing skills, and fostering a sense of achievement. The findings highlight both the linguistic and cognitive challenges that the writers faced, as well as the personal and educational benefits that motivated them to persist in developing their writing proficiency. Participants expressed a sense of accomplishment in completing writing tasks despite challenges. This study provides an in-depth profile of Japanese learners' experiences with English writing, acknowledging both positive and negative emotional aspects. The research implications suggest the importance of effective writing approaches to mediate challenges and regulate emotions by creating a more fulfilling learning environment.

## INTRODUCTION

Writing in a second language (L2) involves complicated cognitive and emotional processes and management. Emotion regulation is an essential step in writing because it influences the attitudes toward writing in English. Previous studies on the emotions of L2 writing have shown that anxiety has an impact on writers' performance and proficiency (Cheng et al., 1999). Conversely, improved self-efficacy and control over emotions are predictors of better writing outcomes (Pajares & Johnson, 1994).

In English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, these emotional aspects of writing become even more significant since learners have to use a different language to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Writing classes in EFL contexts tend to emphasize the completion of written products with accuracy, often at the expense of fluency. EFL learners must regulate their emotions while completing written tasks in English. To investigate the emotional aspects of English writing more deeply, it is possible to explore emotional meaning and interpretation during writing rather than the impact of positive and negative emotions on writing development (Chamcharatsri, 2013).

To address the emotional realm of EFL writers, it is essential to examine the subtle and frequently unexpressed emotions underpinning their writing because emotions can be overt but can also be implicit and ambiguous (Rome, 2014). Gendlin (1996) argued that one encounters feelings that are difficult to articulate

directly. Gendlin called this emotional state “felt sense,” which refers to preverbal, somatic intuition or knowledge that comes before linguistic expressions. While previous research has extensively examined writing anxiety and its effects on L2 writers, the subtle and unarticulated emotional aspects of L2 writing have been underexplored (Fujieda, 2024).

This study addresses these gaps by employing a qualitative approach to interpret and elucidate the felt sense during L2 writers’ writing process and performance in accordance with Gendlin’s (1996) felt sense framework. Using the Thinking at the Edge (TAE) method (Gendlin & Hendricks, 1994), this study unpacks the emotional states of English writing that are not easily articulated and, therefore, can be overlooked by conventional quantitative approaches.

## **EMOTIONS IN L2 ENGLISH WRITING**

L2 writing requires sustained effort and practice to develop critical skills for academic success and personal development (Hyland, 2019). Writing in English, in particular, is seen as both challenging and rewarding. The iterative nature of writing, involving drafting, revising, and editing, is crucial for mastering this skill (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023). The importance of writing in an L2 has been recognized from both technical and emotional perspectives; however, the affective issues associated with L2 writing have not been fully discussed. This type of research underscores the importance of developing writing skills and the ability to express emotions and opinions effectively in academic contexts.

Extensive research on the emotional experiences of L2 writers has been conducted, with a specific focus on the difficulties and affective factors of writing. Previous studies have shown that English writing is associated with both positive and negative emotions, including anxiety, frustration, satisfaction, and accomplishment (Han & Hiver, 2018; Russell-Pinson & Harris, 2019). Many of these studies on the emotions of writing have adopted quantitative methods. Cheng (2004) designed a multidimensional inventory, the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory, with strong properties across three subscales: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior. Horwitz et al. (1986) classified foreign language anxiety as three factors – communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation – and developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale to measure this construct.

While previous research has revealed the emotional challenges faced by L2 writers, this study contrasts with earlier studies by highlighting the unspeakable feelings that L2 writers perceive. When humans perceive their emotional state, they experience an intricate network of emotions that cannot be adequately represented by simple phrases and terms. Gendlin (1996) labeled this ambiguous feeling as “felt sense.” This concept should be further challenged in the theoretical understanding of emotions that elucidate felt sense toward writing in English and emotional self-regulation during English writing.

To examine the felt sense of English writing, using the TAE approach is appropriate (Gendlin & Hendricks, 2004; Severson & Krycka, 2023). The TAE method provides unique insights into the emotional landscape of writing by presenting a complete framework that captures both the challenges and positive

experiences of EFL writers. This holistic perspective may guide the development of pedagogical approaches that support students' emotional and cognitive fulfillment, promoting a more favorable and effective learning experience (Unsworth & Mills, 2020).

While L2 writers have difficulties in writing, there are significant opportunities for their personal and academic development via consistent practice and supportive writing instruction. Current studies emphasize the importance of understanding L2 writers' lived experiences and the potential benefits of informal writing practices in developing writing skills and emotional engagement (Yu et al., 2023).

## **METHOD**

This study explores and interprets the meaning of students' felt sense of English writing. To illustrate the significance of English writing experiences and practices, this study employed a qualitative case study approach with thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). An analysis was conducted on the participants' TAE worksheets (Tokumaru, 2008) to gain insight into their personal writing experiences.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were ten Japanese EFL students with TOEIC scores of 500–550 who were enrolled in a private university. These participants also completed an elective advanced writing class. The participants mastered the basic written structure of genre-specific paragraphs through their classes.

### **Procedures**

The present study used a qualitative method with the TAE approach created by Gendlin and Hendricks (1994). The TAE method is “to access lived experience for the sake of explicating intuitions, widening the conceptual framework of thinking and also of one's habitual understanding of key-concepts” (Schoeller, 2022, p. 290). The rationale for employing this method is that TAE can access the preverbal or bodily felt sense that people have in line with the writers' focus on the emotional components of English writing. The TAE method translates participants' initial vague feelings into clear and illuminates thoughts and insights into English writing via a series of steps.

Participants attended several one-hour TAE sessions. In these sessions, participants were asked to reflect on how they perceived and valued their emotions toward English writing. They identified a specific felt sense with the specific guides of the TAE worksheets written in Japanese. Participants shared their experiences with English writing and provided more details of meaning based on their TAE sheets.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data were collected from the 2019 to 2023 academic years. TAE worksheets were collected to gather the data sources. These data provided a rich picture of the participants' emotional aspects of writing. Major themes were inductively derived from the data through a systematic thematic analysis.

First, the data sources were carefully reviewed to gain a full understanding of the content. Coding is the procedural process of the identification or classification of the text on the basis of repetitive concepts or patterns in the data. The coding process followed an iterative approach in which the author consistently refined and modified the codes to capture the complexities of the data accurately.

To increase the trustworthiness and confirmability of the findings, the author employed hybrid deductive-inductive coding. Deductive codes emanate directly from the research objectives and existing theoretical frameworks, while inductive codes emerge directly from the data. This hybrid model involves a synthesis of presuppositions and a predisposition to notice unexpected patterns and themes.

The thematic analysis process involved several key stages of coding the data (Saldaña, 2021). The author began by familiarizing himself with the data by carefully perusing the TAE worksheets. The author went on to a second stage of coding, where he first engaged in open coding and then in organizing open codes manually. The author then carried out a theme search by identifying common overarching patterns and connections within the coded data. This included an iterative review and refinement of the well-developed themes to ensure that they accurately reflected the facts and appropriately addressed the research questions. The final step in the thematic analysis process consisted of the report, which involved the selection of compelling examples to exemplify the main themes and their significance.

## **Ethical Considerations**

This study received ethical approval from the author's former university before the research began. All participants were informed orally about the research goals, voluntary participation, and the right to revoke participation without any consequences at the beginning of the interview. Data were anonymized to ensure participant confidentiality and were kept securely. To maintain participant privacy, this study strictly maintained anonymity and confidentiality using pseudonyms.

## **RESULTS**

### **Felt Sense of English Writing with TAE**

#### **First Phase**

The TAE process begins by identifying the felt sense, which is an ambiguous and intuitive feeling about a specific topic that holds importance but lacks clarity. Participants expressed their feelings about English writing by jotting down four to five keywords that captured the fundamental nature of their feelings. The term "My Sentence" refers to a sentence constructed using specific keywords. Table 1

summarizes the participants' felt sense of English writing.

**TABLE 1. General Felt Sense of Participants**

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Felt Sense (Worksheets 1-3)	My Sentence from TAE Worksheet
Moe	connection, affinity, barrier, uncomfortable, exciting	Writing in English is exciting, but uncomfortable.
Tetsuto	hard, difficult, tiring, friend	English writing is making friends.
Yumiko	difficult, fashionable, ideas	Telling exacting what I am thinking is difficult.

*Note.* Participants made one sentence (My Sentence) based on their initial felt sense of English writing.

“My Sentences” that the participants presented reveal an ambivalence as well as a struggle with English writing. According to her sentence, Moe conveyed a mix of excitement and discomfort, saying, “Writing in English is exciting, but uncomfortable.” Tetsuto alluded to English writing as an effortful event but fun, stating, “English writing is like making friends” (Worksheet 3). Although she described her difficulties in writing, she placed it within a social activity. Yumiko grappled with expressing her thoughts clearly. She encountered difficulties in accurately delivering her ideas in English with the same meaning as in Japanese. Her sentence covered the cognitive challenges of English writing. These selected excerpts from “My Sentence” provided a window onto their own lived experiences while writing in English.

## Second Phase

The next step was to compare the felt sense with the participants' daily lives and intersect with one keyword of the other three. Yoko compared her frustration with English writing to her desperation of oversleeping. Her TAE worksheet revealed that, as she felt her emotions spiral into panic when she overslept, she found that she could not summarize her thoughts and manage writing plans. Koki compared English writing to mountain climbing, saying, “Writing is challenging like climbing mountains” [Worksheet 5]. His thoughts implied that English writing required significant effort and endurance. These excerpts demonstrated the personal experiences of the participants while writing in English as well as the emotional responses that they felt.

## Final Phase

Finally, participants reflected on the findings from the previous two phases to theorize about the meaning of their English writing. This process examined how their emotions about English writing tied in directly with personal development.

Tomoka and Shinji highlighted both the structured and rewarding aspects of their writing processes. Tomoka saw organizing thoughts well in English writing as demanding and stressed the importance of coherent writing and substantial efforts to communicate clearly in writing. In contrast, Shinji viewed English writing as a source of achievement, describing it as “an activity that opens new opportunities for learning and personal development” [Worksheet 23]. This provides a sort of dual perspective of English writing, which was challenging yet rewarding as an accomplishment, providing a gateway to new knowledge. Their

theories of felt sense emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between structured discipline and motivating rewards in the process of English writing.

This section presented some snapshots of the felt sense of English writing among Japanese EFL writers, using the TAE approach. Based on the TAE data, three major themes related to English writing emerged from the participants' TAE data. The next section discusses how these themes offer valuable insights into the emotional aspects that influence the writers' process of writing.

## **Emergent Themes of English Writing for EFL Writers**

### **Challenges in Articulating Thoughts and Ideas**

The data analysis showed a prominent recurring theme: challenges in articulating thoughts and ideas. This theme surfaced among the participants, indicating a shared challenge in expressing themselves clearly in writing.

One participant, Kei, noted that English writing sometimes confused her, especially how to write well and express her thoughts clearly, saying "Expressing my thoughts in English is difficult. It is also difficult to convey what I am thinking as it is" [Worksheet, 4]. This implies that she struggled not only with the written structure but also with clear communication through writing. Kei experienced the challenge of expressing her complex thoughts in a coherent form in English and making sentences with precise vocabulary.

Eri highlighted the same challenge concerning her ability to express her thoughts clearly in English. On her worksheet she wrote, "I am concerned about whether the grammar, vocabulary, and nuances of the language are correct" [Worksheet, 23]. Eri's emotional state of English writing revealed the challenge that L2 writers face, as her language difficulties impacted her writing development. Her challenge was twofold: writing in a different language and articulating her ideas clearly.

Tetsuto framed writing as a puzzle connecting "pieces" of thoughts and revealing the connection between the idea and the context of the text. The complexity of English writing is clarified as he must organize and express his thoughts clearly to communicate his intended meaning in English successfully. His concept of writing as a puzzle implies the necessity of cognitive effort in presenting his thoughts in a logical manner. He explained this idea in his worksheet: "A puzzle can be seen as a reflection on one's strong sense of self. Solving a puzzle often involves reconstructing one's opinion and understanding of the problem" [Worksheet, 19].

The data indicated a prevalent obstacle faced by the participants: the struggle to effectively express thoughts and ideas in written form. This includes both the structural elements of writing and the clarity of communication, with additional challenges for L2 writers. These findings highlight the need for guiding instructional approaches to tackle these challenges and to support students in developing their writing proficiency and performance.

### **Importance of Developing Writing Skills**

The data analysis unveiled an emergent theme: the importance of developing writing skills. This theme originated from the participants' replies, stressing the

challenges and benefits of improving their writing skills.

Although Kei stated that writing in English was fun but difficult, she stressed that writing widened her world views. She noted, “By writing in a different language, I challenge myself to express ideas in unfamiliar ways. This process often reveals new perspectives and allows me to access emotions that might remain hidden when using my first language” [Worksheet, 23]. This implies that despite the inherent challenges, she thought positively about English writing because her written products helped her improve her learning and self-development.

Ami pointed out that engaging in English writing fostered her writing proficiency. This underscores the importance of persistence and consistent practice in achieving mastery of English writing skills. She stated, “In advanced writing, the complexity of vocabulary and grammar increases, which can be disheartening. However, it is important to persevere and continue making efforts to improve my writing skills” [Worksheet, 23]. The notion that continuous effort results in enhancement is a fundamental lesson, demonstrating that the refinement of skills is an intensive effort that needs commitment.

Chika mentioned that making efforts in writing led to success in the development of English skills. She noted, “Mastery of English is achieved when I can use English fluently, but this fluency comes through consistent practice and effort” [Worksheet, 19]. This also highlights the clear relationship between efforts and improvement, and reiterates that dedicated efforts in English writing improved not just her writing skills but also her language proficiency. Her efforts coincide with the theoretical notions of learning that dedicated practice and commitment are essential for language learning (Li, 2019).

The data underscore the essential need to cultivate English writing proficiency. The participants acknowledged their challenges but realized the substantial benefits, such as personal development and development of language proficiency. These findings suggest that fostering a positive attitude toward and continuous practice of English writing are essential pedagogical strategies in guiding students to develop proficiency in writing.

### **Fostering a Sense of Achievement**

The final significant theme is fostering a sense of achievement. This theme emerged from the participants’ reflections on their encounters with writing in English, particularly in the context of overcoming challenges and achieving personal achievements.

Tomoka revealed that completing her written products contributed to a feeling of accomplishment because she learned “the importance of persistence through trial and error” [Worksheet, 15]. This diligent approach to her writing became a practice that enabled her to write successfully and satisfied her inherent need for validation. Her struggles with English writing were presented as a vital and enriching part of the acceptable learning process.

Tetsuto echoed Tomoka’s emotions in English writing, stating, “Just trial and error, many times. In the end, I felt a sense of fulfillment in English writing” [Worksheet, 19]. His voice demonstrated the idea that perseverance in writing difficulties leads to a deeper feeling of fulfillment. Such satisfaction that he had after overcoming difficulties in English writing enforced how effort and dedication

are vital elements in this part of his writing development.

Yoko noted frustration and irritation while writing in English when she struggled to deliver her ideas clearly. However, she emphasized the importance of patience, asserting, “I felt irritated and frustrated when I could not express myself well. I have to be patient, but I felt an accomplishment when I finished my assignments” [Worksheet, 15]. This expresses Yoko’s emotional journey in English writing – a journey in which initial struggles were overcome and which led to accomplishment with the completion of her tasks. Her emotional shift from feeling frustrated to accomplishment stressed the value of persistence and the emotional benefits of reaching writing goals.

The data illustrate that fostering a sense of achievement is significant in the progress of writing performance. The participants’ writing processes and experiences suggest that the accomplishment derived from navigating writing challenges and completing assignments plays a vital role in motivating students to persistently improve their writing skills. These findings underline the need to establish a supportive learning environment that confirms achievements and confidence through English writing.

## DISCUSSION

This study examined the felt sense of writing in English among ten Japanese EFL writers. Based on the TAE approach and worksheets, the study explored which feelings toward writing in English each writer had and interpreted the meaning of the felt sense of English writing. Through analyzing the data, three major themes emerged.

The participants often struggled to express themselves clearly in writing, indicating both cognitive and linguistic challenges. Nonetheless, they demonstrated a critical awareness of the significance of fostering writing proficiency. The participants explained how their efforts to improve their writing helped them on both a personal and academic level. Completing written assignments contributed to the participants’ sense of accomplishment. This feeling of achievement served as a significant motivation, as they experienced fulfillment after struggling through writing tasks.

This study differs from others by adopting a qualitative method to explore the felt sense of English writing. While previous research has focused primarily on negative emotions related to English writing, such as anxiety, fear, and frustration (Cheng, 2004; Horwitz et al., 1986), this study adopted a qualitative method for investigating what English writing means to EFL writers, going beyond an exclusive focus on negative emotions prevalent in previous research.

The recognition that writing in L2 requires ongoing improvement and achievement highlights the need for perseverance and commitment. This resonates with Xu and Wang’s (2024) concept of *academic buoyancy*, which is defined as “students’ capability to deal with challenge, adversity, and setback in the school setting” (p. 50). For the teaching of writing in EFL contexts, it is necessary to create more effective teaching methods that can address learner challenges and help regulate learners’ emotions. Future investigations can focus on developing suitable writing approaches for EFL learners by exploring effective teacher

interventions in writing instruction.

The TAE approach offers a comprehensive framework to articulate the complex emotional states of learners. As Russell-Pinson and Harris (2019) suggested, it is significant to address “factors that can contribute to stress in the [writing] process” (p. 64). Employing this method encourages writing teachers to help students prioritize the development of a growth mindset, viewing writing as an ongoing process that builds achievement and confidence.

Incorporating these findings with prior research, teachers can support learners’ English learning according to their cognitive and emotional needs. The emotional insights gained from alternative methods like TAE can make writing more manageable, more satisfying, and more fulfilling for students (Ahmed, 2023).

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper sought to understand the felt sense of English writing among ten Japanese EFL learners by employing the TAE method. This study interpreted the felt sense of the writers and articulated recalled emotional experiences during the writing process. The findings unveiled three major themes: challenges in articulating thoughts and ideas, the importance of developing writing skills, and fostering a sense of achievement.

The study highlighted problems in English language expression that the Japanese EFL writers encountered. However, the participants stressed the importance of fostering writing proficiency for personal and academic development despite these challenges. Furthermore, their sense of achievement through their writing tasks served as a key reason why they felt fulfilled when overcoming their writing barriers.

These findings contribute to the existing literature on emotions in L2 writing by providing a balanced outlook on EFL writers’ emotional lives. They revealed that writing in a different language has both positive and negative aspects. This research underscores the necessity for continual improvement and accomplishment, which requires writers to demonstrate perseverance and dedication.

The ramifications of this type of research indicate that EFL writing instruction should focus on establishing effective pedagogical approaches that can address the challenges faced by writers and support their emotional regulation. By creating a supportive learning setting that recognizes achievements and fosters confidence, writing teachers can cultivate a growth mindset in learners, encouraging them to perceive writing as a continuous process in which persistence leads to success.

Further investigations should consider the enduring emotional effects of English writing across different learning contexts and uncover appropriate writing approaches for teacher intervention in writing instruction. Theoretical integration of the findings of this present study with those of prior research suggests that teachers can facilitate the emotional and cognitive needs of writers during English writing, thus giving a more favorable and satisfying writing experience.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was supported by JSPS KAKENHI, Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C), Grant Number 23K00702 (2023–2027).

## THE AUTHOR

**Yutaka Fujieda** is a professor at Osaka University of Economics in Osaka, Japan. He has published the book *Academic Discourse Socialization* (Lexington Books) and several peer-reviewed articles. His research interests include second language writing and teacher education. Email: y.fujieda@osaka-ue.ac.jp.

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# The Potential of Speaking Practice with AI Avatars in VR

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Yukie Saito

*Chuo University, Ichigayatamachi, Tokyo, Japan*

With the emergence of AI technologies, English language learning through virtual reality (VR) is entering a new phase where learners can practice speaking with AI avatars. This study explores the potential of students practicing speaking with AI avatars on the VR platform Immerse to improve their speaking proficiency and reduce foreign language anxiety (FLA) along with their perception toward Immerse and its technology. Eight Japanese students participated in one-month speaking practice sessions with AI avatars. Preliminary findings from two students indicate that practicing speaking with AI avatars improved their words per minute in post-recordings, suggesting enhanced fluency. However, FLA results varied: One student's FLA level increased, while the other's decreased. Both students believed that VR practice would improve their speaking proficiency, but one student viewed Immerse technology more positively than the others. Pedagogical implications for using AI avatars to enhance speaking proficiency and reduce FLA for EFL students are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Virtual reality (VR) is an emerging technology that will have a significant impact on teaching and learning in higher education institutions in the future (Educause, 2020). VR creates computer-generated 3D objects and environments that users can interact with (Dionisio et al., 2013). VR enables users to experience a virtual space that resembles the real world through interactive simulations, which can be very beneficial for foreign language learning, where immersion in visual and auditory stimuli is essential for success (Scrivner et al., 2019). The advantages of VR include better memory recall, increased intrinsic interest, intercultural sensitivity, and reduced emotional filtering (Scrivner et al., 2019; Schwienhorst, 2010). Lin and Lan's (2015) content analysis of VR research also shows how virtual learning environments can enhance learner autonomy, self-efficacy, and creativity while decreasing learning anxiety. Several studies have also investigated VR's effects on speaking proficiency. Yudintseva (2023) reviewed 34 studies (2015–2022) on VR in ESL oral communication, finding that it improved anxiety, motivation, and other skills, though impacts on speaking fluency remained unclear. Conversely, Liu and Hou's (2020) study on a mobile VR English speaking application showed significant improvements in users' fluency, pronunciation, and speaking confidence. However, studies showing a positive effect of VR on students' speaking proficiency are still limited.

Artificial intelligence technologies are creating new possibilities for English language learning through VR, where learners can interact with AI avatars in VR. Mondly is one of the VR language platforms in which learners can practice speaking with AI avatars. Kawasumi and Ishii's (2023) study compared the VR application Mondly with an English-learning smartphone app for Japanese university students, assessing psychological effects such as motivation and fatigue. Involving six students who used both VR and smartphone versions and provided feedback via questionnaires, stimulated recall, and interviews, the study found no significant differences between the methods, though VR increased motivation but also fatigue. Although the study investigated psychological effects such as motivation and fatigue, it did not explore the effects of practicing speaking with AI avatars on students' speaking proficiency and foreign language anxiety (FLA). Existing literature suggests the potential of VR to improve speaking proficiency and lower FLA (Kaplan-Rakowski & Gruber, 2022; Valls-Ratés et al., 2022; York et al., 2021), but investigations into the impact of speaking practice with AI avatars in VR on students' speaking proficiency and FLA levels remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining whether speaking practice with AI avatars can improve students' speaking proficiency and lower FLA levels. The study also explores how students perceive practicing speaking with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology. The following research questions guide this investigation:

- RQ1. Does practicing speaking with AI avatars in VR improve students' speaking proficiency?
- RQ2. Does practicing speaking with AI avatars in VR lower students' foreign language anxiety?
- RQ3. How do students perceive practicing speaking with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology?

## **METHODS**

To address the research questions, audio recordings of the first and last speaking practice sessions with AI avatars in Immerse VR, pre- and post-questionnaires on FLA, and a questionnaire about students' perceptions of practicing speaking with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology were collected and analyzed. This section first describes the VR platform used, followed by details of the study participants and an outline of the study. Subsequently, it explains the data collection and analysis methods

### **English Lessons by Immerse VR**

Immerse VR by Immerse Inc. was used for this study. Immerse VR offers various immersive environments, such as an airport, a restaurant, a park, and a supermarket. Participants can access Immerse VR through their chosen avatars, using either head-mounted displays (HMDs) or personal computers (PCs) regardless of whether they are at home or school. In 2023, Immerse Inc. launched a new service that allows students to practice speaking English with AI avatars

while attempting tasks presented on the screen.

### **Participants of the VR English Lessons and Outline of the Study**

Eight university students from a private Japanese university were the study participants. The focus of this study is two students, Student A and Student B, among the eight students. Student A is a male student and his English proficiency prior to this study was 140 on the TOEIC Speaking test and 715 on the TOEIC Reading and Listening test, while Student B is a female student, and her English proficiency is 90 on the TOEIC Speaking test and 405 on the TOEIC Reading and Listening test.

They practiced speaking English with AI avatars in nine scenes. In each scene, there were three avatars, so talking to three different avatars in nine scenes was set as a speaking practice task. During a winter break, when no English classes were offered, they practiced speaking English with AI avatars in Immerse VR for a month using their PCs at home. To minimize the students' discomfort, PCs were chosen over HMDs, which have been reported to cause motion sickness, headaches, tiredness, eye fatigue, and dizziness (Dolgunsöz et al., 2018; Kaplan-Rakowski & Wojdynski, 2018).

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

For this study, audio recordings of the students' speaking practice sessions with AI avatars, an FLA questionnaire, and a questionnaire about students' perceptions toward practicing speaking with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology were collected. This section provides details on the collection and analysis of the audio-recorded data, the FLA questionnaire, and the questionnaire on students' perceptions in that order.

#### **Collection and Analysis of the Audio-Recorded Data**

The students practiced speaking with three AI avatars in nine different scenes for one month. To investigate whether practicing speaking with AI avatars improved the students' speaking proficiency, the first and last practices of speaking English with AI avatars were video- and audio-recorded. For both the first and last practices, the same VR scene, a bar, was selected. Additionally, the same task of greeting an AI avatar was chosen. In Immerse VR, conversations between AI avatars and students are transcribed using text-to-speech technology, which students can read. However, some utterances by the students were not recognized and transcribed. Therefore, I listened to the audio recordings multiple times and transcribed both the students' and the avatars' utterances. The students' parts of the conversations in the first and the last practice were analyzed in terms of improvements in fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and pragmatic features. Fluency was calculated as the number of words per minute, accuracy was examined based on the number of grammatical errors in the utterances, and vocabulary level was assessed using CEFR levels with Cathoven AI, an AI-driven platform that assists language teachers by offering various tools, including the CEFR Checker, which helps understand the difficulty level of a text.

### **Collection and Analysis of the FLA Questionnaire**

For the FLA questionnaire, the foreign language classroom anxiety scale and the same answer choices by Horwitz et al. (1986) were adapted for this study. The original questionnaire by Horwitz et al. (1986) contains 33 items, as shown in Appendix A; however, nine items (Items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, and 32) considered more related to lower foreign language anxiety were excluded from this study, resulting in a 24-item questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale was employed, with 5 for *strongly agree*, 4 for *agree*, 3 for *neither agree nor disagree*, 2 for *disagree*, and 1 for *strongly disagree*. The FLA questionnaire was administered twice, before and after practicing speaking with AI avatars.

### **Collection and Analysis of the Students' Journals and the Questionnaire**

The students kept journals during their speaking practice and after the final practice with AI avatars in Immerse VR; they wrote positive and negative sides of practicing speaking with AI avatars in Immerse VR and whether they thought it would help them improve their speaking proficiency. The questionnaire about students' perceptions on practicing speaking with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology was developed based on the factors of perceived convenience, perceived playfulness, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and continuance intention to use, as identified in a study by Chang et al. (2013). Their study investigated the factors influencing the continuance intention to use English mobile learning systems (EMLS) among college students and extended the technology acceptance model (TAM) by incorporating intrinsic motivation (perceived playfulness) and extrinsic motivation (perceived convenience). Examples in the questionnaire included "I can learn English at any time with Immerse," "I can learn English at any place with Immerse," and "Immerse is convenient for me to engage in practicing speaking English." The questionnaire is provided in Appendix B. A five-point Likert scale was employed, with 5 for *strongly agree*, 4 for *agree*, 3 for *neither agree nor disagree*, 2 for *disagree*, and 1 for *strongly disagree*. The questionnaire was conducted after the final speaking practice with AI avatars.

## **RESULTS**

In this section, the results of the transcribed audio-recorded data, the FLA questionnaire, and the questionnaire on students' perceptions toward practicing speaking with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology are presented for each case, Student A and Student B. At the end of the section, the results of the two cases are compared.

### **Results for Student A**

In this section, as the results for Student A, the results of the audio-recorded data, the pre- and post-FLA questionnaires, and his perception toward speaking practice with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology are presented.

### Results of the Transcribed Audio-Recorded Data for Student A

The results of the transcribed audio-recorded data are presented in terms of changes in words per minutes, the number of grammatical errors, and the vocabulary levels. In addition, the pre- and post-transcribed data are presented in terms of changes in pragmatic features.

As for the first-session audio recording, the utterance time of Student A's talk was 0:53, the number of total words was 92 and words per minute was 104.1. Compared to that, in the last-session audio recording, the utterance time of his talk was 0:50, the number of total words was 101 and words per minute was 121.1. Although his speaking time was limited in both of the recordings, there was an improvement in words per minute, which possibly indicates an improvement in fluency.

The number of grammatical errors was the same: It was 2 in the first- and last-session audio recordings. For example, in the first-session audio recording, Student A said, "There's many sightseeing spots" and "there is so many stores," which should be "there *are* many sightseeing spots" and "there *are* so many stores." In the last-session audio recording, he said "I wanna know what is your favorite song?" and "I like jazz song because it makes me more relaxed," which should be "I wanna know about what your favorite song *is*" and "I like jazz songs because *they make* me relaxed." The level of the vocabulary remained the same, and the CEFR level was A1 for both the first- and last-session audio data.

The first- and last-session audio data were pragmatically analyzed. Table 1 shows pragmatic differences in the first- and last-session audio data. Regarding the types of questions asked by Student A, although there was no significant change, a more specific question to get to know more about the AI avatar, "I wanna know what is your favorite song?" was asked in the last-session audio recording. Also, Student A showed more interest in the AI avatar by saying, "I want to talk with you where you live."

**TABLE 1. Pragmatic Differences in Student A's First- and Last-Session Audio Recordings**

Differences	First Session	Last Session
Types of Questions Asked by Student D	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Hi, I'm good.) How about you?</li> <li>What's your name?</li> <li>(Yeah, I live in Japan.) How about you?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(My name is Masaru.) How are you?</li> <li>I wanna know about what is your favorite song?</li> </ol>
Showing More Interest in Jamie		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I want to talk with you where you live.</li> </ol>

### Results of Student A's FLA Questionnaires

For the FLA questionnaires, a five-point Likert scale was used: 5 for *strongly agree*, 4 for *agree*, 3 for *neither agree nor disagree*, 2 for *disagree*, and 1 for *strongly disagree*. Student A's average score on the pre-questionnaire was 2.83, while the average score on the post-questionnaire was 3.08. Thus, the score increased by 0.25 after practicing speaking with AI avatars, which indicates an increase in FLA.

Among the 24 items, 10 items showed increases, 5 items showed decreases

and 9 items remained the same. For example, Items 4, 16, 24, 27 increased by 2 points, which were “It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language,” “Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it,” “I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students,” and “I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class,” respectively. Items 1, 21, and 23 decreased by 2 points; they were “I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class,” “The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get,” and “I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.”

### **Results on Student A’s Perception Toward the Use of Immerse and Its Technology**

The comments that Student A wrote in his journal are summarized in terms of positive comments, negative comments and his opinion about whether speaking practice with AI avatars in Immerse would help him improve speaking proficiency. The positive feedback that Student A wrote was related to reduced pressure in conversation and enhanced confidence and accuracy. Student A appreciated the distinct nature of interactions with AI avatars compared to humans and wrote, “Conversations with the AI were different from those with humans and could be done without too much tension.” Regarding accuracy, he commended the AI avatars for their ability to accurately interpret and respond to spoken English and noted, “They were able to hear my English accurately and I was able to speak it with confidence.” He also pointed out negative sides in the journal. For example, he wrote, “It was simply difficult to control,” which implies that he found it difficult to talk to AI avatars in Immerse using his PC. Regarding whether speaking practice with Immerse AI Avatars would improve his English-speaking proficiency, he wrote, “It was great for English language learners because we could practice conversational English in situations” and “I also thought that they (the avatars) would receive our opinions in a positive way, which would motivate us to continue learning English.”

Concerning the questionnaire, the overall mean score was 3.88 out of 5, indicating a generally positive perception of the Immerse platform. Questions 3 and 4 received 5 out of 5; they were “Immerse is convenient for me to engage in practicing speaking English” and “I feel that Immerse is convenient for me to practice speaking English.” The results indicate that Student A finds Immerse convenient to practice speaking. On the contrary, Question 8, “Practicing speaking English via Immerse is enjoyable to me,” received 3 out of 5. This indicates that while the platform is functional, it might lack elements that could make the learning experience more enjoyable or engaging. Also, Question 9, “Learning to operate Immerse is easy for me,” received 3 out of 5, indicating some challenges in using the platform, possibly due to its interface complexity.

### **Results for Student B**

In this section, as the results for Student B, the results of the audio-recorded data, the pre- and post-FLA questionnaires, and her perception toward speaking practice with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology are presented.

### Results of the Transcribed Audio-Recorded Data for Student B

As for the first-session audio recording, the utterance time of Student B's talk was 1:14, the number of total words was 108 and words per minute was 87.6. Compared to this, in the last-session audio recording, the utterance time of her talk was 0:34, the number of total words was 83 and words per minute was 146.5. Although her speaking time was limited in both of the recordings and the time for her talk decreased in the last-session audio recording compared to the first-session audio recording, there was an improvement in words per minute, which possibly indicates an improvement in fluency.

The number of grammatical errors was 3 in the first-session audio recording, and it was 2 in the last-session audio recording. For example, in the first-session audio recording, Student B said, "Where is your live?" "I hope you will come Kanagawa," and "When you are see?" which should be "Where *do you* live?" "I hope you will come *to* Kanagawa," and "When *do you* see *it*?" In the last-session audio recording, she said, "And where are you live?" and "What's favorite your drink?" which should be "And where *do you* live?" and "What's *your* favorite drink?" The number of grammatical errors decreased in the last-session audio recording; however, it might have been affected by less time spent in the last-session audio recording compared to the first-session audio recording. The levels of vocabulary use changed from A1 in the first-session audio recording to A2 in the last-session audio recording.

The first- and last-session audio data were pragmatically analyzed. Table 2 shows the pragmatic differences in the first- and last-session audio data. The number of questions asked by Student B increased from 1 in the first-session audio recording to 5 in the last-session audio recording, indicating a more positive approach to communicating with the AI avatar. Additionally, in the last-session audio recording, she asked a question when she did not understand the meaning of *instrument*. Asking for clarification was not observed in the first-session audio recording. Furthermore, she said "I want to see you again" in the last-session audio recording, which shows her desire for a more intimate relationship compared to "I will see you tomorrow" in the first-session audio recording.

**TABLE 2. Pragmatic Differences in Student B's First- and Last-Session Audio Recordings**

Differences	First Session	Last Session
Number of Questions Asked by Student B	1. Where are you?	1. What's your name? 2. How are you? 3. And where are you? 4. What's favorite your drink? 5. (I play the guitar.) How about you?
Asking for a Clarity		1. Sorry, what do you mean, instrument?
Seeking a More Intimate Relationship	1. I will see you tomorrow.	1. I want to see you again.

### Results of Student B's FLA Questionnaires

For the FLA questionnaires, a five-point Likert scale was used: 5 for *strongly agree*, 4 for *agree*, 3 for *neither agree nor disagree*, 2 for *disagree*, and 1 for *strongly disagree*. The average score on the pre-questionnaire was 3.88, while the

average score of the post-questionnaire was 3.25. Thus, the score decreased by 0.63 after practicing speaking with AI avatars, which shows a decrease in FLA.

Among the 24 items, 15 items showed decreases, 2 items showed increases, and 7 items remained the same. Among the 15 items, two items, Item 6 and Item 29, decreased by 2 points; they were “During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course” and “I get nervous when I don’t understand every word that the language teacher says.” Overall, the results show a decline in Student B’s FLA level.

### **Results on Student B’s Perception Toward the Use of Immerse and Its Technology**

The comments that Student B wrote in her journal are summarized in terms of positive comments, negative comments, and her opinion on whether speaking practice with AI avatars in Immerse was helpful in improving her speaking proficiency. The positive feedback that Student B wrote was related to ease of conversation and efficiency of sessions. Regarding ease of conversation, Student B stated, “Since the conversation partner was an avatar, I found it easier to talk than with people.” Efficiency of the sessions was appreciated by Student B, who mentioned, “Each conversation (completing all tasks) could be finished in about five minutes, so even continuing once a day didn’t feel too burdensome.”

However, Student B also experienced negative effects. For example, the conversation between AI avatars and students could be transcribed automatically, so students could look at the transcription. Thus, Student B relied on the transcription, which was seen as a drawback for her. She wrote, “Reading what the other person said [what the avatar said] made it feel easier than actual practice.” About whether speaking practice with Immerse AI avatars would improve her English speaking proficiency, she wrote, “I believe that learning with AI avatars will improve my English speaking skills. Unlike having a conversation with people, there is no fear of failure, which allows me to try using various phrases over time.” She also added, “Since the sentences spoken by the avatars are accurate, I feel that I could mimic their way of speaking or incorporate new phrases into my own talk as I practice.”

Student B’s overall mean score of 4.41 out of 5 on the questionnaire about the Immerse platform indicates a highly positive perception, suggesting that the platform effectively meets her language learning needs. Among the 18 items, she scored 4 out of 5 on 10 items. Only two items, Items 5 and 6, were rated as 3 out of 5. Item 5 was “When I learn English with Immerse, time passes quickly,” and Item 6 was “When I learn English with Immerse, I am not distracted by noise.”

### **Comparative Results of Student A and Student B**

Regarding FLA, Student A’s FLA score increased from 2.83 to 3.08, indicating increased anxiety. While he appreciated the reduced pressure of interacting with AI avatars, he also found using Immerse technologically challenging. This suggests that while certain aspects of the technology (like accurate responses from AI avatars) increased his confidence in speaking English, the difficulty in managing the technology could have led to his increased anxiety. Therefore, his perception

of the technology is mixed, with positive aspects helping to enhance confidence in certain respects but with the overall complexity potentially increasing his anxiety.

Compared to Student A, Student B's FLA score decreased from 3.88 to 3.25, showing a reduction in anxiety. She found conversations with AI avatars easier and more efficient than with humans, which may have been one reason for her reduced anxiety. However, she also noted a reliance on transcriptions, which she felt might detract from the realism of practice. Despite these concerns, the overall reduction in anxiety and her positive perception of the platform's convenience may have contributed to changes in the number of words per minute in the last-session audio recording compared to the first-session audio recording and her increased willingness to talk, as shown in the results of pragmatic analysis of the first- and last-session audio recordings.

One significant difference between the results of Student A and Student B is that Student A increased his FLA after practicing speaking with AI avatars, though both increased the number of words per minute, implying an improvement in fluency. As the results for Student A suggest, if the technology is perceived as difficult to use, this may be one reason for increased anxiety. However, as the example of Student B suggests, when the technology is user-friendly and interactions are accurately facilitated, learners are likely to feel less anxious, which may affect speaking proficiency and FLA.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this study was to examine how practicing speaking with AI avatars in VR affects students' speaking proficiency and FLA. Prior studies have highlighted the possibility of VR to generate immersive, interactive settings that facilitate language learning (Scrivner et al., 2019; Schwienhorst, 2010; Lin & Lan, 2015). In this study, both Student A and Student B showed an increase in words per minute, suggesting the possibility of enhanced fluency. This is consistent with findings by Liu and Hou (2020), indicating that VR-assisted applications can improve speaking performance. However, neither student demonstrated significant improvement in grammatical accuracy, highlighting the need for ongoing teacher support to address recurring errors observed in first- and last-session audio data. The influence of VR on FLA varied: Student A experienced a slight increase in anxiety, possibly due to technical challenges, despite appreciating the reduced pressure of interacting with AI avatars.

In contrast, Student B reported decreased FLA and perceived the platform as user-friendly and efficient, aligning with Kaplan-Rakowski and Gruber's (2022) findings that VR can mitigate anxiety by providing a safe environment for language practice. The differing effects on FLA illustrate the complexities of integrating new technologies into language learning. While technical challenges may heighten anxiety (as seen with Student A), user-friendly designs may alleviate it (as observed with Student B). Furthermore, the study highlights the pivotal role of students' perceptions in engagement and learning outcomes. Positive VR experiences, like those reported by Student B, may lead to improved fluency and pragmatic skills. Conversely, challenges in using the technology, as encountered by Student A, might diminish these benefits and even increase anxiety. Thus,

optimizing VR platforms to be intuitive and accessible is expected for maximizing their educational effectiveness.

Although improvements in words per minute were observed, the duration of the students' talks in both the first- and last-session audio data was very limited. Thus, in any related future study, all speaking practice with AI avatars might need to be recorded and analyzed. Additionally, conducting pre- and post-speaking tests, such as the TOEIC Speaking test, along with the audio data, is needed to examine improvements in speaking proficiency outside the Immerse VR environments. Also, given the study's limited scope with only two participants, further research is necessary. Analyzing data from additional students would provide a more comprehensive understanding of VR's impact on speaking proficiency and FLA. Exploring the long-term effects of speaking practice with AI avatars in VR on students' speaking proficiency and FLA is also essential. Moreover, a comparative study involving a control group practicing speaking with teachers and a treatment group practicing with AI avatars is expected. By addressing these areas, future studies can build on the promising results of this study and contribute to more effective and accessible language education through VR technology, filling the gap for Japanese English learners with limited opportunities to practice speaking in an EFL context.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by JSPS Kakenhi, Grant Number JP22K13165.

## THE AUTHOR

**Yukie Saito** is a professor in the Faculty of Global Informatics at Chuo University in Japan. Her main research areas are the application of edtech in English education, the application of CEFR, and teachers' cognition and classroom practice. Email: ty-saito@yacht.ocn.ne.jp

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## APPENDIX A

### The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), by Horwitz et al. (1986)

The numerals of the items used in this study are bolded.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
- 3.** I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
- 4.** It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.
- 6.** During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
- 9.** I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
- 10.** I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.
- 12.** In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
- 13.** It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.
- 15.** I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
- 16.** Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
- 17.** I often feel like not going to my language class.
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
- 19.** I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
- 20.** I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.
- 21.** The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
- 23.** I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
- 24.** I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
- 25.** Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
- 26.** I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
- 27.** I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
- 29.** I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.
- 30.** I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
- 31.** I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
- 33.** I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

## **APPENDIX B**

The statements in the questionnaire on students' perceptions on practicing speaking with AI avatars in Immerse VR and its technology.

1. I can learn English at any time with Immerse.
2. I can learn English at any place with Immerse.
3. Immerse is convenient for me to engage in practicing speaking English.
4. I feel that Immerse is convenient for me to practice speaking English.
5. When I learn English with Immerse, time passes quickly.
6. When I learn English with Immerse, I am not distracted by noise.
7. Practicing speaking English via Immerse makes me feel good.
8. Practicing speaking English via Immerse is enjoyable to me.
9. Learning to operate Immerse is easy for me.
10. My interaction with Immerse is clear and understandable.
11. It is easy for me to become skillful at using Immerse.
12. I find Immerse easy to use.
13. Using Immerse enables me to improve my English speaking skills.
14. Using Immerse makes it easier for me to practice speaking English.
15. I find Immerse useful for practicing speaking English.
16. I would like to continue to practice speaking English using Immerse in the future.
17. I plan to practice speaking English using Immerse in the future.
18. I expect my use of Immerse to continue in the future.



# Building Learners' Identity for Comprehension Through L2 Extensive Reading Interactions

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Noriko Kurishita

*Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Nagoya, Japan*

Although Day and Bamford's (1998) concept of reading comprehension for L2 extensive reading (ER) involves learner agency, the quality of comprehension has hardly been studied from the learner-centered perspective. This case study reveals the process of four Japanese university students' changing their identities through interactional practices (i.e., book talks) to realize general comprehension shifting from verbatim comprehension. By utilizing the framework of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), conversation analysis and follow-up ethnographic data revealed that peer scaffolding during interaction assisted learners' identity establishment and shifted their reading quality towards normal reading as in L1. Successful learners eventually enjoyed opinion gaps that led them to a deep understanding of books with their reading rate and comprehension level unconsciously adjusted.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the popularity of ER utilized for second language (L2) teaching, how learners change their reading quality toward natural methodology is little studied. This study explores how learners' comprehension quality shifts, revealing the process's mechanism in an ER classroom community manifested in learners' interactional competence (IC) development based on sociocultural theory (SCT). It adapts legitimate peripheral participation (LPP; Lave & Wenger, 1991) to observe how students engage in their interactional practices. In the process of learners' engagement of the practice from peripheral to full participation, the study reveals how they build their self-identities to change their reading quality from verbatim understanding to *general comprehension* (Waring & McLean, 2015), which is "normal" reading as we do in our L1.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Day and Bamford's (1998) expectation of reading comprehension for ER requires measuring readers' *agentivity* expressed as "what it means to be a reader and the meaning reading can have in a person's life" (p. 167). This notion of reading comprehension, called *general comprehension* – for readers to grasp the main idea of a text, integrate it with their background knowledge, and evaluate the text for their preferences (Waring & McLean, 2015) – is not something

evaluated by quizzes but demonstrated in a community. Readers read materials by reflecting on what is written in their lives, such as savoring stories, obtaining necessary information, and judging the value of material based on their preferences, which are all for the reader's "own reward" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 8) that they can experience through social activities.

Learner agency is the key to general comprehension because it requires readers' unconscious manipulation of strategies called *rauding* – a reading skill that allows them to comprehend a text faster while maintaining a certain level of comprehension (Waring & McLean, 2015). Rauding is a cognitive activity similar to that occurring in the L1 with minimal distractions for reading (Carver, 1992). L2 ER researchers claim that it occurs only when readers read simplified materials well within their proficiency level (e.g., Nation & Waring, 2020); however, the appropriate books do not always match with learners' preferences (Takase, 2004) or affective factors (Arai, 2022) in their choice of books.

The notion of IC in SLA (Young, 2007, 2011) provides a clue to measure this complexity of general comprehension involving learner agency in its participatory framework. Young (2007) focused on social and cultural aspects to invoke learners' identities, beliefs, and power in interactional practice and defined IC as

How the language, gesture, and positioning of specific interactions are determined by the social context of interaction and how that context – conceived broadly enough to include the political implications of the practice and the identities of the participants – is constructed by their verbal and non-verbal actions. (p. 266)

In the pursuit of their identities, learners participate in an interaction where they reify knowledge to establish their identity as capable learners, which promotes them to further learning. Cekaite (2007) utilized the participation framework for developing a child's emergent L2 IC in an immersion classroom and demonstrated empirical evidence of learners' self-identity building through interactions. She revealed that a single informant's trajectory of her IC development demonstrated how she positioned herself as a competent member of the classroom community while acquiring turn-taking alignment to participate in classroom interaction appropriately.

Young's participatory metaphor for L2 learning is consistent with the SCT view and applicable to learning in general. SCT emphasizes the importance of interaction, which is regarded as a mediational tool (i.e., *practice*) by which learners develop their knowledge and skills (Swain et al., 2015). Lave and Wenger (1991) developed LPP, claiming that participation degree in practice indicates learning intensification. A novice learner becomes a full participant from being a peripheral participant as they engage in practice with more experienced or high-knowledge learners in a community. Learning occurs when a learner acts within society, where a learner produces knowledge, transforms the knowledge, and changes their identity due to learning in situ. Participation is based on situated negotiation of meaning to connect a learner to the world with mutual support (i.e., *scaffolding*). In this view, general comprehension is understood as a result of a reader's accumulated experience of interacting with the world to comprehend books.

To apply LPP to ER, questions arise as to how L2 readers establish their

identities, as their reading quality shifts through interactive practices. Focusing on turn-taking to measure the participation degree as IC development, the current study demonstrates the relationship between the degrees of learners' reading quality shifts and their participation. It also attempts to reveal the interactive micro-mechanism of learners' identity-building, utilizing conversation analysis (CA) and associated reading skill development. In all, the study pursues the benefits of interactions to facilitate general comprehension.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to heuristically explore the validation of LPP to measure general comprehension. To reveal its complexity, the research focuses on the following questions:

- RQ1. How are learners involved in their interactive practices during the process of reading quality shift through ER?
- RQ2. What are the trajectories of individual learners' development with their value and identification shifts towards reading quality shift through ER?
- RQ3. How do learners realize general comprehension, balancing comprehension accuracy and reading rate?

RQ1 is to disclose the micro-mechanism of learners' interactive practices observing the participation degree utilizing CA. RQ2 is to triangulate the CA by seeking learners' value and identity shifts as well as reading quality changes. Finally, RQ3 is to quantitatively evaluate learners' reading skills (i.e., reading) needed for general comprehension.

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants in this study were four students (two males, Ken and Shota, and two females, Satomi and Sena – all the names are pseudonyms) enrolled in a year-long ER class in the pedagogy department at a Japanese university. The four students were selected based on their English proficiency, majors, educational backgrounds, and gender among those who consented to provide their data in this research approved by the university's research ethics committee in the academic year 2023. Despite the slight differences in their educational backgrounds, all participants were born in Japan and had education in Japanese schools where all of them experienced the grammar-translation method to learn English and no ER. Their English proficiency ranged from below A1 to A1 level in CEFR.

According to the pre-study interview, the participants were graduates from local public and private high schools ranging from prestigious schools with competitive, exam-oriented education (Ken and Sena) to regular schools with less competitive, fewer exams (Satomi and Shota). With the limited opportunity to learn English as an EFL learner, their reading strategies and identities were

largely influenced by their school experiences before entering university. Despite slight differences in degree, they expressed their abhorrence of the grammar-translation method in their English classes, except Satomi, who had experienced study abroad. (See Table 1 for details on the participants.)

**TABLE 1. Backgrounds of Participants**

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Satomi (F)</b>	<b>Ken (M)</b>	<b>Sena (F)</b>	<b>Shota (M)</b>
<b>High Schools</b>	Private school	Public prestigious school	Public prestigious school	Public school
<b>Major English Proficiency</b>	English A1	English A1	P.E. Below A1	English Below A1
<b>Backgrounds</b>	Fun experience of study abroad	Strong wish to become an English teacher	Strongly negative about school learning with memorization	Low self-efficacy for school English learning

### Context

ER was implemented in a 90-minute weekly class in a one-year course. The main interactive activity throughout the study was book talk in English in which students talked about their favorite books that they had read. It was facilitated with a hands-on activity sheet (see Appendix A) with possible questions listed and practiced in class. However, the students were strongly encouraged to freely arrange the questions and insert follow-up questions to make their interaction natural. ER was instructed and practiced at the beginning of the course. After each sustained silent reading (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 128) in or outside of class, students conducted a book talk reiterated with three different partners.

### Data Collection

The data collection spanned 25 weeks in the academic year of 2023 (April 2023 to November 2023). The data sources included conversation transcripts from book talks as speaking tests, follow-up group interviews of the target students, book logs, and reading fluency tests. These data sources, except pre- and post-surveys, were conducted at the end of each study phase (see Table 2). The speaking tests were performed by two randomly selected students in the book talk style they experienced in class. They talked about a new book as they did each time in class; however, they did so without the hands-on activity sheet that they had referred to for the in-class book talk. The reading fluency tests were created utilizing Nation and Malarcher’s (2007a, b) vocabulary-controlled reading materials and quizzes to measure the development of comprehension accuracy and reading rate. Moreover, the students were required to keep book logs with the reading amount and book levels for their ER progress. The recording of each speaking test lasted for five minutes for each pair. The total interview recording spanned five hours and 30 minutes.

**TABLE 2. Data Sources and Collection Timing**

	<b>Pre-Study</b>	<b>Phase I</b>	<b>Phase II</b>	<b>Phase III</b>
	<b>Week 1-2</b>	<b>Week 3-8</b>	<b>Week 9-16</b>	<b>Week 17-25</b>
<b>Speaking Test</b>		X	X	X
<b>Follow-up Interview</b>	X	X	X	X
<b>Reading Fluency Test</b>	X	X	X	X
<b>Book Logs</b>		Daily basis		

## Data Analysis

The study adopted the exploratory design (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009) in the mixed method approach to explore the validity of the interactive participation to measure the learners' reading quality shift toward general comprehension. This design was to explore the topic by collecting qualitative data to identify principle themes and possibly generate a theory. The video-recorded book talk tests were transcribed by CA conventions (see Appendix B) using InqScribe (version 2.5.0.318) to first qualitatively observe participation referring to interactional practices by Wong and Waring (2021). (See Appendix C.) Then, their occurrences were counted as three types of turn-takings (turn-takings, valid turn-takings, and multi-unit turns – MUTs) based on the turn-constructive unit, which is the minimum interactional unit, and compared to quantitatively observe individual development. The follow-up interviews conducted in Japanese were also video-recorded and transcribed by the author. The main purpose of the interviews was to investigate comprehension quality and strategy use. Its ethnographic data were collected in group interviews (see Appendix D for questions). Both transcriptions for CA and group interviews were later analyzed utilizing NVivo (version 1.7.1) to categorize and count evidence for each student's participation and to validate the action by their ethnographic data. Moreover, to see the relation between their comprehension quality and reading, the results of the periodical reading fluency tests were analyzed for comprehension accuracy and reading rate, and the developments with the qualitative data from CA and the interviews in each phase were compared.

## RESULTS

### Qualitative Results: CA-Informed Analyses

#### Peripheral Participation (Phase I)

The interactions in Phase I were characterized by the rigid pattern of adjacency pairs of a practiced question and its reply with the fixed roles of speaker and recipient. There, lower-proficiency students often forgot the questions, and higher-proficiency students assisted them. Excerpt 1 typically exemplifies the pattern; Ken (Ke) tried to make Shota (Sh) utter the question sentences by whispering a part of the questions (Line 19) without switching his role as a recipient of the questions.

**Excerpt 1**

18 Sh a- e:to (1.5) e:to {<sup>ooo</sup>nannte yuundakke | what am I supposed to say?<sup>ooo</sup>}  
 19 Ke <sup>ooo</sup>did you find<sup>ooo</sup>  
 20 Sh a-did you find any interesting book.=  
 21 Ke =yes. yes I did.  
 22 Sh (1.5) e:to:

However, another high-proficient student, Satomi (Sa) offered her help more interactively as a more experienced interactant. In Excerpt 2, where T had trouble recalling the question to ask, she whispered it at Line 72 as Ken did. However, unlike Ken's latched and determined yes to reply to the question (Line 21 in Excerpt 1), she replied yes with rising intonation (Line 74). This encouraged T to develop the conversation by asking another question (Lines 75–76).

**Excerpt 2**

71 T <sup>oo</sup>uhm<sup>oo</sup>  
 72 Sa <sup>o</sup>did you find any interesting book<sup>o</sup> hh  
 73 T hh did you find any interesting book?  
 74 Sa yes?  
 75 T (4.0) ( ) ((Moving his hand trying to say something.))  
 76 <sup>oo</sup>let's si<sup>oo</sup> ah: is title. what is the title.

Although lower-proficient students mostly passively participated in interaction with the support of the other interlocutor, when they obtained the book title, they held an additional turn (i.e., MUT) by repeating the information. This action indicated that they tried to find out if they knew the book, and if they did, there might have been a chance for them to develop the topic.

At the peripheral participation stage, despite the differences in IC, students were generally not well in command to repair and circumvent language breakdowns interactively. Nevertheless, some students demonstrated a sign to associate the book information with their experiences, and this turned out to hold an additional turn, breaking the rigid adjacency pairs as a MUT, which was not yet fully developed due to their limited IC and undeveloped ER.

**Developing Participation (Phase II)**

In this phase, the students' interactions were characterized by mutuality. Lower-proficiency students were especially active, involving more MUT initiations for co-constructions. However, a difference emerged in the success of co-construction.

In Excerpt 3, Shota held a MUT and inserted a turn, “the teacher” (Line 54), to co-construct the summary. B, suffering from summarizing his story, was delighted to reply with a repeated “yes” (Line 57) and completed summarizing (Line 58). Finally, both Shota and B joyfully acknowledged the co-production with gratitude (Lines 59–60).

**Excerpt 3**

52 B =looking-u (0.5) the two bo:y-i (0.5) a::two (1.0) <camera:a> (0.5) a::  
 53 [(.) small camera]  
 54 Sh [the teacher]=  
 55 B =uh?  
 56 Sh The teacher is: (.) the secret camera  
 57 B >yes, yes, yes<  
 58 (1.3) so: (0.5) the (.) gla- wearing classes boy-i (.)  
 59 Sh oh::hh, >(I know)< > °°thank you.°°<=  
 60 B =thank you↑

In contrast, Sena's trial for co-construction was unsatisfactory for her. In Excerpt 4, where Sena tried to summarize her story, she required Z's linguistic assistance with gazing gestures (Line 26) and whispering Japanese *ninngen* for the English equivalent (Line 28). However, Z picked up only the clearly articulated phrase "afternoon" and moved on to the next question (Line 30).

**Excerpt 4**

26 Se u::n, (0.3) a::, |<after:noo:n> (0.8) ({ninngen? | humans?})-wa h[hh]  
 |((gazing at Z))  
 27 Z [hhh]  
 28 Se ({ninngen? | humans?}) (1.5) (°°of human?°°) afternoon.  
 29 Z afternoon.  
 30 (2.0) °u::h:n° (1.5) could you show me your favorite page?

Shota was fortunately acquainted with a peer who read a book he knew and Sena was unfortunately not with a peer who helped her with her linguistic troubles. This difference would separate their paths in establishing their identities regarding enjoyment of ER.

**Full Participation (Phase III)**

In this stage, Satomi and Shota vigorously engaged in interactions inserting follow-up questions to inquire about details of the story introduced by their partners.

In Excerpt 5, Satomi inquired about Shota's book by repeating the book title (Line 27) and asking an extra question about the book series (Line 29). With both utterances, she rolled her eyes, which indicated she was trying to find out if she knew the story.

**Excerpt 5**

26 Sh <the title is:> The Big Test.  
 27 Sa The Big Test. ((rolling her eyes))  
 28 Sh >°okay°<  
 29 Sa oka↑y↓ what's the <seri↑es↓> ((rolling her eyes))  
 30 Sh a:h <FRL>  
 31 Sa FRL? (.) oka↑y↓

Shota, as Satomi's listener, did not hesitate to inquire about the book she was introducing. In Excerpt 6, he initiates a MUT (Line 134) to ask about the details of "wedding" (Lines 136 and 138).

**Excerpt 6**

- 133 Sa the main event i:s Willma and <°Wilf?°> is going to wedding.  
134 Sh °wedding?°  
135 Sa yes.  
136 Sh [who]-un?  
137 Sa [a:nd]-  
138 Sh whose wedding

In this stage, the students' fuller engagement was triggered by their interest in the book contents. Satomi and Shota's interaction was no longer to repair linguistic problems but to actively search for book information to satisfy their interests.

**Quantitative Results**

Every student's number of turn-takings in a five-minute test increased over time with the average frequency being from 51.75 to 70.5 (see Table 3). Meanwhile, their IC was enhanced with valid turn-taking from 0.86 to 0.97 on average. This indicates that the students made more rapid turn-takings, developing their IC over time. However, a difference in developmental patterns was observed between successful students and less successful students. While Satomi and Shota's numbers of turn-takings and validity steadily increased, those of Ken and Sena's fluctuated. In particular, Sena was the only student who could not achieve perfect validity on the last speaking test.

As for MUT initiation, which indicates participants' stronger will for engagement, Ken's participation was the least for every test, one-fifth of Satomi's on average. Sena and Shota's MUT initiation rates did not differ much, with Sena's at 0.21 and Shota's at 0.19 on average. However, Shota perfectly succeeded in co-construction on every test, whereas Sena did only about half throughout the study.

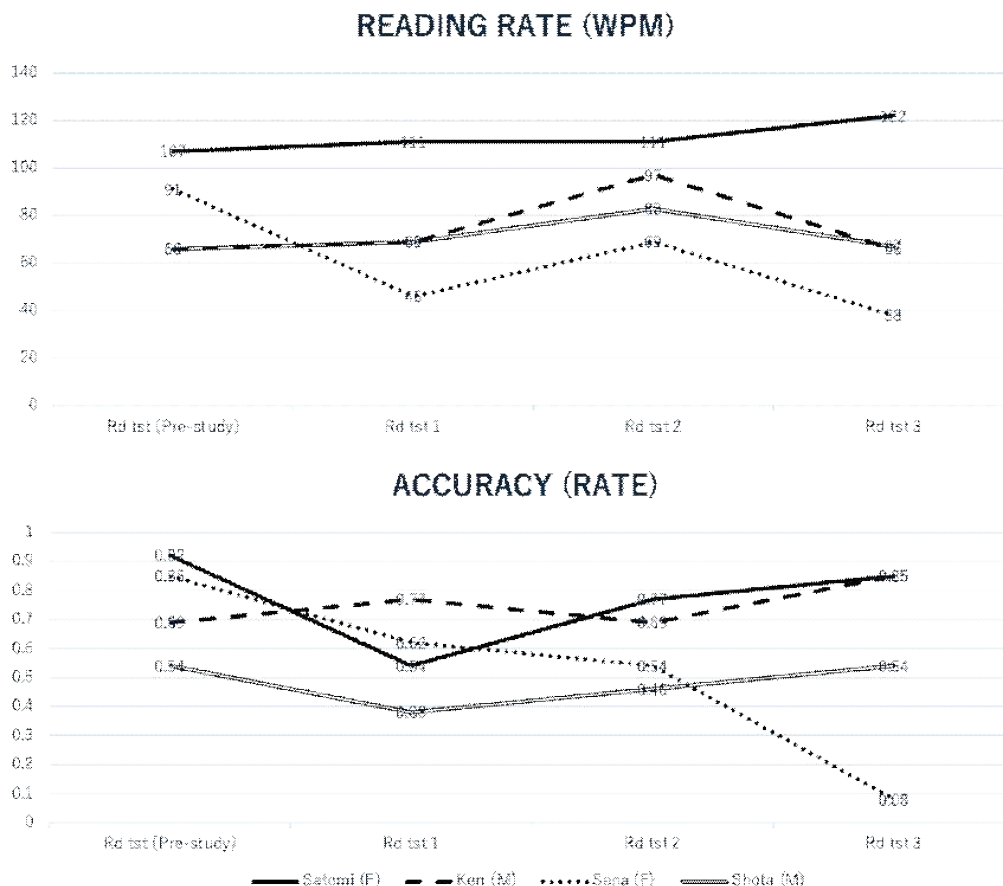
**TABLE 3. The Number of Turn-Takings of Each Participant**

	Participants	Sp tst 1	Sp tst 2	Sp tst 3	AVG
<b>Total Turn-Taking</b> (frequency/5 min)	Satomi (F)	61	69	80	70.00
	Ken (M)	53	62	55	56.67
	Sena (F)	50	42	67	53.00
	Shota (M)	43	58	80	60.33
	AVG	51.75	57.75	70.5	60.00
<b>Valid Turn-Taking</b> (rate)	Satomi (F)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Ken (M)	0.94	0.95	1.00	0.96
	Sena (F)	0.76	0.95	0.88	0.86
	Shota (M)	0.74	0.90	1.00	0.88
	AVG	0.86	0.95	0.97	0.93
<b>MUT Initiation</b> (rate)	Satomi (F)	0.16	0.39	0.49	0.35
	Ken (M)	0.04	0.02	0.15	0.07
	Sena (F)	0.05	0.30	0.27	0.21
	Shota (M)	0.09	0.27	0.20	0.19
	AVG	0.09	0.25	0.28	0.20
<b>Successful Co-Construction</b> (rate)	Satomi (F)	-	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Ken (M)	-	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Sena (F)	0.50	0.50	0.67	0.56
	Shota (M)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	AVG	0.75	0.88	0.92	0.85

### Extensive Reading Development and Rauding

Figure 1 shows the development of reading speed and accuracy measured by reading fluency tests and of the accumulative reading amount and the book levels (i.e., the number of words contained in a book) in the three phases of the study. It demonstrates that each participant had a critical time when they increased speed, losing accuracy. The active participants, Satomi and Shota, had a similar tendency; in Phase I, they had a critical time, and after that, they tried to gain accuracy by balancing with speed. On the other hand, the moderate participants, Ken and Sena, demonstrated distinct paths to adjust accuracy after their critical time in Phase II; Ken lowered his book level, while Sena upgraded hers. As a result of the adjustment, Ken improved accuracy in Phase III, whereas Sena failed to do so.

FIGURE 1. The Results of Reading Fluency Tests and ER Development



	Rd Test 1 (Phase I)		Rd Test 2 (Phase II)		Rd Test 3 (Phase III)	
	Word/Book	Σ of Words	Word/Book	Σ of Words	Word/Book	Σ of Words
<b>Satomi (F)</b>	1,034	12,197	1,811	68,057	1,032	200,277
<b>Ken (M)</b>	1,389	11,577	685	75,491	810	116,613
<b>Sena (F)</b>	405	6,190	1,082	30,086	561	83,094
<b>Shota (M)</b>	1,217	8,761	982	52,589	794	105,643

### Interview-Informed Analyses

The students’ group interviews revealed two trends in how the students perceived book talk and ER. Satomi and Shota gradually incorporated their book talk information into their ER, enjoying opinion gaps. On the other hand, Ken and Sena treated book talk and ER separately and persisted in their original concerns about linguistic accuracy in speaking and reading.

In Phase I, the students’ primary issue was to keep face by attempting to maintain turn-taking during the book talk. Especially, Sena was frustrated with her limited ability and not being able to express herself in sentences. ER was not their primary concern unless it related to their talk.

However, in Phase II, some students started enjoying book talk when they

realized that accuracy was not necessary to conduct interaction. They viewed interaction as a co-activity in which both interlocutors helped each other to co-construct to convey information. Satomi recognized her contribution during interaction and expressed her joy when her partner understood her point about the book she was talking about:

We can communicate only by words [without forming a sentence]. ... Even if my partner's utterances are not perfect with fragments of words and phrases, I can guess what they want to express and rephrase it in a sentence. Then, they are glad, saying, "That's it!" [Satomi, Interview 2]

Shota strongly criticized the way he learned interaction in junior high school. Compared to what he experienced during book talks, he retrospectively explained how memorized expressions did not work for actual communication with foreigners on his school trip:

[Practicing] patterned expressions was tedious work. [We were taught] when a foreigner asked this, we replied using that phrase. But in actual interaction, they replied in a different way we did not imagine. We could not use any of the practiced expressions! [Shota, Interview 2]

Concurrently, Satomi and Shota reported the power of opinion gaps they encountered. Due to the overall ER progress of everybody, the students had more chances to share their opinions on the same book. Satomi stated that it monitored her comprehension when she noticed the opinion gaps. The reciprocal power was further stated by Shota. In reply to Satomi's report in the group interview, he mentioned,

Rather than reading the same book again, [I started feeling it was] interesting to know what other people feel about the book, and the difference of interpretation of the same story. I was doing that by reading Japanese books. Now, I can do a similar thing by reading English books. [Shota, Interview 2]

In Phase III, Satomi and Shota mentioned the reading strategies they had not adapted before. They reported a drastic change in their reading strategies with quick skimming. Shota reported,

Come to think of it, [at the beginning of ER,] I might have translated every word into Japanese first. But now, I can skim an important point at the first glance of a passage. [Shota, Interview 3]

Moreover, in replying to the question about his favorite books and series, Shota did not hide his excitement to talk about the kind of stories he liked and his favorite characters.

Unlike Satomi and Shota, Ken and Sena reported about neither the reading strategy change nor their favorite books. In the atmosphere where one side of the interview group was excited about their favorite books and characters, they hesitantly mentioned series they liked; Ken still preferred children's picture books for their easiness to comprehend, and Sena tried to catch up with others by

reading books too difficult for her level.

By the end of Phase III, Satomi became an autonomous reader who spontaneously read internet news in English. Shota understood stories by joyfully relating them to the real world. In contrast, for Ken and Sena, ER was still an obligation for course credit without much change in their identities for English interaction and reading.

## DISCUSSION

By the end of the study, Satomi and Shota had realized general comprehension, whereas Ken and Sena had not. Although all students appeared as provisional participants at the peripheral stage despite the differences in their original IC, the differences appeared in the following research points:

### **RQ1. How are learners involved in their interactive practices during the process of reading quality shift through ER?**

Crucially, learners need to recognize mutual scaffolding to construct interaction with their interlocutors so that they notice that linguistic accuracy is a secondary issue for IC development. Once they notice this, they reduce their fear of linguistic errors and start joyfully communicating about books for the information necessary for their ER progress. Then, the opinion gaps are no longer a sign of comprehension errors but triggers for deep understanding. The accumulated experience of deep understanding from various angles stimulated by opinion gaps leads learners to general comprehension. This process allowed learners progress in their ER with pleasure.

### **RQ2. What are the trajectories of individual learners' development with their value and identification shifts towards reading quality shift through ER?**

Learners need to recognize their linguistic development as a reification through interactional negotiations to establish their ideal selves for their new identifications. Although she demanded linguistic aid by actively participating in interaction, Sena's effort was not acknowledged by her peers. This discouraged her from pursuing her competent self, which peers would have interactively supported. As a result, she remained frustrated as an incapable student who could not express herself due to her lack of grammatical knowledge without changing her identity to a competent self.

Ken also needed to know his IC development, which was hidden from him by a dearth of peers who might have made him aware of his interactional development. As a student who everybody in the classroom acknowledged as competent with a lot of English knowledge and with tactic reading strategies for exams, he did not have opportunities to shape his new identification through mutual scaffolding in interaction. Most of the time during interactions, he was a provider of his rich knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, with which he survived the entrance exam. Still, he was not a recipient of the interactional skills and knowledge he needed to obtain. As a result, he persisted in his original identification and values as a "good student" without changing his reading strategies toward general comprehension.

### **RQ3. How do learners realize general comprehension, balancing comprehension accuracy and reading rate?**

Successful learners with general comprehension do not need conscious manipulation of comprehension accuracy and reading rate. Rauding automatically occurs once they are successfully involved in the mechanism stated for RQ1. Satomi and Shota were no longer conscious about reading accuracy and speed once they were involved in pleasure reading with the assistance of book talk. On the contrary, Ken and Sena needed manipulation of accuracy and speed, and their success in manipulations depended on their choice of book levels after their critical time; Ken lowered his book level, while Sena raised her book level due to her fear of being behind her peers. As a result, Ken succeeded in gaining higher scores in the post-test than in the pre-test, but Sena failed to do so, scoring lower on the post-test. Interestingly, despite the success of strategy manipulation, Ken did not enjoy ER in a way similar to that of Satomi and Shota.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Realizing general comprehension is an unconscious process. It occurs not through instructions or learners' deliberate manipulation of strategies but through their own experience reciprocally creating situated learning through interaction. Book talk assisted the learners' in comprehension by reciprocally creating resources in interaction. It involved identity-building by mirroring individual knowledge and skills interpersonally, which eventually led them to general comprehension. Rauding occurred automatically in the process of clarifying opinion gaps in texts. In the process of co-production of meaning-making, interactants applied their linguistic and book knowledge. Acknowledgment by others was necessary for identity-building in the process; the successful experience recognized by peers gradually removed the fear of uttering inaccurate language and gradually provided joy in exchanging various comprehension perspectives during the co-construction of interaction.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

Since this is a case study, further validation is necessary for generalization by either researching on a larger scale, in a longer time span, or by replicating the study. However, it provides teachers with some salient points: individual students need to interact with everybody in the classroom to explore the various knowledge that others possess. For example, Sena needed to encounter linguistically advanced students to help her language skills develop. Ken needed to talk with Satomi, who possessed different types of English skills, to notice how interaction should be conducted. Arranging interaction pairs for students to explore everybody's knowledge to co-construct new resources based on their own resources is the instructor's responsibility to create an optimal learning community for ER success.

## THE AUTHOR

**Noriko Kurishita** is an English instructor in Japan. Her research fields are extensive reading and teaching methodology. She is a doctoral student majoring in TESOL at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Japan. Email: kurichan.five@gmail.com

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## APPENDIX B

### Conversation Analysis Conventions (Wong & Waring, 2021) used in this study

.	(period) falling intonation
?	(question mark) rising intonation
,	(comma) continuing intonation
-	(hyphen) abrupt cut-off
::	(colon(s)) prolonging of sound
<u>word</u>	(underlining) stress
<u>word</u>	the more underlining, the greater the stress
WORD	(all caps) loud speech
°word°	(degree symbols) quiet speech
↑ word	(upward arrow) raised pitch
↓ word	(downward arrow) lowered pitch
>word<	(more than and less than) quicker speech
<word>	(less than and more than) slowed speech
hh	(series of h's) aspiration or laughter
[word]	(set of lined-up brackets) beginning and ending of
[word]	simultaneous or overlapping speech
=	(equal sign) latch or continuing speech with no break in between
(0.4)	(number in parentheses) length of a silence in tenths of a second
(.)	(period in parentheses) micro-pause: 0.2 second or less
()	(empty parentheses) inaudible talk
((word))	(double parentheses) transcriber comment
	horizontal line to indicate where the action starts

### Other indications in this study

{Japanese words  English translation}	curly brackets to mark Japanese words and their translations in English
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## APPENDIX C

### I. Interactional practices that consist of interactional competence (Wong & Waring, 2021, p. 9)

Turn-taking practices	Way of constructing a turn and allocating a turn.
Sequencing practices	Ways of initiating and responding to talk while performing actions such as requesting, inviting, story-telling, or topic initiation.
Overall structuring practices	Ways of organizing a conversation as a whole as in openings and closings.
Repair practices	Ways of addressing problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding of the talk.

### II. Fundamental notions of turn-taking

Turn-constructive unit (TCU)	A word, a phrase, a clause, a sentence, or a gesture that completes a communicative act (Wong & Waring, 2021, p. 22).
Valid turn-taking	A turn-taking that constructs TCU.
Multi-unit turn (MUT)	A conversational turn that consists of more than one TCU (Wong & Waring, 2021, p. 34).

## APPENDIX D

### Questions for group interview: originally conducted in Japanese

1. 自分の多読の進み具合はどうですか。(Describe your ER progress.)
2. 多読学習で戸惑うことはありますか。(Do you have any troubles in ER?)
3. 仲間とのブックトークは多読を進めるために役立っていますか。それはどんなことで役立っていますか。(Is book talk useful for your ER progress? How is it useful/not useful?)
4. ブックトークを通して仲間と共に学ぶことは楽しいですか。それはどうしてですか。(Is it fun to learn with your peers through book talks? Why is it so?)
5. ブックトークを通して仲間から学ぶことはありますか。それはどんなことですか。(Do you learn anything from your peers through book talks? What are they?)
6. ブックトークで自分は話し相手の役に立っているという感覚はありますか。(Do you feel that you contribute to the interaction?)
7. 多読授業は、自分の目指す英語力の習得に役立っていると思いますか。なぜ、そう思いますか。(Does this ER class contribute to your English improvement? Why do you (not) think so?)
8. 以前と比べて、読み方に変化がありましたか。それはどんな変化ですか。(Did you notice any difference in how to read English text before and now? If you did, how does it differ?)
9. これまで自分が経験した英語の学びと比べて、多読を通して英語を学習することをどう思いますか。(What do you think of learning English through ER compared to English learning you experienced?)
10. 英語の本を読むことを楽しんでいますか。(Do you enjoy reading English books?)
11. どんな本にハマりましたか。それについて述べてください。(Have you ever encountered a "bingo" book? If you have, describe what it is about.)
12. これまでの授業で最も楽しかったことは何ですか。(Tell us the happiest thing(s) you experienced in this class so far.)

# All You Need Is Yourself: Self-Talk to Improve Speaking/ Communicative Skills

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Sanae Oda-Sheehan

*Ochanomizu University, Tokyo, Japan*

Many Japanese university students have studied English in a grammar-focused and examination-oriented environment while wishing to improve oral communicative skills. Those learners may well feel frustrated having only limited resources to practice speaking, let alone opportunities to have practical communication with English speakers. However, they should be reminded that by adopting the art of self-talk, EFL learners can use themselves as a resource without having to depend on external factors. This study reports on a three-month project of such self-talk practice designed for university students and qualitative analyses of their reflections. The results suggest that this simple and innovative approach can be a powerful tool, bringing about significant changes in learners' communicative endeavors and increasing their willingness to communicate (WTC). Above all, it has promoted learner agency, inspiring students to explore unconventional approaches in autonomous learning. Such implications should benefit similar EFL contexts in many other countries as well.

## INTRODUCTION

Developing oral communicative skills seems to be of great interest to many Japanese learners in the EFL context, in which the focus of learning can often be placed on reading, writing, and grammar for test preparation. During my 17 years of teaching, on the first day of class I usually ask my students (a) whether they like studying English, (b) whether they want to be able to speak English better, and (c) which of the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) they wish to develop most. The results of this pre-course survey have repeatedly indicated similar trends: Whether they like studying English or not, learners want to be able to speak better and feel that speaking skills are what they need to develop most in their English learning.

Nevertheless, those learners are less likely to take action to improve in these areas because they do not know how to practice due to a lack of classroom instruction, and more importantly, because they believe they would need a conversation partner to practice speaking. However, the real challenge lies in the fact that many of them are faced with speaking anxiety (Allwright & Bailey, 1991) and struggle to form their ideas in English to carry on a conversation. They tend to “spend so long making lexical choices that they lose the chance to speak” (Hughes, 2002, p. 132). In other words, they need to be able to vocalize what they want to say as soon as it comes to mind.

Therefore, it is important to remind them that they should initially practice organizing and verbalizing their ideas in English before being engaged in interactive communication, and for that purpose, they would not need to have interlocutors in the initial output process. Simply stated, they can practice speaking English just by talking to themselves.

That is the concept of self-talk practice in this study, whose effectiveness was originally confirmed in my own learning experience many years ago. As a high school student in an environment where grammar-oriented rote learning was stressed even more so than now, I desperately sought ways to be better at English speaking and began to practice in front of a mirror talking to myself in the reflection. Years later, as a teacher and researcher in the field of TESOL who empathizes with learners' struggles, I am willing to share my experience in the hope of helping them overcome their personal challenge and enhance their learning experience.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, self-talk is defined as “talk or thoughts directed to oneself” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Self-talk is often discussed in the field of psychology and defined as “an internal dialogue in which an individual utters phrases or sentences to themselves” (American Psychological Association, n.d.), highlighting the effect of positive self-talk and negative self-talk in psychotherapy. Meanwhile, it has been rarely discussed in the field of TESOL in terms of speaking development. This lack of previous literature may be related to previous findings that spoken forms of language have generally been under-researched (Hughes, 2002) and, for the Japanese EFL context in particular, there have been very limited studies to investigate speaking skills (Iwamoto, 2016). On the flip side, this lack of previous literature could imply self-talk's potential as a highly innovative approach in TESOL.

At the same time, it should be noted that learning to speak in an EFL environment requires an extensive amount of self-practice outside the classroom. “No matter how much students learn through lessons, there is always plenty more they will need to learn by practice, on their own” (Scharle & Szabó, 2000, p. 4), and it is essential that learners take an active role and assume responsibility for their learning process. In that respect, developing speaking skills may involve a certain level of learner autonomy and sense of exploration.

Learner autonomy is generally defined as learners' freedom and ability to make decisions about their own learning (Cook, 2016). To foster learner autonomy, a sense of responsibility needs to be developed among learners, and “learners can only assume responsibility for their learning if they have some control over the learning process” (Scharle & Szabó, 2000, p. 80). The most meaningful learning, regardless of learning contexts, may take place when learners assume an active role in such an autonomous process.

This was the very reason I decided to try the approach of self-talk with my students while respecting their choices of how, when, where, and what to discuss. Following the suggestion by Cook (2016), I became a helper who would assist learners' choices and offer advice but would not teach directly. Although many

Japanese students are used to taking on a passive role in the classroom, I assume they still have their own learning style and preference even if it may only be working on a subconscious level. As Richards and Lockhart (1996) pointed out, learners may have “very specific assumptions about how to learn a language and about the kinds of activities and approaches they believe to be useful” (p. 55). I wanted my students to enjoy the exploration and autonomous learning in the approach I discovered in my own learner autonomy.

Based on the previous literature and theoretical perspectives, this study aims to investigate the following three research questions:

- RQ1. How did the learners feel about self-talk practice before and after its implementation?
- RQ2. Did they find any difference in their English speaking through this practice? If yes, in what ways?
- RQ3. What limitations might there be to self-talk practice?

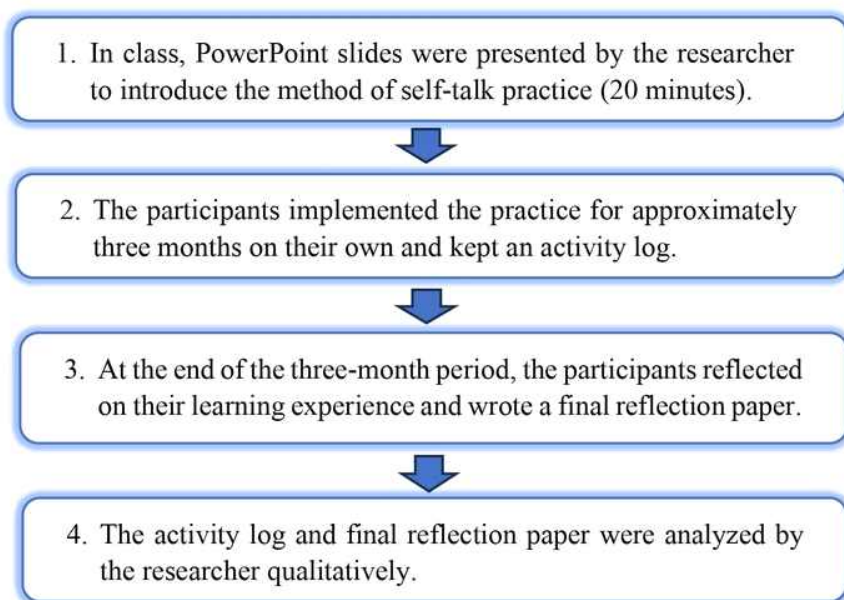
## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

### Participants and Procedure

The participants were 72 Japanese university students who were enrolled in intermediate-level English courses (classified as B1–B2 levels in the CEFR). In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, anonymity and pseudonyms were used, and composite figures were created, if necessary, on the basis of factual details to mask their identities.

The process of the research design is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. Research Design and Process



## **Introduction of the Self-Talk Approach and Suggested Topics**

During a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation, I introduced the concept of self-talk to ensure that the participants understood what they were to do in this project. I suggested speaking English aloud about any topic at their convenience on a daily basis and continuing to talk for at least one minute as ideas occurred to them. At the same time, for those who may have been confused about what to discuss, I provided scaffolding by suggesting the following four types of topics.

### **Definitions**

Learners start describing the definitions and functions of surrounding things. In second language acquisition, learners tend to simply use translation in their L1 without trying to explain definitions in L2. For example, as the English word “school” is *gakko* in Japanese translation, they would remain in the mental concept of *gakko* and usually not try to explain what “school” means in English. Therefore, it would be a good speaking exercise to explain the definition of “school” as “School is a place where people go to learn and be educated,” without depending on a Japanese translation. In this way, they can talk about anything that comes within their field of vision or mind.

### **Oral Journal/Diary**

Learners describe what happened during the day, what they did, or how they felt. Learners may have done this as a part of a writing activity, and the oral version of that practice should enhance their speaking skills.

### **Favorite People/Things**

Learners introduce people or things they like, as it would have an affective impact on their learning process. This is similar to show-and-tell activities, and the passion of talking about their own interests should increase learner motivation and accelerate their speaking development.

### **Japanese Culture/Heritage**

Learners imagine introducing Japanese culture to people who are not familiar with it. Due to the recent inbound tourism boom in Japan, this topic may be of interest to many learners. It can also be a narrative to retell old Japanese folk tales, which would help them talk for a longer period of time.

These topics should be familiar to the learners and thus appropriate and effective for this practice. By talking about something familiar, learners would require less time for processing the contents and language, leaving more time for communicative effects, which can lead to quicker production in speaking.

### **Imaginary Audience and Mirror**

Another scaffolding suggestion I provided was imagining having an audience in front of them to create a more communicative and interactive impact. Additionally, to promote such a scenario, I suggested practicing in front of a mirror so that they could see their reflection. Also, as Japanese learners are more

likely to care about accuracy and be afraid of making mistakes and feeling embarrassed, I suggested imagining the audience was non-Japanese, who may be more tolerant in their reactions to learners' faulty utterances (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). With a non-Japanese audience, learners could feel less nervous about making mistakes and reduce their speaking anxiety, which may promote and accelerate their speaking development.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The participants recorded their activity details in a self-talk activity log on a daily basis and also entered general comments on the overall learning experience in the form of a final reflection on the self-talk activity. The entries could be written either in English or in Japanese. After collecting all the data, I analyzed and interpreted them in accordance with the qualitative research procedure of taking memos, coding, and thematizing (Bazeley, 2013). Also, as triangulation (use of multiple data sources and procedures) is considered effective and necessary in increasing the credibility of data analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012), in addition to the data from the logs and reflections, I examined the pre-course questionnaire responses mentioned earlier in the Introduction section. I classified all the coded data into categories and sub-categories to better analyze and synthesize them, and then compared the results with the questionnaire data for any correlation.

## **RESULTS**

Through the data analysis, five conceptual categories emerged, details of which are provided in the following sub-sections.

### **Conceptual Category 1: Innovation**

Many of the participants indicated that they had hardly ever practiced speaking before this project because they had never received instruction for practice approaches and thus had no clue of how to do it. Therefore, they were so surprised that through such a simple approach as talking to themselves, they could practice anytime and anywhere without any financial cost. One of the participants commented,

What an eye-opener! Nobody had told me I could practice like this all by myself! I was initially reluctant to try this approach and doubtful of its effectiveness but started enjoying talking about topics of my choice little by little! [Hiro, final reflection]

The participants' responses may be a reminder that true innovation can lie in simplicity. As mentioned in the Literature Review section, the lack of previous research on self-talk in the field of TESOL could also be indicative of its simple yet innovative nature.

## **Conceptual Category 2: Perceived Improvement**

The participants were more likely to feel confused, frustrated, and anxious about “what to say” when they started this routine, but they gradually felt more relaxed and confident, paying more attention to “how to say it” as they continued the practice. This shifting of focus from “what to say” to “how to say it” holds great significance in communicative development, suggesting pragmatic consideration in their speech to bring about smoother and more successful interaction (Taguchi & Roeber, 2017).

Also, many participants reported that their speaking seemed to have improved in terms of speed, vocabulary, pronunciation, paraphrasing, and sentence structure, as I had expected would occur. In fact, even without any additional instructions from me, many autonomous learners went the extra mile to ensure improvement by recording, listening to, and reflecting on their own speech, or by looking up words in the dictionary afterwards and making word lists to expand their vocabulary.

Meanwhile, through the analysis, some results were found that I had not expected but which turned out to have significant value. For example, some of the participants mentioned that their writing may have improved. The potential cause was surmised by one participant as “Perhaps this practice is effective for outputting, whether in speaking or in writing” [Yoko, final reflection]. Also, some reported that their listening seemed to have improved. The self-analysis proposed by one participant was that “by speaking and listening simultaneously, I may have become more attentive and sensitive to the sounds of English” [Naomi, final reflection].

Furthermore, some of them compared this practice with their overseas experience. One participant explained,

The improvement in this practice was just like what I experienced during my stay in the UK. When I was traveling there alone for two weeks last year, I tried to communicate using paraphrases and gradually started thinking in English instead of in Japanese. Surprisingly, this self-talk practice had the same effect as that overseas experience. Although I cannot travel abroad often, I can do this practice daily by myself free of charge! [Ken, final reflection]

Another unexpected result that was reported as an improvement was in communicating with their family. Some of them mentioned that their parents complimented them on their practice speech, which was a great encouragement to them. One participant shared the following experience:

Today, I thanked my parents in English for all they’ve done in raising me. That’s something I would never do in Japanese because I would feel uncomfortable and embarrassed, but I did that in English while making an excuse saying, “This is just for the school homework!” Still, they were so delighted with my appreciative message, which made me happy, too. [Jo, activity log]

Although the outcome of these family interactions does not seem to be directly related to linguistic improvement, it still has a considerable impact, especially on the motivational aspects, which is worth mentioning here. Also, in

addition to those improvements perceived by learners, there were many more changes that I, as a teacher and researcher, perceived in their speech and attitudes toward speaking. For example, class discussions became more active, indicating an increased willingness and enthusiasm to speak up during class. Overall, there seemed to be tangible benefits in this self-talk approach for raising learners' motivation, creativity, and self-confidence.

### **Conceptual Category 3: Imagination and Mirror**

Imagining speaking to a non-Japanese audience, as I had suggested to the participants, worked well for many of them, promoting non-verbal communication while reducing their speaking anxiety. Although speaking in front of a mirror initially made them feel somewhat uncomfortable, soon they started paying more attention to their facial expressions and body movements through their reflection in the mirror. Even those who had answered in the pre-course questionnaire that they did not like studying English indicated that the imaginary audience helped them continue to talk.

This favorable outcome was also confirmed by comments such as “I’m usually pretty shy, but I was surprised to see myself speaking enthusiastically in the reflection” [Sakura, activity log]. These communicative efforts using imagination and reflection can lead to producing more interactive and spontaneous responses, which is essential in practical communication.

### **Conceptual Category 4: Reflection**

Reflection, mentioned in Conceptual Category 3, is in the physical sense, but it can also refer to the process of deep and careful thoughts on behavior and feelings. Most of the participants chose to discuss what happened and what they did during the day, and the process led some of them to further reflect on their lives. One such example was made by Kana:

Through reflecting on my learning so far and talking about future career and visions, I have learned to think about important matters from multiple perspectives. [Kana, final reflection]

This process of reflecting on the past, present, and future is indeed based on the concept of *reflective practice* (RP), which is defined by Schön (1983) as the capacity to reflect on action to engage in a process of continuous learning. Through the data analysis, it became clear that the participants had a learning experience based on RP even if they were not aware of RP theory.

Another participant, Hayato, reflected on his learning and wrote, “This practice was helpful for not just English-speaking skills but also for personal development.” He further explained:

I realize that to acquire new skills, whether they are something linguistic or not, we should not aim at perfection but observe people attentively who already have those skills. The most important thing is just to enjoy the learning process. [Hayato, final reflection]

This realization may have been brought about by his proactive learning in RP and learner agency. *Agency* is defined as “a self-reliant, independent, or self-defining capacity to operate with volition and power to bring about an effect, change, or decision in the particular sociocultural context” (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 108). Having agency gives learners more motivation and autonomy in their effort, producing a more positive impact on their learning, all of which was another result that emerged through the analysis.

### **Conceptual Category 5: Limitations of Self-Talk Practice**

Although speaking is fundamentally a people-focused interactive task (Hughes, 2002), the self-talk approach lacks the aspects of spontaneous interaction with interlocutors. Consequently, some of the participants expressed their uncertainty of practicing by themselves because, without interlocutors, they were not sure whether they were making themselves understood in their speech or not. This can be a major limitation of this approach. Yet, this ambiguity and uneasiness has inspired them to try to have more interaction with others, guiding them to increase their willingness to communicate (McCroskey, 1997).

Also, some others reported that they did not think they had expanded their vocabulary through this practice because they kept using the same words in their speech. This comment shows that the self-talk approach may not be fully successful without learners making additional efforts. As mentioned in Conceptual Category 2, it may be more effective with autonomous learners who are willing to explore and devise their learning process.

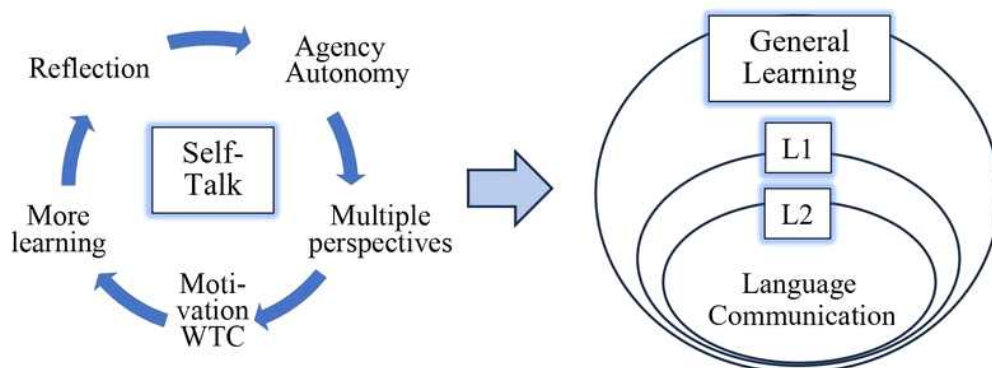
Despite these limitations, given that many learners would struggle even in generating initial conversation, self-talk could still be a good start to facilitate speaking efforts. At the same time, more approaches should be designed to integrate self-talk with more interactive activities.

## **DISCUSSION**

The above findings were synthesized to develop interpretive insights and address the research questions. First, it became clear that the self-talk approach can be a way to reduce speaking anxiety that can be an obstacle to speaking practice. Having no interlocutors in self-talk removes the potential embarrassment of making mistakes. Eliminating speaking anxiety should help learners concentrate on their speech production and expedite their development process, as many participants witnessed in this study.

Secondly, learner agency confirmed in this approach can foster creativity and exploration in the learning process. This could inspire learners to discover and improve their own weaknesses through reflective practice. Such an autonomous process could invite multiple perspectives, allowing linguistic and communicative advancement not necessarily in L2 but in L1 and general learning as well. Perhaps this outcome is the most significant development in this study, creating powerful ripple effects beyond the boundary of L2 speaking and promoting interdisciplinary exploration among learners, as illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. Cycle of Reflective Practice and Possible Improvement



Thirdly, this approach may be the most effective at the onset of speaking development in which speaking anxiety is the most common and noticeable obstacle. In other words, as explained in Conceptual Category 5 of the Results section, this approach alone may not be satisfactory for further development due to the lack of direct interaction and immediate feedback. Therefore, perhaps the best solution lies in the integration of self-talk and face-to-face interpersonal communication. Learners should initially develop confidence and a certain level of fluency through self-talk practice, and then engage in actual communication with their L2 interlocutors to enhance their interaction and spontaneity. It is just like musicians practicing individually before practicing with the orchestra, or athletes doing some individual workout before team practice.

Based on those interpretive insights, I have reached the following answers to address the research questions:

- RQ1: Most of the participants were surprised by this simple and innovative approach, and despite some initial hesitation, they enjoyed the practice, which eventually raised their learning motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC).
- RQ2: The participants perceived their development and improvement not only in speaking English but also in various aspects of learning through autonomy and learner agency.
- RQ3: Receiving no immediate feedback can be the biggest limitation of the self-talk approach, but it can be overcome through integration with face-to-face interpersonal communication after learners develop confidence and initial fluency.

Finally, as research methodologies usually have limitations to some extent, this study is no exception. The limitation of this study is that this project was conducted as a part of semester classwork. Therefore, it is possible that the participants stressed positive factors in their entries, highlighting what they thought I would want to hear. Nevertheless, I believe the impact of that limitation has been minimized by (a) allowing them to write entries in Japanese (L1) to invite more direct and honest comments and (b) regularly encouraging them to have a critical eye in completing class assignments.

## CONCLUSIONS

I began this study in anticipation of confirming effects on L2 speaking and communicative skills among EFL learners. Yet, the results have powerfully indicated that, in addition to the perceived improvement in these skills, there are many other developmental advantages confirmed in areas both in and outside the sphere of language learning. Those incidental benefits imply that self-talk practice can be a promising approach in the field of TESOL, in which sociocultural diversity and complexities often require multiple perspectives to be applied in proactive efforts.

Here, teachers should realize that guiding learners to speak better can bring more “life” to their learning as well as to the classroom while embracing two types of pedagogical significance. First, as learners often wish to improve their speaking skills, classroom interactions would become livelier and more dynamic, encouraging learners to find joy and excitement not only in speaking but also in overall English learning. The second “life” is more of a practical nature in which speaking and communicative competence are crucial in society and many workplace situations. That is the reality many university students will face upon graduation, and it is the teachers’ job to help learners prepare for real-life communication and societal needs (Oda-Sheehan, 2022). In other words, there should be a solid bridge between school and society, and communicative endeavors such as self-talk practice would surely serve in creating such a bridge. The implications from this study should be beneficial to EFL contexts in many other countries where motivated and autonomous learners are eager to cross that same bridge.

## THE AUTHOR

**Sanae Oda-Sheehan** is a full-time lecturer at Ochanomizu University, Tokyo. She completed her master’s degree in TESOL at Teachers College, Columbia University, and her PhD in applied linguistics at Ochanomizu University. In addition to teaching at the tertiary level, she works as a communications consultant utilizing her business background. Her research interests include communicative task effectiveness, L2 pragmatics, teacher identity, and autoethnography. Email: sanaesheehan@gmail.com

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# Assessing Students' Collaborative Problem-Solving Competencies in EFL Classrooms in Vietnam

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Trinh Hong Linh

*VNU-University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi, Vietnam*

*VNU-University of Education, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Cao Thanh Cong

*VNU-University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Thach Huong Giang

*VNU-University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi, Vietnam*

With their emergence as one of the most important competencies in the 21st century, collaborative problem-solving skills have received significant focus in EFL classrooms. Consequently, many universities in Vietnam with English majors have adjusted their curricula to equip learners with these skills, preparing them for future work. However, the effectiveness of teaching collaborative problem-solving skills and the actual competence of learners remain critical concerns for researchers and educators. Consequently, this research has been conducted at the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University to assess students' collaborative problem-solving abilities in EFL classrooms in Vietnam. With the employment of quantitative research design, the findings of this study can aid teachers in not only identifying students' competencies but also in acquiring further information about the effectiveness of collaborative in-class activities to enhance their teaching methods.

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and the rapid development of information technology, the ability to collaboratively solve problems has become one of the most important skills of the 21st century. Recent studies have shown that this skill not only helps learners develop critical and creative thinking abilities but also improves teamwork efficiency in real learning and working environments (Griffin et al., 2012). Student training should focus on both professional knowledge and soft skills development in which collaborative problem-solving (CPS) competencies play a key role. Saavedra and Opfer (2012) emphasized that in an increasingly complex and globally connected world, the ability to collaborate and solve problems becomes a decisive factor for success in both academic and professional environments.

The significance of CPS skills has been increasingly recognized as essential in several studies. For example, a study by Hmelo-Silver (2004) indicated that problem-based learning not only encouraged students to dig deeper into knowledge but also helped them develop important skills such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking. Research by Johnson et al. (2007) also confirmed that group work in a learning environment promotes the development of social skills and problem-solving competencies. When students work in groups, they not only learn how to share ideas but also learn how to listen, empathize, and resolve conflicts, thereby improving collaboration effectiveness. Trilling and Fadel (2009) asserted that people with good collaboration skills not only contribute to a team's success but are also an important factor that helps the organization adapt and develop in the context of globalization. In addition, research by Griffin et al. (2012) revealed that developing collaborative problem-solving competencies not only helped students improve teamwork skills but also improved reflective thinking skills. Training students in this skill not only prepares them for success in the workplace but also helps them become global citizens capable of positively contributing to society. Given the significance of collaborative problem-solving abilities, it is understandable that educators want to ensure that the competencies are assessed adequately.

The assessment of collaborative problem-solving competencies can help determine students' proficiency levels in important skills, thereby playing an important role in improving the quality of education. For students, being accurately and fairly assessed on CPS competencies helps them identify their strengths and weaknesses, thereby making more effective learning and personal development plans. Research by Trilling and Fadel (2009) showed that students equipped with good CPS skills are able to work effectively in group environments, solve complex problems, and be creative in their work. For educational institutions, CPS assessment is necessary to be able to design and improve curricula to suit the actual needs of the labor market and society. According to Saavedra and Opfer (2012), schools need to know students' abilities to adjust teaching methods and learning activities, thereby ensuring that students not only master knowledge but also develop necessary soft skills. This assessment also helps schools compare teaching effectiveness between classes and courses, thus providing timely and effective measures to improve teaching quality.

To address the gap in CPS competency assessment, this study aims to assess the CPS competencies of university students at the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University. This is a pioneering study in assessing these competencies, thereby helping to improve the quality of education and meet the needs of the modern labor market. The results of this study will provide a scientific basis for educators to improve teaching methods and training quality.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition of CPS**

Collaborative problem-solving (CPS) has been defined from various perspectives

over the years. Salas et al. (1992) highlighted CPS as the combination of problem-solving and cooperative abilities through continuous interaction among members, emphasizing its dynamic nature and the need for ongoing collaboration. Roschelle and Teasley (1995) refined this by focusing on the coordination among participants to build shared knowledge for problem-solving, underscoring the importance of joint efforts.

O'Neil et al. (2008) expanded the definition, describing CPS as involving at least two people working together to solve problems that require both cognitive and social skills, integrating intellectual engagement and social interaction. The OECD (2017) offered a comprehensive definition, stating that CPS involves individuals actively and effectively participating in a process where they share understanding and effort to solve a problem, integrating knowledge, skills, and collaborative effort. This research adopts the OECD (2017) definition, as it captures the essential elements of CPS relevant to this study.

### **Frameworks for Assessing CPS Competencies**

Stevens and Campion (1994) were pioneers in identifying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for CPS. They analyzed the structure of CPS competencies, emphasizing the difficulty of coordinating and choosing appropriate attitudes in these activities. Their competency framework focused on two main aspects: interpersonal interaction skills and self-management skills, focusing on the role of the individual in collective success. The next year, Roschelle and Teasley (1995) expanded this concept by highlighting coordination among members to build and share knowledge to solve problems. They emphasized the importance of common understanding and joint efforts in the problem-solving process.

The OECD (2013) developed a comprehensive framework for assessing CPS competencies, which includes a four-level process designed to evaluate students' abilities systematically. This process comprises (a) identifying the problem, (b) organizing and integrating information, (c) planning, and (d) monitoring and evaluating the plan.

Griffin and Care (2015) developed another comprehensive competency framework that promotes building common understanding and sharing information to achieve common goals. Their research shows that effective communication and coordinated action among team members are key factors in achieving success in CPS. Similarly, Child and Shaw (2016) pointed out that the quality of interaction, including resolving conflict and achieving common understanding, is more important than simply sharing information. Their research highlights that sharing information and resources without deep interaction and participation may not significantly improve problem-solving outcomes. This supports Evans' (2020) findings on the need for advanced interaction skills in CPS.

OECD (2017) has developed a comprehensive competency framework for CPS, covering key skills such as communication, coordination, and decision-making. This competency framework not only stresses the need for shared understanding and collaborative efforts to achieve common solutions but also provides specific criteria for assessing these skills. This represents a significant improvement over previous competency frameworks, with greater detail and wider adoption.

It can be seen that one of the common points of the introduced CPS frameworks is that CPS competencies are being broken down into sub-competencies corresponding to the stages of cooperation conducted to solve problems. This is a relatively reasonable arrangement because competencies must be expressed through specific circumstances and tasks. Tasks during CPS also appear differently in different stages. Building on the OECD framework, this study develops its own comprehensive framework tailored to the context of EFL classrooms in Vietnam. The proposed framework, which is illustrated in Table 1, includes several key components: (a) identifying and agreeing on the common problem that needs to be solved, (b) sharing information and experiences to identify the problem's scope (common ground) and required solutions, (c) planning and implementing, and (d) evaluating the results of actions and the collaboration process.

**TABLE 1. Frameworks for Assessing CPS Competencies**

Construct	Items
<b>1. Identifying and agreeing on the common problem that needs to be solved</b>	1.1. Identify the problem and the type of collaborative interaction to solve the problem. 1.2. Communicate with other team members to reach agreement on the problem that needs to be solved. 1.3. Describe roles and team organization (communication protocol and rules of engagement).
<b>2. Sharing information and experiences to identify the problem's scope (common ground) and required solutions</b>	2.1. Discover perspectives and abilities of team members. 2.2. Present publicly opinions on directions to handle the problems and propose some possible solutions. 2.3. Persuade, negotiate, and build shared understanding about problems and their solutions.
<b>3. Planning and implementing</b>	3.1. Identify and describe the goals and tasks, as well as how and when the tasks are to be completed together. 3.2. Assign the tasks appropriately and make individuals understand their own tasks and the group's missions. 3.3. Enact plans and support each other while solving the problem. 3.4. Handle problems when they arise and monitor results of actions.
<b>4. Evaluating the results of actions and the collaboration process</b>	4.1. Monitor and adjust the process of solving the problem. 4.2. Evaluate the success in solving the problem. 4.3. Evaluate the results of actions taken to solve the problem. 4.4. Self-reflect and provide feedback to other team members. 4.5. Adapt team organization and roles.

## METHOD

### Participants

This study was conducted at the University of Languages and International Studies, where English is taught as a foreign language, with the employment of quantitative research methods. On account of the lack of time, the random

sampling method is employed when choosing participants for this study. After the pilot study with the participation of 50 students, 271 out of 6949 students in the university participated in the official data collection process.

## Procedure

In this study, students' CPS competencies were assessed by using two different data collection tools in order to compare the data collected from these two testing instruments. First of all, students were invited to take a 45-minute scenario-based test including 35 questions. Then, all of the participants were required to self-assess their performance in collaborative tasks using the given self-assessment grading rubric. There were four main constructs in the rubric with a total of 15 items. Students had to rate their performance in collaborative tasks by choosing the appropriate point from a 4-point scale in accordance with the level of their CPS competencies. Both the test and the self-assessment grading rubric were designed based on the framework of assessing students' CPS developed for this study. The data gathered from the self-assessment grading rubric were analyzed using SPSS software, Version 26, while students' results from the scenario-based test were inspected with the employment of ConQuest and item response theory (IRT). Initially, the reliability and validity of the scale were evaluated. Once confirmed as reliable and valid, the data from the assessment tools were examined to determine students' levels of CPS competencies.

To ensure reliability and validity of the two assessment instruments, 50 students were invited to take part in a pilot session. The pilot session took place exactly like what happened in the large-scale assessment. In terms of the self-assessment grading rubric, the results showed that all constructs in the self-assessment grading rubric had Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.80, which indicates a good level of reliability (Peterson, 1994). The reliability of the self-assessment grading rubric is illustrated in Table 2.

**TABLE 2. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of the Self-Assessment Grading Rubric**

Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>A. Identifying and agreeing on the common problem that needs to be solved – 0.83</b>		
1.1	0.56	0.80
1.2	0.62	0.82
1.3	0.59	0.81
<b>B. Sharing information and experiences to identify the problem scope (common ground) and required solutions – 0.86</b>		
2.1	0.45	0.81
2.2	0.37	0.83
2.3	0.41	0.85
<b>C. Planning and implementing – 0.82</b>		
3.1	0.45	0.81
3.2	0.56	0.79
3.3	0.51	0.80
3.4	0.47	0.78

<b>D. Evaluating the results of actions and the collaboration process – 0.81</b>		
4.1	0.73	0.81
4.2	0.69	0.79
4.3	0.67	0.80
4.4	0.58	0.78
4.5	0.63	0.79

The validity of the self-assessment grading rubric was also verified thanks to the use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), as the principal component analysis showed that 15 items in the rubric were divided into four factors, which corresponds to the four constructs identified in the framework. The scale demonstrates sufficient internal consistency, as the evaluation of scale validity revealed a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.90 and a significance level (Sig.) of Bartlett’s Test at 0.000, which was below the threshold of 0.005. Moreover, the cumulative variance explained was 57.35%, suggesting that these factors collectively represented 57.35% of the total variance (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). These metrics indicate that the exploratory factor analysis for all 15 items in the self-assessment grading rubric was valid. These items are presented in Table 3.

**TABLE 3. Results of EFA for the Validity of the Self-Assessment Grading rubric**

<b>1. Identifying and agreeing on the common problem that needs to be solved</b>	1.1. Identify the problem and the type of collaborative interaction to solve the problem.	0.82
	1.2. Communicate with other team members to reach agreement on the problem that needs to be solved.	0.80
	1.3. Describe roles and team organization (communication protocol and rules of engagement).	0.79
<b>2. Sharing information and experiences to identify the problem scope (common ground) and required solutions</b>	2.1. Discover perspectives and abilities of team members.	0.80
	2.2. Present publicly opinions on directions to handle the problems and propose some possible solutions.	0.75
	2.3. Persuade, negotiate, and build shared understanding about problems and their solutions.	0.71
<b>3. Planning and implementing</b>	3.1. Identify and describe the goals, the tasks, as well as how and when the tasks are completed together.	0.73
	3.2. Assign the tasks appropriately and have individuals understand their own tasks and the group’s missions.	0.67
	3.3. Enact plans and support each other while solving the problem.	0.63
	3.4. Handle the problems when they arise and monitor results of actions.	0.59
<b>4. Evaluating the results of actions and the collaboration process</b>	4.1. Monitor and adjust the process of solving the problem.	0.71
	4.2. Evaluate the success in solving the problem.	0.70
	4.3. Evaluate the results of actions taken to solve the problem.	0.59
	4.4. Self-reflect and provide feedback to other team members.	0.56
	4.5. Adapt the team organization and roles.	0.54

Regarding the scenario-based test, the results of IRT analysis using ConQuest showed that the separation reliability coefficient was 0.994, indicating that all the

data gathered from the test was consistent with the model and all the questions as well as the measurement scale were capable of dividing students' CPS competencies into different levels. All questions on the test had appropriate indexes within the allowable range. Therefore, it can be concluded from the pilot test results that both the self-assessment grading rubric and the scenario-based test are valid and reliable for the large-scale assessment.

## RESULTS

### Results of the Scenario-Based Test

The scenario-based CPS competency assessment test included 35 multiple-choice questions, with each option corresponding to a level of CPS competency (1, 2, 3, or 4) and awarded a score that was equivalent to its level of CPS competency. A total of 271 students took the test. After the raw scores were calculated, all the participants' final scores were converted to a 10-point scale, so the maximum score for the test was 10, while the minimum was 0. The results from analyzing the data collected from the tests conducted by the 271 students are presented in Table 4.

**TABLE 4. Descriptive Analysis of the Results of the Scenario-Based CPS Competency Assessment Test**

Item	Result
Mean	5.459752322
Standard Error	0.111483411
Median	5.789473684
Mode	6.052631579
Standard Deviation	1.453565839
Sample Variance	2.112853648
Kurtosis	-0.407705691
Skewness	-0.302847639
Range	7.368421053
Minimum	0
Maximum	10
Lowest	1.578947368
Highest	8.947368421
Count	271
Confidence Level (95%)	0.620079451

From the descriptive analysis of the results of the scenario-based CPS competency assessment test, it can be observed that mean = 5.50 < median = 5.79 < mode = 6.05, and skewness = -0.303 < 0 indicates that the score distribution was non-normal and skewed to the left. The highest score achieved by a candidate was 8.95, while the lowest score was 1.58, and kurtosis = -0.408 < 0 suggests that the score distribution was relatively broad. The reliability of the test

was 0.62, indicating that the internal consistency of the scale was at an acceptable level.

Table 5 demonstrates the students’ level of CPS competencies based on the test results. To help interpret what students’ scores mean in substantive terms, the scale is divided into four proficiency levels. The lowest level is Level 1 which reflects an elementary level of students’ CPS competencies while Level 4 is the highest level.

**TABLE 5. Results of the Scenario-Based CPS Competency Assessment Test**

Number of Students	Score Range	Level of CPS Competency	Percentage
61	Less than 4	1	22.51%
101	4 to less than 6	2	37.27%
108	6 to less than 8	3	39.85%
1	8 or above	4	0.37%

As can be seen from Table 5, a majority of the students achieved Level 3 or Level 2 of CPS competency, that is, 39.85% and 37.27%, respectively. Only 1 student achieved Level 4 (0.37%), and 22.51% of the participants achieved Level 1 of CPS competency, indicating that nearly one-fourth of the students participating in this study possessed this low level of CPS competency.

### Results of the Self-Assessment Grading Rubric

The results from the self-assessment grading rubric (see Table 6) indicate that the majority of the students rated themselves at an intermediate proficiency level (Levels 2 and 3), with 18.32% of the students identifying as Level 2 and 55.37% as Level 3. Very few students rated themselves at Level 1 (5.05%), while approximately one fifth of the surveyed students rated themselves at the highest proficiency level, Level 4 (21.05%).

**TABLE 6. Overall Results of the Self-Assessment Grading Rubric**

Number of Students	Level of CPS Competencies	Percentage
13	1	4.80%
51	2	18.82%
150	3	55.35%
57	4	21.03%

Table 7 demonstrates the detailed results of the self-assessment grading rubric, where students’ average responses to each item are identified. As can be seen from Table 7, the construct that students self-assessed that they were best at was D, “Evaluating the results of actions and the collaboration process,” with almost all of the items being at 3.00 or above, except for Item 4.1, “Monitor and adjust the process of solving the problem.” In contrast, the two constructs that the students had the most problems with were B, “Sharing information and experiences to identify the problem scope (common ground) and required solutions,” and C, “Planning and implementing,” with most of the items being

under 3.00.

Of all items measured in the self-assessment grading rubric, Item 2.2, “Present publicly opinions on directions to handle the problems and propose some possible solutions,” seemed to have caused students the most difficulties, as it was the item that students rated the lowest ( $M = 2.63$ ;  $SD = 0.902$ ) while Item 4.4, “Self-reflect and provide feedback to other team members,” was the competency that students felt they were the most confident about, as its mean was the highest of all items evaluated ( $M = 3.45$ ;  $SD = 0.878$ ).

**TABLE 7. Detailed Results of the Self-Assessment Grading Rubric**

Item	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>A. Identifying and agreeing on the common problem that needs to be solved.</b>					
1.1	271	1	4	2.98	0.718
1.2	271	1	4	3.23	0.700
1.3	271	1	4	2.97	0.752
<b>B. Sharing information and experiences to identify the problem scope (common ground) and required solutions.</b>					
2.1	271	1	4	2.86	0.854
2.2	271	1	4	2.63	0.902
2.3	271	1	4	2.82	0.786
<b>C. Planning and implementing.</b>					
3.1	271	1	4	2.79	0.865
3.2	271	1	4	2.71	0.863
3.3	271	1	4	2.96	0.822
3.4	271	1	4	3.19	0.694
<b>D. Evaluating the results of actions and the collaboration process.</b>					
4.1	271	1	4	2.87	0.826
4.2	271	1	4	3.02	0.876
4.3	271	1	4	3.00	0.823
4.4	271	1	4	3.45	0.878
4.5	271	1	4	3.07	0.805

## CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen from the results of the scenario-based CPS competency assessment test as well as the self-assessment grading rubric, the majority of the participant students at the University of Languages and International Studies possessed intermediate levels of CPS competency, which means that they were capable of handling multi-step tasks that involve synthesizing various pieces of information, especially in complex and evolving scenarios. They could also effectively manage team roles and pinpoint the specific information needed by individual team members to address problems and facilitate negotiations among team members to resolve conflicts when they arose. In addition, only very few students could achieve advanced levels of CPS competency, which requires

students to successfully conduct sophisticated problem-solving tasks with high collaboration complexity. Unfortunately, there was still a moderate number of students who possessed only an elementary level of CPS competency, which means that they could only complete tasks with limited collaboration and failed to handle complex problems without support from other team members.

Moreover, when comparing the results of the two assessment instruments, it is quite fascinating to notice that there is a great contrast between the results of the standardized test and the self-assessment tool in terms of weak and strong students. Specifically, very few students admitted that their CPS competency levels were very low, at Level 1 according to the assessment scale, while according to the results of the scenario-based test, the number of students in this group was quite large. Similarly, whilst many students believed their CPS competency levels were very high, at Level 4 according to the assessment scale, on the test, only 1 student out of 271 participants in the study could achieve this level. Therefore, it can be concluded that many students imprecisely assessed their level of CPS competency, and it is recommended that more assessment tools be employed to evaluate students' performance in the collaborative tasks instead of only using the self-assessment grading rubric.

## **LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although this study has yielded noteworthy data, it is crucial to acknowledge that the study does have some limitations. To begin with, the study only sheds light on students at the University of Languages and International Studies. Future research should also focus on other groups of students, such as students majoring in other majors like technology or business. Another limitation is that this study only used two collection tools, namely, the scenario-based CPS competency assessment test and the self-assessment grading rubric. Using other data collection methods such as observation may allow triangulating the results, thereby enhancing the overall depiction of the phenomena. Finally, the overall scope of this study is quite small with the employment of a non-probability sampling method, which may reduce the representativeness of the samples for the whole population. Therefore, another sampling method and a larger sample should be taken into consideration for future studies.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This research has been completed under the sponsorship of the University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS, VNU) under Project Number N.21.18.

## **THE AUTHORS**

**Trinh Hong Linh** is currently a PhD student at VNU-University of Education and an English language lecturer at ULIS, VNU. Her research interest is in English language teaching, as well as assessment and measurement. Email: linhtrinh1105@gmail.com

**Cao Thanh Cong** is a master's student at the VNU-University of Languages and International Studies, specializing in TESOL methodologies and assessment. He also works as an English language teacher at various English centers in Hanoi, Vietnam. Email: CaoThanhCong2001@gmail.com

**Thach Huong Giang** is currently a graduate student at ULIS, VNU. Her research interests include English language assessment and technology application in EFL teaching. Email: giangthach0610@gmail.com

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# Teacher Perceptions of the Effect of Extracurricular English Learning at Modern Islamic Boarding School

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Putri Harum

*Islamic University of Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

In Indonesia, numerous Islamic boarding schools (IBSs), despite their name, have expanded their focus to enhance the non-religious skills of their students, including proficiency in the English language. This study aims to explore the effect of extracurricular English learning at Modern IBS through the perceptions of EFL teachers. For that purpose, a descriptive qualitative method was employed to obtain a clear understanding of how extracurricular activities influence students' improvement in the English language. The participants were two English teachers at Modern IBS. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data for this study. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to discover what the effects are of extracurricular English learning from the teachers' perceptions. The results indicate that extracurricular activities can enhance speaking, writing, and listening skills, enrich English vocabulary, and boost students' motivation in learning English. This research is expected to provide a clear picture of teachers' perceptions of extracurricular activities in IBSs that influence students' English skills.

## INTRODUCTION

In the present era, English has become one of the essential languages that must be mastered, and its urgency continues to grow over time, as it has become more necessary in many sectors of life. This is supported by the government's inclusion of English in the educational curriculum in Indonesia for decades. There are four skills embedded in English language learning. However, in the process, students' motivation to learn the language is also considered important by some people. Santosa (2017) emphasized that one of the crucial factors in mastering English is motivation, which plays a supportive role in the most effective learning of English and is not hindered by factors such as age, condition, and location. Therefore, the school and its elements continue to try various methods to enhance the effectiveness of the English language learning process and seek solutions to overcome the problems within it.

Consequently, several schools in Indonesia, both public and private, have implemented various programs to maximize English language learning outcomes. In the context of private schools, particularly Modern Islamic Boarding School (Modern IBS), there are several extracurricular activities beyond the classroom that support students' language development. One of these is by mandating students to use a foreign language in their daily communication, which is

considered a contributing factor to language learning success. Additionally, Islamiati (2019) believed that the boarding system, which fosters a linguistic environment, can encourage students to use the target language in everyday conversations. Furthermore, expressing what has been learned from regular classes can enhance students' speaking skills, as these skills are difficult to master without supportive habits (Nurcholilah, 2018).

In the process of language learning, both environmental factors and daily activities play a significant role in enhancing language proficiency. Zhang (2023) stated that the environment has a significant impact on students' learning experience and outcomes, and it also affects their motivation. Additionally, there are numerous extracurricular activities in Modern IBS that contribute to students' language development besides mandating the use of English in daily conversations. However, little is known about the effects of these English language activities on students' English proficiency at Modern IBS in Kuningan, West Java, Indonesia. Consequently, this study aims to explore the effect of extracurricular English learning in Modern IBS through the perceptions of its EFL teachers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Extracurricular Activities**

Extracurricular activities are activities conducted beyond the classroom, aimed at enhancing various student skills with extended and more flexible time. Some researchers describe them using terms like "out-of-class experiences" (Amara, 2021; Nelson et al., 2002). Additionally, Stoltzfus (2007) and Vermaas et al. (2009) recognized the connection between extracurricular activities (ECAs) and the school environment. They noted that while ECAs frequently take place outside regular school hours, they still occur within educational settings or in partnership with schools, involving all levels of education from kindergarten to college. These activities are recognized as a common feature in educational systems across different countries. Tathahira and Nahrisya (2020) stated that in extracurricular activities, English language activities occur naturally, without any structured planning, rules, or feedback. Moreover, Saputra (2011) found that activities beyond the classroom could encourage students to practice English, enhance their speaking skills, and boost their confidence in expressing their ideas.

### **Language Activities in Modern Islamic Boarding School**

Modern Islamic Boarding School (Modern IBS) is a private school and has a different curriculum compared to regular schools. This curriculum difference has given rise to various programs aimed at supporting student success in learning, particularly in enhancing language skills. A study by Islamiati (2019) mentioned several language activities in enhancing the students' ability to speak at Ushuluddin IBS, such as public speaking, morning conversation, introducing vocabulary, placing vocabulary and terms, and spying. In addition, Suardi et al. (2017) and Latif (2019) reported that students in Islamic boarding schools are required to communicate in English in various settings, including in the

dormitory, mosque, and dining area; during English, arts, and sports competitions; and in posting announcements.

## **METHOD**

### **Context and Participants**

In this study, the author employed descriptive qualitative research to explore the perceptions of EFL teachers at Modern IBS. The participants of this study were two English teachers (one female and one male) from Modern IBS in West Java, Indonesia. Their pseudonyms were Zea and Rey. Zea had been teaching English for about two years, while Rey had been an English teacher for almost nine years and served on the Language Advisory Council (LAC) for three years at this school. Additionally, Zea and Rey were graduates of Modern IBS and had been involved in extracurricular language activities during their schooling for around six years. In short, the participants have had sufficient experience in extracurricular language activities and were expected to provide in-depth information regarding the effects of English extracurricular activities in this study.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore the perceptions of the participants and Zoom meetings were used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they fostered a comfortable environment for the participants and allowed the author to delve deeply into the topic. To obtain more in-depth information relevant to the study, the author adapted interview questions from Tathahira and Nahrisya (2020) regarding teachers' perceptions of the English Day Program (see Appendix).

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) and Heriyanto (2018) to address the research questions. To manage the data, each Zoom meeting was recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. The data were then categorized into various themes and analyzed accordingly. Furthermore, the results of the author's analysis and the interview transcripts were validated by the participants to ensure reliability and validity.

## **RESULTS**

### **Enhance English Language Skills**

In Modern IBS, various programs have been designed to enhance students' language proficiency beyond the classroom. Zea and Rey mentioned that the language support programs, particularly English, were divided into several categories depending on their frequency of implementation. Daily and weekly programs included introducing vocabulary, making sentences, public speaking, discussion or debate, morning conversation, essay writing, and wall magazine

creation. Additionally, there were designated Arabic Week and English Week activities where students were required to communicate exclusively in English during English Week and in Arabic for Arabic Week. Furthermore, monthly and annual programs encompassed the selection of the best speaker, trilingual public speaking competitions (Arabic, English, Indonesian), drama contests (Arabic and English), and spelling bee competitions. They stated that these activities had been in place since the inception of the boarding school and had progressively evolved through the introduction of innovations to meet emerging needs. Rey stated that the introduction of TOEFL practice for students at the 2nd- and 3rd-year levels of high school was one of the latest innovations implemented to cater to the specific interests and needs of students wishing to further enhance their English language proficiency.

Zea and Rey concurred that the time allocated for language learning in the classroom was quite limited; therefore, these extracurricular activities were designed to expand students' opportunities to enhance their language skills beyond the classroom. Moreover, Rey believed that opportunities to practice speaking skills significantly impacted students' English language improvement, as the ultimate goal of language learning is to communicate effectively. Zea stated,

The time allocated for learning in the classroom is limited. Therefore, we enhance the students' abilities through extracurricular activities. This approach aims to improve students' speaking skills, writing skills, and vocabulary acquisition. [Zea, interview]

In Zea's view, the most prominent skill among students was speaking proficiency, as they are intensively trained to communicate in English, both through daily activities and formal learning. This observation was corroborated by Rey, who noted that the orientation of the programs at the institution was predominantly geared towards enhancing speaking abilities, resulting in significant development in that area. However, they mentioned that writing skills were also emphasized, with exercises involving making sentences, essay and speech writing for students in Grades 1–4 TMI (Tarbiyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah, the education system adopts the KMI Gontor curriculum, a six-year educational program equivalent to junior and senior high school), and material preparation for discussions or debate among Grade 5 TMI students (equivalent to Grade 11 of high school) on a weekly basis, as well as scriptwriting for drama contests annually. Zea further added that listening and speaking training were conducted concurrently as they are interrelated, much like writing and reading. In this regard, Rey attempted to quantify his observations regarding student progress in percentage terms, slightly differing from Zea's perspective:

So, if I were to percentage it, speaking would be 60%, reading 30%, writing 10%, and listening 10%. This is based on my evaluation of the students so far. [Rey, interview]

According to Rey, if the evaluation results to date are expressed in percentages, students' speaking proficiency accounted for 60%, followed by reading at 30%, writing at 10%, and listening at 10%. Thus, it can be inferred that the institution places a strong emphasis on spoken English proficiency in its

instructional approach.

Zea and Rey, both noted that the students commonly committed errors in terms of pronunciation, word use, and sentence structure. According to Zea, this usually started with the habit of direct-translation from Indonesian to English on a word-for-word basis. In addition, Rey also mentioned that some students demonstrated insufficient sensitivity in listening to information from native speakers, and also had limitations in comprehending reading materials, particularly in capturing implicit information. On the other hand, Zea reported that the activities had proven to be quite effective in enhancing students' English language proficiency:

In my opinion, these activities have been effective in improving English proficiency because to be able to speak a foreign language, input is important. This input comes not only from the mandatory curriculum but also from extracurricular activities. Additionally, learning a foreign language can be easily forgotten if not practiced regularly. Therefore, these activities help ensure that what has been taught is continually used, making it easier to remember. Moreover, no matter how much vocabulary one knows, if it is never spoken, pronunciation will be challenging. [Zea, interview]

Rey added that an increase in student competence was evident, one indicator being the results of oral examinations administered at the end of each semester. To date, he assessed the effectiveness of the language programs at a level of 70%, indicating that while these programs were reasonably effective, further development, particularly in terms of content, was warranted:

The materials also need to be supplemented in these supporting programs to potentially enhance their effectiveness. Thus, if I were to estimate the effectiveness, it would be around 70%, indicating that while it is not perfect, it has a considerable impact. However, continuous updates are necessary for further development. [Rey, interview]

According to Zea, one aspect of the program that was still sub-optimal in its effectiveness was the creation of sentences that are too simple for each grade level. This creates a challenge in subsequent grades to develop more complex sentences to improve their productive skills. On the other hand, Rey acknowledged that, although all activities at the boarding school had the potential to enhance students' English proficiency, their effectiveness sometimes decreased during implementation. He believed that the lack of effectiveness of an activity was usually due to factors or mechanisms that did not function properly, such as inconsistent involvement of the language department within the student organization. As a result, the effectiveness of the program also depended on how actively the Central Language Improvement (CLI) section of the student organization carried out its duties. Additionally, Rey pointed out that the process of guidance and supervision could also be a factor in reducing the effectiveness of existing activities. For instance, a lack of material updates in conversation activities or insufficient guidance and references in the wall magazine could lead to a decrease in student interest. Therefore, the material needed to be updated to make it more relevant and engaging for the students.

## **Boosting Students' Motivation**

The teachers reported various reactions from the students towards the language programs. Zea stated that many students, especially new students, initially felt forced due to the overwhelming number of activities they were required to participate in. However, over time, an increasing number of students exhibited enthusiasm and adapted to the new experiences. Nevertheless, she added that this enthusiasm gradually fades as the activities become routine. On the other hand, she reported that there are students who feel pressured as they perceive themselves as inadequate in following the programs, experiencing nervousness and fear of making mistakes when delivering speeches or communicating in English on a daily basis. To address this, Rey and Zea mentioned that monthly and yearly competitions such as the best speaker, drama competitions, speech contests, and spelling bees are organized as efforts to motivate the students. Meanwhile, according to Rey, some students appeared enthusiastic about participating in the programs, while others merely complied with them as part of their routine, viewing them as benchmarks for language proficiency.

Zea and Rey, both shared their views regarding the importance of holding language competitions at the boarding school. They believed that such competitions could enhance students' interest and motivate them to study English more diligently. The impact was expected to be felt in the classroom learning process, where students interested in English tend to absorb the taught material more readily:

I think various language competitions at Modern IBS have motivated students, as some of them possess a strong competitive spirit and enjoy competing for prizes. This has led to increased motivation among students to improve their language skills in order to participate in future language activities. [Zea, interview]

Rey also added his opinion that aside from motivating students, the variety of activities in these programs could stimulate students' creative thinking, as they became more expressive and challenged. Therefore, competitions such as speech contests, drama competitions, and spelling bees were expected to encourage students to study with enthusiasm, as the challenges offered by these competitions could stimulate their creative thinking:

Motivation arises from engaging in a variety of activities, which helps prevent a sense of monotony. Besides that, motivated and interested students tend to be more expressive, making them more readily challenged and inadvertently fostering creative thinking. This is because they learn the language through activities rather than being overwhelmed with texts typically encountered in the classroom. [Rey, interview]

In addition, Zea was pleased to see the students' enthusiasm in participating in the language programs and was motivated to further enhance their language skills. Meanwhile, Rey was also excited and committed to developing English language-related programs to improve language proficiency at the boarding school, as this was his area of focus. He hoped that his enthusiasm and passion would be

contagious to the students, thereby motivating them to enhance their English language skills.

## **DISCUSSION**

Extracurricular English learning activities can help students to enhance their English proficiency and boost their motivation. Results from the interview showed that for effective oral communication, students must be exposed to diverse inputs not only within the classroom but also through extracurricular activities, which afford longer and more flexible timeframes. Regarding English speaking skills, students generally focus on what is appropriate to say, how to say it, and the suitable social situations for its use (Rosyid, 2004). Therefore, the primary objective of these programs is to provide students with opportunities to practice using English and develop their speaking skills (Nurcholilah, 2018). This aligns with Santosa's (2017) assertion that one of the factors contributing to success in learning a foreign language is opportunities. Moreover, The participants stated that speaking skills are the most developed among the language skills. Extracurricular English learning activities at Modern IBS are primarily designed to enhance students' speaking abilities. Several speaking-related activities including speech, debate, song, poetry, and drama competitions (Saputra, 2011).

On the other hand, one of the participants mentioned that when learning a language, vocabulary and materials that have been studied must be practiced and repeated so that they become familiar and are not forgotten. This relates to Rosyid (2004), who stated that teachers encourage their students to participate in conversation sessions in the dormitory and various other activities to reinforce previously learned material from regular classes. Additionally, some extracurricular activities at Modern IBS also impact students' motivation to learn the language. Besides opportunities, students need strong motivation to develop the language they are learning. This aligns with Dornyei (2001), who stated that maintaining high motivation in language teaching and learning is key to successful language acquisition, as students' academic achievements are closely linked to their motivation.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, the language activities implemented at Modern Islamic Boarding School are diverse and structured to enhance the English language proficiency of the students beyond the classroom. The programs include introducing vocabulary, making sentences, public speaking, discussion or debate, essay writing, wall magazine creation, best-speaker selection, public speaking competitions, drama contests, and spelling bee competitions. Additionally, students are required to communicate in English for daily communication. The findings of this study indicate that these programs have successfully improved the English language skills of the students, motivated them in learning through varied activities, and increased their vocabulary through interaction in these activities. Moreover, direct evaluations by teachers and integration of feedback into

classroom teaching contribute to addressing common language errors. However, despite the significant contributions of these programs in enhancing students' language proficiency, there are challenges, such as maintaining enthusiasm among students. Therefore, continued efforts are needed to increase their effectiveness and ensure that students get an optimal learning experience at this boarding school. All in all, this study can provide a clear picture of teacher perceptions regarding the effect of extracurricular activities at Modern IBS.

## THE AUTHOR

**Putri Harum** is a final year student in the Department of English Language Education at the Islamic University of Indonesia. Her research interests include teacher education, second/foreign language English teachers, and EFL classrooms. Email: putri.mine21@gmail.com // 20322095@students.uii.ac.id

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## APPENDIX

### Interview Guide

(Adapted from Tathahira and Nahrissy's (2020) interview questions.)

1. What programs or extracurricular activities are available at this school?  
(Apa saja program atau kegiatan ekstrakurikuler yang ada di sekolah ini?)
2. How long have these activities been implemented at this school?  
(Berapa lama kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut telah diterapkan di sekolah ini?)
3. What is the purpose of these activities?  
(Apa tujuan membuat kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut?)
4. How do students feel when participating in these activities? Do they enjoy them? Do they feel pressured?  
(Apa yang siswa rasakan ketika menjalankan kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut? Apa mereka menikmatinya? Apakah mereka merasa tertekan?)
5. As a person who is also involved in these programs? What do you feel?  
(Sebagai orang yang menjalankan dan yang juga terlibat kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut, apa yang anda rasakan?)
6. Do you correct or evaluate students' mistakes in everyday English verbal communication or during these activities?  
(Apakah anda memperbaiki atau mengevaluasi kesalahan siswa dalam komunikasi verbal bahasa Inggris sehari-hari atau selama kegiatan?)
7. Do you think these activities are an effective way to improve students' English skills? Why or why not?  
(Apakah anda pikir kegiatan-kegiatan ini merupakan sebuah cara yang efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris siswa? Mengapa? Mengapa tidak?)
8. What skills have significantly developed in students through these activities?  
(Kemampuan apa yang berkembang secara signifikan pada siswa dengan adanya kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut?)
9. If students make mistakes in writing or speaking English during these activities, what types of errors do they commonly make? Do you have any specific information or records on this?  
(Jika siswa melakukan kesalahan dalam menulis atau berbicara bahasa Inggris selama kegiatan, jenis kesalahan seperti apa yang sering mereka buat? Apakah anda memiliki informasi atau catatan khusus akan ini?)
10. If you believe any activity is less effective in improving students' language skills, which activity is it? What are your thoughts and solutions for enhancing it in the future?  
(Jika anda pikir ada salah satu kegiatan yang kurang efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa siswa, kegiatan apakah itu? Lalu apa pendapat dan solusi dari anda yang kiranya perlu ditingkatkan di masa depan?)

## The Use of Rhetorical Appeals, Hedges, and Boosters: Contrasting Small Cultures in ESL Writing

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Florida D. Sajor

*De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines*

Metadiscourse strategies in academic writing have gained particular prominence in contrastive rhetoric studies over the past decade and charted the salience of international discourse markers, which Hyland refers to as “stance markers.” By adopting the frame of small cultures by Atkinson (2004), the current study probes into the usage of stance markers and rhetorical appeals in the L2 argumentative papers of two different strands in senior high school. The results show that the widespread use of logical appeals on both strands may indicate an avoidance of taking a firm stance on their claims or taking strong commitment to a proposition. The findings reveal some nuances in ESL writing, which may inform teachers in designing activities that match the learners’ styles.

### INTRODUCTION

The notion of culture has been debated over the past century by anthropologists and has taken on a “bewildering vagueness” (Baumann, 1996, p. 10) from the humanities to the social sciences due to its contested definition throughout the years. Because of this, Atkinson (2004) has markedly pointed out its notoriety as one of the most contentious ideas in academe.

For most, the term culture means a “certain coherence, uniformity, and timeliness in the meaning systems of a given group and to act like the concept of race in identifying homogenous units” (Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 9). This essentialist view was criticized to be deterministic, reductionist, and essentially racist (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Michaels, 1995; Sarangi, 1995), which Keesing (1994) deemed as an inescapable occupational hazard in our conception and analysis of culture. A more recent ideation of culture has taken an opposite turn from the essentialist paradigm, which sees the culture concept and stories about it as multiple and competing, depending on how people position themselves in different situations (Amadasi & Halliday, 2017).

With much controversy surrounding the definition of culture, Baumann (1996) concurred with Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990) that rather than express a heightened sense of concern over its ambiguity, it was better to ask what theoretical work can the term do. After all, definitions are not judged by their truth value but by their functional use (Baumann, 1996). Along with this argument, it is beneficial to look at it from the popular perspective of how academics and non-academics understand its meaning based on their causal observations (Holliday, 1999), the binary opposition of large and small cultures.

Large cultures view the world as having ethnic, national, or international groups, such as Western, Japanese, and British cultures, and see a small non-ethnic or non-native culture as subordinate to large cultures. This concept espouses the belief in a dominant and dominated party, a center-periphery paradigm that perpetrates cultural imperialism and hegemony (Holliday, 1999).

Small cultures contrariwise reject the idea that it is a reification of large cultures. In this paradigm, *culture* pertains to any cohesive behavior in activities by social groupings and is not a reduction or a sub-part of large cultures. The formation of this concept is influenced by (a) the need for group cohesion such as a convention, identity, and discourse; (b) cultural residues, such as family, school, nation, region, and peers; (c) social constructions, like routinization and institutionalization; and (d) products such as art and literature values (Atkinson, 2004; Holliday, 1999). Thus, we consider the hip-hop culture, legal culture, and even classroom culture. Baumann (1996) illustrates the notion of small cultures in his ethnographic study in the Southall suburb in London. When asked what culture meant for them, one of the local groups asserted that it depended on what community he meant. Thus, the term's meaning refers to different entities at different times, depending on the topic. Thus further, having a fixed definition of culture was considered very hard to grasp according to Atkinson (2004).

Amadasi and Holliday (2018) explore small culture through personal narratives formed in everyday experiences, overlapping with on-the-go small culture formation. "On the go" refers to the transient nature of interactions within small culture (Amadasi & Holliday, 2018). In scenarios like social club gatherings or family events, people gather and negotiate their personal narratives.

In this study, the small culture of academe was investigated. Academic writing, particularly in the genre of argumentation, persuasion, and reasoning is indispensable. For the argumentative discourse to be effective, the two rhetorical appeals, logic and emotions, should be made apparent in the paper. Mshvenieradze (2013) places *logos*, the sense of logic, as the most important notion. On one hand, *pathos*, the sense of emotion or feelings, is also accounted for in the analysis of argumentative texts (Kamimura & Oi, 1998). In student argumentative essays, the main aim is to persuade their teachers that their idea is valid or more valid than others. For their work to gain academic acceptance, they need to balance conviction with caution and show an appropriate disciplinary persona of modesty and assertiveness (Hyland, 1996).

The quintessential view of balance in argumentative writing may prove to be cumbersome for novice writers, not to mention EFL writers of English. To achieve a sensible balance of arguments, Stapleton (2001) proposed several criteria to assess the critical value of written arguments. Essentially, this is to avoid fallacies that manipulate through language, through emotions, through distraction, and inductive fallacy (Mayfield, 2007). The presence of such fallacies was correlated to problems in critical thinking and thus needs to be avoided (El Khoiri & Widiati, 2017).

The stability of conviction and authorial voice in argumentation is also affected by interactional metadiscourse that reveals the writer's viewpoint on a proposition (Hyland, 2004). Hedges and boosters allow writers to communicate more precisely the degrees of accuracy in their truth assessments (Halliday, 1994). Hedges are devices that withhold complete commitment to a proposition (e.g.,

*possible, may, could*). They suspend an idea as an opinion and not hard facts.

Boosters, on the other hand, express certainty and mark involvement with the topic (e.g., *surely, obviously, prove*). These constructs form part of what Hyland (2005) calls “stance markers,” which enable writers to assert their personal authority and engage their readers through persuasion.

Both hedges and boosters expose the viewpoints of the author to communicate ideas to the audience and also the writer’s attitude toward the readers. They are said to be powerful factors in gaining approval from the audience, which is why it is recommended that authors weigh the intensity of the commitments they want to invest in arguments based on the effect of this commitment on the readers.

Previous studies have reported the salient use of these two interactional metadiscourse strategies in student L2 writing. In Musa et al. (2019), the findings revealed that the preference of Yemeni L2 writers in employing hedges over boosters suggests that they tend to prefer detachment over commitment in writing research articles. Another study that highlights the prominent use of hedges and boosters is that of Ho and Li (2018). The study centered on the analysis of argumentative essays by first-year Chinese students and reported a strong correlation between essay scores and interactional metadiscourse strategies. It was found that high-rated essays outperformed low-rated essays in terms of sophistication of lexico-grammar expressions. The wider variety and more complex expressions of metadiscourse markers were an indication of higher quality essays.

Lee and Deakin (2016) compared interactional metadiscourse features between successful and less successful undergraduate essays. It was found that L1 writers were more inclined to use more of the authorial stance, while ESL students generally opted for a detached style (p. 18).

Postgraduate academic writing research has also investigated this area. Akbas and Hardman (2018) explored the academic texts written by three groups of postgraduates: native speakers of Turkish (TL1), English (EL1), and Turkish speakers of English (TL2). The study revealed findings that written outputs of TL2 were similar to EL1 in terms of being modest in their claims and thus employed more hedges in their compositions. They were more detached and cautious than written works of TL1. The researchers also pointed out that the results of the study contradicted the conceptions in contrastive rhetoric, whereby writing conventions and choices are considered to be rooted in the native language. Similar studies also conveyed the same interest in hedges and boosters as metadiscourse markers (Rezaee & Ghobadi, 2021).

A contrastive study conducted by Ghadyani and Tahririan (2014) analyzed the interactional markers used among Iranian medical research articles that were indexed in the Institute for Scientific Information (Iran ISI), those that were not indexed in ISI (Iran non-ISI), and those that were authored by native speakers of English. It was revealed that the Iran ISI and Iran non-ISI groups exhibited excessive use of boosters and just an appropriate number of hedges. The difficulties they faced were rooted in differences in first-language literacy and second-language writing. Their use of hedges significantly relied on the sections of the articles that were marked by different genres. The differences were attributed mainly to the writers’ native language, their culture, and their lack of awareness of the writing conventions of English medical academic research.

Rezaee and Ghobadi (2020) conducted a study on metadiscourse markers in

postgraduate geology students' research findings. Hedges were the most frequently occurring marker in the paleontology corpus, indicating a provisional allowance for objections and revisions. Boosters were prominent in the geotechnics sub-group, reflecting a shift towards objective assurances. Misuse of metadiscourse markers can result in long and clumsy texts (Crismore & Abdollahzadeh, 2010). In editorials, Ojo (2020) compared Nigerian and American usage of hedges and boosters as modality markers, finding no significant difference between the two cultures. Scholars disagree on whether inexperienced writers should follow L1 rhetorical organization, leading to potential rejection by the intended audience (Akbas & Hardman, 2018).

The said dispute among scholars is potential grounds to investigate further this disagreement on the application of writing conventions and also because there is arguably less literature that delves into contrasting academic writing practices within the small cultures frame or the ones that occur in small social groupings, such as the classroom, and even less contrastive studies on secondary ESL writing (Bacang et al., 2019). This study, then, is a viable means for exploration specifically in the context of accounting, business, and management (ABM) and technical- vocational-livelihood (TVL) tracks, two strands that fall perfectly under the notion of small cultures.

Further, this study is geared towards identifying the rhetorical appeals, hedges, and boosters in argumentative essays of Grade 11 ABM and TVL ESL writers and describing their writing styles through authentic language use in their compositions. It is guided by the following questions, which were expected to inform language practitioners and researchers in extending their understanding of L2 students' differences in writing:

- RQ1. What kinds of rhetorical appeals do the ABM and TVL ESL writers dominantly use?
- RQ2. Which strand dominantly uses hedges and boosters in their argumentative essays?
- RQ3. Between ABM and TVL ESL writers, is there any significant difference in the use of
  - a. rhetorical appeals?
  - b. hedges and boosters?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Rhetorical Theory**

The classical idea of rhetoric is traced back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle who believed that rhetoric fundamentally existed to persuade. For him, a good *rhetor* was someone who was able to win any argument regardless of beauty or truth value (Connor, 1996). The consequential idea of rhetoric has found its way into modern composition studies in which persuasive appeals of *ethos* (credibility), *pathos* (emotional appeal), and *logos* (logical appeal) have turned into the default prescriptive standards in argumentative writing. In fact, several models have emerged from this conception. Kinneavy (1971) has included

persuasion in his classification of discourse. Additionally, Perelman's (1982) new rhetoric model focused on the informal argument and assigned great emphasis on the audience: those that the speaker addresses, the speaker himself, and the universal audience.

Because of these normative approaches, emotional appeals have been rejected as illegitimate substitutes for arguments (Micheli, 2010). In his theory of rhetoric, Micheli offered an alternative approach in which, instead of assuming pathos and logos as two distinct parts of the argumentative process, they should be seen as intertwining where emotional appeals are considered "forms of argumentation" and not "simply adjuncts to arguments" (p. 12). Hence, rather than perpetrating the dichotomy of emotional and logical appeals in rhetorical tradition, emotions may be considered as the very objects of argumentation and thus justifying their legitimacy as an argument in itself.

Micheli (2010) considered emotion as a cognitive component and a rational assessment. Under this argument, appraisal theorists stressed its explanatory power, that it does only allow us to see emotions as they are but rather what emotions there are. Second is its arguability in the rhetorical tradition. The scenario here is that a typical orator does not put forward arguments to support an emotion but uses emotional appeals to persuade. It suggests that rhetoric does not only place emotions as *adjuvants*, or enhancers, to argumentation but instead as themselves being open to argumentation. The third point involves the rejection of the idea that emotional appeals are but an illegitimate substitute for an argument. Instead, it asserts that the degree of reasonableness or fallaciousness depends on how it fits a model of dialogue and on the contribution of its goals. Lastly, Micheli presents the steps of how the alternative approach operates, which begins with attribution of emotion, evaluation of emotion, and legitimation or illegitimation of emotion.

### **Hypothesis 1 for RQ3a**

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): There is no difference between the use of logical appeal in the student essays and the use of emotional appeal in the student essay

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>A</sub>): There is a difference between the use of logical appeal in student essays and the use of emotional appeal in student essays.

### **Hypothesis 2 for RQ3a**

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): There is no difference in the use of rhetorical appeals between ABM and TVL ESL writers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>A</sub>): There is a difference in the use of rhetorical appeals between ABM and TVL ESL writers.

### **Stance and Engagement Theory**

Hyland (2005) provides a comprehensive model for writers to interact with their audience by essentially "positioning" themselves through rhetorical choices that allow them to establish relationships with people and ideas. Accordingly, in this theory, critical to a writer's effective argument is an evaluation or the writer's

careful consideration of the audience. This is managed in two interactions, namely, stance and engagement. The first one expresses an attitudinal dimension in which writers convey their judgments and opinions by putting forth their personal authority in a claim or disguising their involvement. The latter pertains to the alignment dimension to which the writer connects to their readers by recognizing them as part of the discourse and leading them to interpretations (p. 176).

Under the stance positioning are four main elements. First are the hedges, which are based on the plausibility of an idea rather than the definitiveness of facts. They express doubt and uncertainty. Examples of these are *perhaps, maybe, to some extent, usually, roughly, may, seem, probably, might, possibly, suggests, sometimes, around, and fairly*. Second are boosters like *certainly, indeed, clearly, obviously, actually, definitely, conclusively, undoubtedly, in fact, know, evidently, prove, and always*. These allow writers to demonstrate confidence, involvement, solidarity, and engagement with their audience (Hyland, 1999). Attitude markers such as *hopefully, unfortunately, and remarkably* show the writer's affective propositions using comparatives, subordination, and progressive particles. Last are self-mentions, which pertain to the use of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives to project an impression of themselves, such as the deliberate omission of explicit author reference in adopting an authorial stance.

Since the interest of this study is centered on the participant's ability to make strong and convincing arguments, hedges and boosters will make for the analytical framework. These stance markers blend perfectly with argumentative essays, as they create a balance of subjective and objective evaluations.

### **Hypothesis 1 for RQ3b**

Null Hypothesis (Ho): Hedges are more evident in student essays than boosters.

Alternative Hypothesis (HA): Hedges are less evident in student essays than boosters.

### **Hypothesis 2 for RQ3b**

Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no difference in the use of stance markers between ABM and TVL ESL writers.

Alternative Hypothesis (HA): There is a difference in the use of stance markers between ABM and TVL ESL writers.

### **Small Cultures Paradigm**

To better understand the conceptualization of small cultures of Adrian Holliday, this framework has to involve a flexible view in using it as an analysis tool. Atkinson (2004) explained that the various social scenes, may they be big or small, tend to have similar characteristics, such as culture, norms, values, hierarchies, symbols, and material artifacts. The concept of culture, then, can be used to analyze these by adjusting the scale of application to fit one's analytical needs.

Since the current study involved contrasting rhetorical devices from specific small groups of ABM and TVL strands, the notion of small cultures by Holliday

(1999) was deemed suitable in this case. The shared assumptions and cognitive competencies within strands, such as solving mathematical problems for ABM students (Almerino et al., 2020) and engaging in manual, technical skills for TVL students, would naturally impel them to form their own unique set of internal norms and socialization practices. Similar to the illustration by Atkinson (2004), the classroom culture of the two distinct strands in the senior high school would inadvertently overlap with other norms, such as youth culture, school culture, and academic writing culture, and would partly spread into national culture as it affirms the idea of its non-essentialist nature and is not necessarily subsumed under the culturist view of larger national or international groups.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized a quantitative research design to determine the dominant use of rhetorical appeals, hedges, and boosters in argumentative essays of ABM and TVL ESL students and the significant differences between the two strands using frequency count, mean, and inferential statistics.

### **Participants**

Seventeen participants from three sections of Grade 11 senior high school students enrolled in ABM and TVL strands of a public secondary high school in Koronadal City, South Cotabato, Philippines, were chosen for this study. A stratified random sampling technique was employed in choosing the participants because of its accuracy of statistical results and ability to establish equal representation among the three strata. The participants wrote argumentative essays on the subject oral communication in context. It should be noted that while the subject centers on oral productive skills, the written argumentative outputs were subsequently used in their manuscript speech reading.

### **Data Gathering**

This research analyzed 51 argumentative essays with arguments revolving around the topic of the participants' choice. This included the essential parts of the introduction, body, and conclusion and ranged from 300 to 500 words. Essays coming from each section were chosen using the fishbowl draw technique. The coding of rhetorical appeals, hedges, and boosters was done through hand tagging by labeling "B" for the presence of a booster, "H" for hedge, "LA" for logical appeals, and "EA" for emotional appeals.

### **Analysis**

The analysis of the argumentative essays of Grade 11 ABM and TVL ESL students began by hand tagging and coding. The identification of logical and emotional appeals followed Micheli's (2010) rhetorical theory, while the presence of hedges and boosters in expressing doubt or certainty in their arguments was based on Hyland's (2005) typology of stance and engagement markers. Descriptive

statistics was employed in determining the frequency of rhetorical appeals, hedges, and boosters in the students' argumentative essays. Moreover, to identify if there were significant differences in the use of rhetorical appeals, hedges, and boosters based on the strand, the chi-square test of independence was employed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that ABM-5 and ABM-7 students used logic as the dominant rhetorical appeal in writing their argumentative essays with 47 percent and 45 percent of occurrence, respectively. From the results, it can be seen that between the two small cultures of the senior high school strands, ABM students used more logic in their arguments. This tends to corroborate Almerino et al.'s (2020) findings that ABM students excel in mathematical capacity and mathematical applications. Similarly, when logic in arguments is structured using symbolic logic, as seen in cases where a conclusion is supported by a set of premises, this pattern was reinforced. Furthermore, it shows that the TVL students were more emotional in their compositions with 37 percent of occurrence.

**TABLE 1. Rhetorical Appeals Dominantly Used by ABM and TVL Classes**

Strands	Rhetorical Appeals	<i>f</i>	%
ABM-5	Logical Appeal	24	47
	Emotional Appeal	7	14
	Neither	20	39
ABM-7	Logical Appeal	23	45
	Emotional Appeal	20	39
	Neither	8	16
TVL 1	Logical Appeal	11	22
	Emotional Appeal	19	37
	Neither	21	41

Note. (*n* = 51).

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between senior high school strands and rhetorical appeals. The relationship between these variables was significant:  $X^2(2, n = 51) = 10.42, p = 5.99$ . Logical appeal was evident among the write-ups of all the respondents.

Since the computed value of  $X^2 = 10.42$  is greater than the critical value of  $X^2 = 5.99$ , we reject the  $H_0$  and accept the  $H_A$  for Hypothesis 1 concerning RQ3a. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a large difference in the use of rhetorical appeals among respondents. Generally, logical appeal was more evident among ABM-5, ABM-7, and TVL-1 in their essays. The remarkable prominence of logical appeals in both strands can be associated with the fact that there was significant attention given to explicit teaching of the rhetorical conventions in argumentative writing in all classes.

**TABLE 2. Rhetorical Appeals Used by the ABM and TVL Strands**

Strand	Rhetorical Appeal	<i>f</i>	<i>n</i>	%	Fisher's Exact Test of Difference
ABM	Logical Appeal	47	10	46	$p < 6.24$
	Emotional Appeal	27	2	25	
TVL	Logical Appeal	11	51	22	
	Emotional Appeal	19		37	

As can be seen in Table 2, the computed value of  $X^2 = 6.24$  is greater than the critical value of  $X^2 = 5.99$ . We therefore reject the  $H_0$  and accept the  $H_A$  for Hypothesis 2 on RQ3a. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the use of rhetorical appeals between ABM and TVL ESL writers.

Noting the significant contrast of rhetorical appeals in their argumentative constructions, we revisit Connor's (1996) chapter on the field of rhetoric. Raimes (1991) made a useful explanation that beginning-level ESL students benefit from a language development course and language production purposes emphasized in textbooks and not so much from teaching academic writing, which requires higher levels of cognition and advanced articulation. The limited usage of the TVL group in putting forward logical and emotional claims in argumentation indexes their overall lower levels of cognitive competencies reported in Almerino et al.'s (2020) research on the academic performance of K-12 students in the Philippines, whereby the TVL strand registered lowest among all strands in all sub-tests in the Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA).

The inclusion of emotional appeals by TVL students in their composition as a mark of low-critical thinking as argued earlier by El Khoiri and Widiati (2017) seems to confirm the low scholastic results of technical/vocational students as compared with other strands in Almerino et al.'s (2020) study. It can also be theorized that a lack of lexical storage to put forward a set of logical claims could be the reason why TVL students turn to impressionistic comments fueled by emotional impressions rather than hard, logical facts. Although this might be the case, Micheli's (2010) framework legitimizes emotions as objects of argumentation and not just mere adjuncts to argumentation. Nonetheless, they still enhance the cogency of arguments and establish its validity as an appeal.

**TABLE 3. Stance Markers Dominantly Used by ABM and TVL Classes**

Strand	Stance Markers	<i>f</i>	%
ABM-5	Hedge	16	31
	Booster	20	39
ABM-7	Hedge	33	65
	Booster	21	41
TVL 1	Hedge	24	47
	Booster	10	20

Note. ( $n = 51$ ).

Table 3 displays the predominant stance markers used by the ABM and TVL students. Interestingly, the two ABM classes preferred different stance markers in

their essays. ABM-7 and TVL-1 used more hedging devices with 33 and 24 occurrences, respectively, than the ABM-5 strand, which used fewer hedges with a frequency count of 16.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relation between senior high school strands and stance markers. The relation between these variables was significant:  $X^2(2, n = 51) = 5.13, p = 5.99$ .

Since the computed value of  $X^2 = 5.13$  is less than the critical value of  $X^2 = 5.99$ , we accept the  $H_0$  and reject the  $H_A$  for Hypothesis 1 pertaining to RQ3b. Therefore, hedges are more evident than boosters, specifically among ABM-5, ABM-7, and TVL-1 student essays.

Table 4 presents data showing that the ABM strand outnumbers the TVL in their use of hedges with a mean percentage of occurrence of 48 and 47, respectively. The same can be said in their use of boosters, wherein the ABM strand marked 40 as the mean percentage of occurrence over the TVL strand, which garnered only 20 as their mean percentage of occurrence. In general, the ABM strand used more stance markers than its TVL counterpart.

**TABLE 4. Stance Markers Used by the ABM and TVL Strands**

Strand	Stance Marker	<i>f</i>	<i>n</i>	%	Fisher's Exact Test of Difference
ABM	Hedges	49	10	48	<i>p</i> > 5.13
	Boosters	41	2	40	
TVL	Hedges	24	51	47	
	Boosters	10		20	

A chi-square test of independence was performed to inspect the relation between senior high school strands and the stance markers. The relation between these variables was not significant:  $X^2(2, n = 153) = 0.0667, p = 5.99$ .

Since the computed value of  $X^2 = 0.0667$  is less than the critical value of  $X^2 = 5.99$ , we accept the  $H_0$  and reject the  $H_A$  for Hypothesis 2 regarding RQ3b. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the use of stance markers between ABM and TVL ESL writers.

According to Francis et al. (2002), the use of hedges makes the writer more adaptable to the audience. In this case, ABM ESL writers having more instances of using this device, as seen in Table 4, does not imply uncertainty on their part. Rather, it reflects a cautious act of calculated assertion in anticipation of potential challenges to their claims (Hyland, 1998). Furthermore, by viewing it through the lens of the small cultures paradigm from the previous section, the increased deployment of boosters by ABM ESL writers validates their predispositions towards entrepreneurship. This alignment reflects the vital needs for traits like strong leadership and business skills within the entrepreneurial field.

These skills are manifested in sales and marketing discourse, which boosters may be a part of as when they pitch a certain product to be “very” useful or “undoubtedly” the best on the market. In the case of TVL ESL writers, their argumentative essays often lack stance markers, reflecting a cohesive identity within their discourse community. This could be because their emphasis lies more on the technical skills and practical knowledge within their field of study instead

of focusing on written communication. Their preference for hedges over boosters would also show that they tend to avoid taking an authorial stance to steer clear of reader criticism, which may also be an indication of lower-quality essays (Ho & Li, 2018).

Despite there being a difference in their frequencies, it bears no impact overall, since the findings suggest that there is no significant difference in the use of stance markers for both strands. It substantiates previous scholarship reported in the literature that the salience of stance markers in argumentative papers is dependent on the context and the type of learners who benefit from such utility of interactional stance markers (Ho & Li, 2018; Lee & Deakin, 2016; Musa et al., 2019).

## CONCLUSIONS

This study explored how ABM and TVL ESL writers make use of rhetorical appeals, hedges, and boosters in their argumentative essays. Both strands showed a widespread use of logical appeals as a result of explicitly teaching the rhetorical conventions of argumentative writing. On the other hand, TVL learners tended to be more emotional in their approach to writing, which does not only speak of their critical thinking skills but also the emphasis of their disciplinary community on practical skills like baking, welding, drafting, and other technology-based competencies over written communication.

The results suggest that the two strands either avoid taking a firm stance on their claims or make a strong commitment to a proposition. Furthermore, it can be gleaned from the analysis of the use of stance markers by the two groups of writers in their argumentative essays that novice writers have yet to master the art and accuracy of writing texts. At this point, it is understandable that senior high school students from the ABM and TVL strands may often fail to elaborate ideas that make their points clear, since they are still not able to obtain a larger conceptual scheme, which can however be learned as they acquire more opportunities to write argumentative academic papers.

Accounting for the number of rhetorical appeals, hedges, and boosters can inform teachers on how students utilize these devices in discourse and design activities that match the learners' styles (Akbas & Hardman, 2018). By identifying areas where these elements are underutilized or overly relied upon, students can focus on improving their persuasive and communicative strategies within their community of practice. Even more, their awareness and application of these stance markers can help them gain the approval of their intended audience.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study do not fully generalize argumentative L2 writing due to the relatively small size of the participant sample. For future researchers, it can be suggested to investigate a larger sample, including STEM and HUMSS disciplines to fill in the gap in genre research. Novice or expert writers in a certain discipline have different priorities and sets of writing traditions in their own microcosms. Moreover, the study could also have combined other sources of data, such as perceptions of teachers and participants to get more depth of information on students' writing competence. It is hoped that student writers in their field be corrected for their use of stance markers and

rhetorical appeals, which are applied in their disciplines and other related fields as well (Rezaee & Ghobadi, 2020).

## THE AUTHOR

**Florida David Sajor** is a master teacher-II from Koronadal National Comprehensive High School – Senior High School, Koronadal City in the Philippines. Her interests focus on language learning studies, promotion of culture in education, and campus journalism. She is a recipient of various academic and research scholarships locally and abroad, including her Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics in Singapore and Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. Currently, she is pursuing her doctoral degree in applied linguistics at De La Salle University, Manila. Email: florida\_sajor@dlsu.edu.ph

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# **Action Research Paper**

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# Acting Schools and Student Monologues in the CLIL Classroom

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Jonathan Buck

*Toyo University, Tokyo, Japan*

The film industry is primarily characterized by two influential acting styles: classical acting and method acting. These styles significantly shape actors' preparation and performances in dramatic roles. Notably, there are parallels between these acting approaches and various language learning activities, such as discourse analysis, pronunciation drills, and concept checks. This paper explores the integration of these acting methodologies into the pedagogy for English learners within a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) class at a Japanese university. Over four years, action research was conducted to determine the most effective ways to combine these approaches. The result is an innovative activity that merges acting training with language learning. This activity is adaptable to various educational contexts, including non-CLIL language classes, offering students a unique opportunity to engage deeply with both cinematic arts and language acquisition.

## INTRODUCTION

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has gained traction as a progressive approach to language education. CLIL entails teaching subject matter through a language that is not the students' native tongue, with the dual aim of enhancing language proficiency and content comprehension. This methodology has found favor in bilingual education programs for its potential to render learning more engaging and effective by blending language acquisition with academic content.

The methodology discussed in this paper aligns with CLIL principles, originating from a course I designed and taught for freshman and sophomore students at a large Japanese university. The course, offered within the elective curriculum for students in the law and politics department, was nominally an English course but was structured with a CLIL approach to broaden students' perspectives. The course was an interdisciplinary blend of film theory and English language learning.

Spanning thirty classes, the course encompassed a wide range of topics related to cinema, including story theory, genre, and composition. In the final weeks, the focus shifted to acting, providing students with opportunities to read scripts and perform. This practical component aimed to reinforce both their understanding of film and their English language skills.

Upon reviewing the first iteration of the course, I recognized an imbalance:

The curriculum leaned too heavily towards film theory at the expense of engaging students in English language practice. This realization prompted a comprehensive redesign of the course to achieve a more balanced integration of film theory and English language activities. Subsequent refinements were made based on ongoing evaluations and feedback, striving to enhance the course's effectiveness as a CLIL-based educational experience.

This paper presents the three main influences on the development of the activities – acting schools, CLIL, and student monologues – discusses how they are all brought together, outlines the method of producing materials and activities and how this improves student engagement and learning outcomes, and proposes how the activities can be adjusted.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Classical Acting and Method Acting**

Acting is divided into two main styles: classical acting and method acting. Both have greatly influenced theater and film with their unique techniques and ideas.

Classical acting comes from European theater, especially the plays of William Shakespeare. It focuses on the external aspects of performance, like voice control, precise movements, and careful study of the text. Classical actors train hard in speaking clearly and moving expressively. Techniques from early Konstantin Stanislavski are often used, where actors analyze their characters' goals for intellectually grounded performances. This style emphasizes clear and controlled use of the actor's physical and vocal abilities.

Method acting, on the other hand, developed from Stanislavski's later work and was expanded by American teachers like Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner. It focuses on the character's psychology and emotions, encouraging actors to use their own memories and feelings to make their roles authentic. This style values the actor's emotional truth, aiming for deep and realistic portrayals that connect strongly with the audience. Method acting often involves actors fully immersing themselves in their characters, sometimes blurring the lines between the actor and the role.

While classical acting is known for its technical precision, method acting is praised for its emotional depth. Both styles have their supporters and critics, and modern acting training often combines elements from both to create versatile actors who can adapt to different roles and media.

### **Student Monologues**

The use of student monologues in language learning is recognized as an effective pedagogical strategy that enhances language proficiency through extended spoken performances.

The theoretical foundation for using monologues lies in communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language learning (TBL). CLT emphasizes meaningful communication and real-life language use, while TBL focuses on

completing tasks using the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Monologues align with these approaches by requiring learners to organize and articulate their thoughts coherently, simulating authentic communication.

Empirical studies highlight several benefits of monologues in language learning. Thornbury and Slade (2006) argued that monologues facilitate fluency development by encouraging sustained speech, while Derwing et al. (2008) demonstrated improvements in pronunciation and intonation through monologue practice. Additionally, Shrosbree (2008) found that preparing and delivering monologues enhances vocabulary acquisition and grammatical accuracy, as learners engage deeply with the language and receive feedback from peers and instructors.

Monologues also foster learner motivation and self-expression. By allowing students to present personal experiences and opinions, monologues create a sense of ownership in the learning process. Practical applications in the classroom include assigning topics related to students' interests, integrating peer feedback sessions, and utilizing digital tools for self-assessment and progress tracking.

Despite the advantages, challenges such as performance anxiety and unequal participation can arise. Thornbury (2005) suggests that creating a supportive environment and providing structured guidance can help mitigate these issues, ensuring that all learners benefit from the activity.

Student monologues are a valuable tool in language education, promoting fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and learner motivation. With careful implementation and supportive teaching practices, monologues can significantly enhance language learning outcomes.

### **Bringing Them Together**

Monologue preparation is a critical component of both acting and language learning. While classical acting, method acting, and student monologues for language learners come from distinct pedagogical backgrounds, they share several similarities in how they prepare individuals to deliver monologues effectively. These similarities are rooted in the fundamental principles of performance, communication, and personal expression. Thus, this criterion was formed.

### **Emphasis on Understanding the Text**

In both classical and method acting, a deep understanding of the text is essential. Classical actors analyze the script to understand the structure, language, and rhetorical devices used, often focusing on the historical and cultural context of the piece. Similarly, method actors delve into the text to explore the subtext and motivations of the characters, aiming to uncover the psychological and emotional layers of the dialogue.

For language learners, comprehending the text is equally important. Students need to understand the meaning, vocabulary, and grammatical structures of the monologue. This often involves translation, contextual analysis, and exploration of idiomatic expressions, ensuring they grasp both the literal and nuanced meanings of the language.

### **Character and Personal Connection**

Method acting emphasizes personal connection and emotional truth, encouraging actors to draw on their own experiences to relate to the character's emotions and motivations. This personal connection is crucial for delivering authentic and believable performances.

Similarly, language learners preparing monologues are encouraged to connect personally with the material. This might involve relating the content to their own experiences or feelings, making the language more meaningful and easier to internalize. Personal connection aids in memorization and enhances the emotional delivery of the monologue.

### **Practice and Repetition**

Repetition and practice are foundational in both acting schools and language learning. Classical actors rehearse extensively to perfect their diction, timing, and physicality. Method actors engage in repeated practice to inhabit their characters fully, experimenting with different emotional and psychological approaches.

Language learners also benefit from repeated practice. Rehearsing the monologue multiple times helps solidify language patterns, improve pronunciation, and build confidence. Repetition allows learners to refine their delivery, ensuring clarity and fluidity in their speech.

### **Feedback and Reflection**

Both acting and language learning involve a process of feedback and reflection. Classical and method actors often work with directors and peers to receive constructive criticism, which they use to refine their performances. Reflecting on feedback helps actors understand their strengths and areas for improvement.

Language learners similarly benefit from feedback from teachers and peers. Constructive criticism helps identify pronunciation errors, grammatical mistakes, and areas where the delivery can be more expressive. Reflecting on feedback enables learners to make adjustments and improve their overall performance.

### **Focus on Expressiveness**

Expressiveness is a key element in both acting and language learning. Classical actors focus on vocal modulation, facial expressions, and physical gestures to convey the character's emotions and intentions. Method actors, while emphasizing internal emotions, also work on outward expressions to communicate their characters convincingly.

Language learners are encouraged to be expressive to convey meaning effectively. This includes using appropriate intonation, stress patterns, and body language to enhance communication. Expressiveness helps engage the audience and makes the monologue more compelling.

Therefore, despite differences in their foundational philosophies, classical acting, method acting, and student monologues for language learners share several similarities in their preparation processes. These include a deep understanding of the text, personal connection, practice and repetition, feedback and reflection, and a focus on expressiveness. These commonalities underscore the universal principles of effective performance and communication, regardless of the specific context or purpose.

## ACTIVITY DESIGN

As previously outlined, the intention of the activities is to both teach film theory and provide opportunity for language acquisition. Below an example activity is presented and explained.

In this exercise, participants are required to analyze a monologue from both the classical and method acting perspectives. A suitable monologue, comprehensible to the learners, is selected for this purpose. In certain instances, an authentic monologue from cinema is utilized, while in others, a generated monologue is provided. A brief contextual background accompanies the monologue, detailing the character, narrative, logline, and other relevant elements to aid the learners in their analysis (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1. Sample Monologue and Background**

Marie wants to break up with her boyfriend because she has fallen in love with someone else. Marie is 26 years old and lives with her boyfriend. She has been waiting months to tell the truth and cannot wait any longer.

Read the monologue below:

I've been doing a lot of thinking lately, and I need to be honest with you. This isn't easy for me to say, but I can't keep pretending that everything is okay between us. The truth is I've fallen in love with someone else.

I never planned for this to happen, and I never wanted to hurt you. But feelings are complicated, and I can't ignore what's in my heart any longer. I've tried to push these feelings aside, to convince myself that they would go away, but they haven't.

I hope you can understand that this decision wasn't made lightly. You mean a lot to me, and I'll always cherish the time we've spent together. But I need to follow my heart, even if it means letting go of what we had.

I wish you nothing but happiness, and I hope you can find someone who loves you the way you deserve to be loved. Goodbye.

After reading the monologue and background students are given questions to represent the method approach (see Figure 2) and the classical approach (see Figure 3).

**FIGURE 2. Monologue Analysis Questions: The Method Approach**

- Who is Marie? Where is she from? Where does she live? What is her personality like?
- Have you ever had this experience? How did you feel?
- How do you think Marie feels?
- What body language shows her feelings?
- Read the first section of the monologue. How can you show Marie's character and emotion?
- Practice the monologue with your partner. Try to imagine you are feeling the same emotions as Marie. Make any changes if you feel it can improve your performance.

**FIGURE 3. Monologue Analysis Questions: The Classical Approach**

- Read the first section of the monologue out loud to your partner. Which words do you think need to be stressed?
- Which parts of the monologue should be:
  - Loud or quiet? Why
  - Quick or slow? Why?
- How can you show your feelings in the monologue using your voice and body language?
- Read the whole monologue out loud. Are there any difficult words for you to pronounce?
- Practice reading the monologue until you feel comfortable.

As outlined earlier, the method approach takes the internal focus so the actor “learns” to deliver their lines by creating an identity to mimic, unlike the classical approach, which had an external focus where the actor focuses more on stagecraft and pronunciation. In this case the learners go through a process similar to an actor while providing genuine language learning experiences for students. This section can be adjusted to student levels and needs along with genre-specific content. A post-activity discussion can be used to allow students to analyze the effectiveness of each approach. Figure 4 is an example.

**FIGURE 4. Post-Activity Reflection**

- What is the difference between each approach?
- What are the benefits and downsides of each approach?
- What kind of actor do you think you would be?
- How do these activities help with learning English?

This form of reflection enables students to evaluate the efficacy of activities from both an acting and language learning perspective. It provides an opportunity to modify the activity to better align with the instructor’s objectives. As previously discussed, there are significant parallels between an actor’s preparation process and language learning activities, allowing instructors to tailor reflections to meet student needs.

These adjustments can be applied to the activity as a whole. For instance, if an instructor aims to enhance a learner’s comprehension of narrative language, students could be tasked with writing their own monologue and subsequently completing monologue analysis questions to examine their writing process. Alternatively, if the instructor seeks to emphasize pronunciation, a monologue accompanied by an audio track could be used, enabling students to engage in shadowing exercises to improve their pronunciation skills. Moreover, this activity can be adjusted into a peer feedback session where students can evaluate their speech based on various criteria such as clarity, pace, fluency, and so on. All of this is feasible along with retaining the ability to learn about acting schools.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the integration of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) principles with acting methodologies offers a multifaceted approach to language education. By blending film theory and English language learning, the course described in this paper provides a unique and engaging learning experience for students. The incorporation of classical acting and method acting techniques, alongside student monologues, fosters a comprehensive understanding of both language and performance art. This dual focus not only enhances students' language proficiency but also enriches their appreciation of cinematic arts.

Through iterative refinement and feedback, the course has evolved to better balance theoretical and practical components, ensuring a more effective learning process. The activities designed, such as monologue analysis from both acting perspectives, enable students to deeply engage with the material, encouraging both linguistic and expressive development.

Ultimately, the approach outlined in this paper demonstrates the potential of interdisciplinary methods in language education. By continuously adjusting and refining activities to meet students' needs, educators can create dynamic and versatile learning environments that promote both academic and personal growth. This innovative integration of CLIL with acting principles stands as a promising model for future educational endeavors, highlighting the importance of adaptability and creativity in teaching practices.

## THE AUTHOR

**Jonathan Buck** is a lecturer in the LEAP Department at Toyo University in Tokyo, where he teaches English test preparation courses and study abroad skills. He also teaches film theory and English as an adjunct lecturer at Keio University. His main focus of research is speaking skills and learner corpora. Email: buck@toyo.jp

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## **Workshop Reports**

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# Beyond the Classroom: Real-World IT Literacy Through PBL

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Becky L. Sanchez

*Gakushuin University, Tokyo, Japan*

This article summarizes an interactive workshop demonstrating the implementation of project-based learning (PBL) in an IT literacy course for university students. It explores how PBL can help develop IT literacy skills alongside essential 21st-century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. The workshop highlighted two key components of the course called scavenger hunts, which were comprised of self-directed exploration and peer-to-peer teaching, as well as missions that were inductive, collaborative activities designed to help students gain skills and practical ability in using various software applications. This article discusses the rationale behind this approach and examines its implications for broader educational practice, with the goal of inspiring educators to integrate these strategies into their own diverse educational contexts.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 2023–2024 academic year at Tokyo International University, I was tasked with teaching two IT literacy courses for E-track (EMI program) students majoring in international relations, business economics, or digital business innovation. Almost all were second-language English speakers from diverse backgrounds with varying levels of English proficiency. I was given complete creative control in designing the course, provided it met the objectives of equipping students with fundamental computing and information security skills for word processing, spreadsheet management, and presentations. I realized that these courses would be the ideal context to help students develop a more comprehensive set of 21st-century skills essential for success in our rapidly evolving globalized society.

Twenty-first-century skills encompass four key areas: ways of thinking (creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, metacognition, and learning to learn), ways of working (communication and collaboration), tools for working (information and ICT literacy), and living in the world (local and global citizenship, life and career, and personal and social responsibility, including cultural awareness and competence; Binkley et al., 2012). Mastering these competencies enhances academic performance, professional readiness, and personal growth, preparing individuals to thrive in diverse settings (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012).

To maximize student learning, provide an active learning environment, and increase the development of all four areas of 21st-century skills, I chose

project-based learning (PBL) as the foundation for these courses. PBL facilitates deep learning through active engagement in real-world, meaningful projects, enhancing content knowledge while developing essential skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and self-management. The objective of PBL in this context was for students to gain knowledge through the projects themselves, not just apply their knowledge in a project (Thomas, 2000). Furthermore, I wanted students to learn to develop skills essential not only in academic settings but also in their future professional careers.

In the following sections, the course design and its implications for broader educational practices are described in detail.

## **COURSE DESIGN**

Students engaged in a semester-long project in which they designed their own business or organization, aligning with their majors. They first identified a specific need or problem, and then did research on how to best meet this need or solve the problem through their own business or organization. These projects were ultimately individual, but incorporated peer feedback and took place alongside other in-class mini-projects that required teamwork and communication.

Throughout the semester, they were able to develop and apply IT skills in practical scenarios, such as writing business plans, conducting market research analyses, creating video commercials, and preparing investor pitch deck presentations. As the students were majoring in fields either directly or tangentially related to business, this was a great opportunity for them to gain useful hands-on experience in a structured, supportive environment. Additionally, because the students were from various backgrounds, PBL allowed everyone to have their own unique voice while also learning how to navigate collaborative environments, similar to future work contexts.

Two main components of this PBL course aimed to help students develop these skills and apply them in real-world contexts: scavenger hunts and missions.

### **Scavenger Hunts**

Instead of lecturing students on each topic, I required students to complete scavenger hunts that entailed finding online tutorials related to upcoming class topics and submitting the links to our class Padlet, along with a short explanation and evaluation of the source. Students then watched each other's tutorials and brought their understanding and expertise on each topic to the in-class discussions. This allowed for a more customized learning experience, as each student was tasked with finding tutorials that matched their current level of understanding, allowing them to both share with and learn from others. In addition, this process enhanced their research skills and helped them understand how to critically evaluate information sources, as they were tasked with finding the best resources to share with the class.

There were also in-class scavenger hunts that required students to work as a team to search for information online to share with their peers through mini-presentations or demonstrations. In this way, students were able to gain

additional practice using various IT tools, further reinforcing IT literacy skills development. This also created a supportive and productive learning environment where students were able to contribute meaningfully to everyone's learning in their own way.

Furthermore, by placing the responsibility of finding and sharing sources on the students, I was able to shift my role from instructor to facilitator, maximizing the amount of class time I could dedicate to inductive, hands-on learning, as well as monitoring the class to offer personalized support to groups of students (Grant, 2002). This also allowed for constant, more accurate formative diagnostics throughout the semester. Because I was freed up to walk around the class and observe, I was able to see which students needed more guidance and help. This also served to inform my groupings in the future. For instance, at times, I paired students with similar abilities so that they could work at the same pace, and at other times, I paired students with different abilities where one or two could take on a leadership role, akin to real-world situations they would face in the future.

### **Missions**

Missions, in contrast, were hands-on inductive projects structured to promote collaboration, problem-solving, and the practical acquisition and application of IT skills gained from the scavenger hunts. These low-stakes, real-life scenarios helped students build their knowledge and abilities under the guidance of a supportive instructor and their peers. For in-class missions, students were tasked with solving problems for a fictitious business that we created throughout the semester called GreenTech Solutions. In these GreenTech Solutions missions, students first worked in small groups to tackle various challenges, such as duplicating an example Google Sheets document with financial data of GreenTech Solutions to present to investors, or creating a storyboard and shooting footage for GreenTech Solutions to help the marketing team make commercials. In this way, students could problem-solve as a team using their knowledge of the topic to figure out how to execute the mission on their own.

After the GreenTech Solutions missions, students were able to directly apply their learning to their own projects. These missions took place both in-class and at-home so that students could benefit both from the guidance of their peers and instructor but also have the necessary time to complete the task.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE**

This approach can make tangible the achievements of students throughout the semester. For instance, in the context of an IT literacy course, students who may initially feel that their computer skills are lacking are able to see a full portfolio of their work by the end of the semester, from their own fully polished business plan document and detailed spreadsheets of data to professional-looking websites, edited videos, and pitch deck presentations. Working on projects that mirror real-life contexts allows students to take ownership of their learning, thereby enhancing their self-regulation and motivation (Shin, 2018).

Though this approach was implemented specifically in IT literacy courses,

there are many implications for educational practices across disciplines. PBL fosters active learning and deeper engagement with course content. By working on meaningful projects, students not only acquire content knowledge but also develop vital 21st-century skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, which are essential in today's workforce. PBL also cultivates a classroom dynamic where students are motivated to actively participate and take ownership of their learning. They can track their progress more effectively and witness firsthand how the skills and knowledge they acquire are applied and evolve over time, developing a sense of pride in their results.

Engaging in these projects also encourages students to recognize their role within a community, where teamwork involves supporting each other's learning and problem-solving together. Peer feedback enables students to refine their work based on constructive input and independently improve their learning outcomes. A PBL approach fosters an environment where supporting others enhances, rather than impedes, personal growth, reinforcing collaboration skills crucial for academic and professional success. Furthermore, learning to work effectively in teams better equips students for future academic and professional environments, where collective success often depends on mutual support and effective teamwork. They can learn to navigate challenges both autonomously and within team settings.

To support a PBL approach, the use of activities like the scavenger hunts and missions employed in the IT literacy courses can help students build essential skills in a practical environment. Scavenger hunts promote self-directed learning by encouraging students to find and evaluate online resources on their own, enhancing their research and critical thinking abilities. Educators can leverage digital tools like Padlet to facilitate these activities. Implementing missions based on real-world challenges can strengthen essential skills needed for future success, such as communication, interpersonal dynamics, and problem-solving. These real-world missions also foster the development of vital soft skills, as students must effectively communicate their ideas to others. While working on a team, they learn to navigate interpersonal dynamics, manage conflicts, delegate tasks, and leverage team members' strengths, much like they would in a real business environment.

This approach naturally shifts the educator's role from traditional lecturer to facilitator, allowing for more class time to be spent on meaningful activities and effectively addressing individual student needs.

## **CONCLUSION**

The integration of project-based learning and 21st-century skills in IT literacy courses is a powerful approach to developing both technical skills and essential competencies for future academic and professional environments. However, the components of this approach, such as scavenger hunts and missions, can be implemented across disciplines.

While it admittedly can take more time to design a course in this way, by designing courses that foster active learning and real-world application that mimic the authentic contexts in which our students will find themselves in their futures,

educators can create more engaging, relevant learning experiences.

## THE AUTHOR

**Becky Sanchez** holds a BA in Spanish and English linguistics, an MA in linguistics, specializing in language teaching, and is currently pursuing an MBA and an EdD in educational technology. Her dissertation focuses on integrating 21st-century skills in EFL education in Japan. Her other research interests include self-directed learning, collaborative learning, flipped learning, and CLIL. Passionate about professional development, Becky has given numerous presentations and workshops at international conferences in the United States, Peru, South Korea, Thailand, Cambodia, and Japan. She is currently an adjunct instructor in the Faculty of International Social Sciences at Gakushuin University. Email: becky.sanchez411@gmail.com

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# GenAI and EAP Instruction: Navigating the Future of Language Learning

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Sarah Warfield

*NYU Shanghai, Shanghai, China*

Generative AI (GenAI) holds potential for enhancing teacher and learner agency in language learning. This conference paper discusses integrating GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT, into English for academic purposes (EAP) instruction, based on a workshop delivered at the 2024 Korea TESOL International Conference. Leveraging machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP), GenAI offers personalized learning and promotes AI literacy. The workshop demonstrated tasks that encourage deeper engagement and reflective learning. Challenges like algorithmic bias and data privacy must be addressed, but with careful implementation, GenAI can significantly enhance educational outcomes.

## INTRODUCTION

Generative AI (GenAI), a field within computer science aiming to create intelligent machines that replicate human cognitive behavior, offers exciting opportunities to enhance both teacher and learner agency in language learning classrooms. Despite well-deserved skepticism among language professionals on how to incorporate this new educational technology, the rapid advancement of GenAI in education means late adopters may soon be left behind. Researchers and practitioners mostly agree that within the next decade, we can expect significant changes in educational practices that will permanently alter how we teach and learn (Gates, 2023; Khan, 2023).

Since the release of ChatGPT in 2022, I have actively incorporated GenAI tools to enhance my students' learning experiences in the English for academic purposes (EAP) classroom. My goal is not only to improve students' English academic skills but also to foster AI literacy, equipping them with essential 21st-century competencies. By designing tasks that fully integrate GenAI tools, I have gained greater control and flexibility in my teaching methods. As we see more GenAI tools in our classrooms, there is potential for EFL teachers to develop greater agency in their professional practices by learning to utilize and develop these technologies.

This KOTESOL workshop combined a demonstration of GenAI tools in EFL education with an exploration of their practical applications and benefits. While the live session focused more on implementation, this paper provides a deeper understanding of the theoretical foundations and reasons behind their effectiveness in language education.

## GenAI Technologies in Language Education

GenAI tools represent the latest innovation in teaching with technology, highlighting the ongoing evolution of educational technology from personal computers in the 1980s to the current need for AI literacies quickly surpassing digital literacies (see Appendix A).

Under the umbrella term of *artificial intelligence* (U.S. Department of Education, 2023), machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP) are particularly relevant to language learning contexts. ML tailors educational experiences through data analysis, while NLP enables GenAI to assess learners and interact conversationally. These technologies align well with the growing emphasis on personalized instruction for L2 learners since the early 2000s (Duckworth et al., 2009). GenAI tools utilizing NLP and data-driven learning (DDL) can adapt to individual student needs, offering custom-fit education (Son et al., 2023). As AI literacy grows, educational systems are evolving with age-appropriate AI pedagogies, preparing students for a tech-centric future (Almatrafi et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2022).

Educators must apply the same critical lens to GenAI tools as they would to any new language learning practice. Potential issues include inaccurate output (Kasneci et al., 2023), algorithmic bias (Dieterle et al., 2022), and data protection concerns (Kohnke et al., 2023). Nevertheless, there remains a promising path forward for integrating GenAI tools into language learning pedagogies to enhance both learner and teacher agency, provided these obstacles are thoughtfully addressed.

The widespread adoption of GenAI tools by students necessitates that educators embrace these technologies. For L2 learners, GenAI tools offer increased control over their learning, potentially boosting motivation and language acquisition. Teachers can leverage these tools to develop curricula, lesson plans, and language learning tasks more efficiently. It is crucial that educators equip themselves with the knowledge and skills to use AI effectively, keeping pace with students' usage and rapid institutional adoption. By proactively engaging with GenAI, we can position ourselves as key contributors to the discourse surrounding this emerging educational technology, making informed decisions and shaping the future of education.

## AI-Enhanced Language Learning

In my EAP classes, I've observed students frequently using ChatGPT for various tasks, including summarizing texts, drafting emails, writing reflections, and creating presentation scripts. To the eagle-eyed instructor familiar with GenAI tools, ChatGPT-generated content is often recognizable by its tell-tale signs: long responses, a distinct "chatbot voice" (using words like *dive*, *delve*, and *journey*), and generally correct grammar. However, these texts typically lack the nuanced rhetorical structure expected in academic writing. Importantly, despite this widespread and detectable use, reliable AI detection tools remain scarce, presenting a challenge in maintaining academic integrity (Walters, 2023).

While these AI-generated texts may appear competent at first glance, ChatGPT and other large language models (LLMs) are prone to inaccuracies and lack

genuine understanding. At their core, LLMs are sophisticated text prediction tools, generating responses based on patterns in their training data rather than true comprehension. In fact, to illustrate LLMs' limitations, ChatGPT compares itself to a parrot, operating based on patterns and predictions rather than genuine understanding (OpenAI 2024; see Appendix B).

A key concern in the use of GenAI tools is the tendency towards what Swaak (2024) described as a transactional view of writing and knowledge acquisition. This concept has become central to my approach in teaching with AI. In discussions with my students, I emphasize how GenAI interactions can easily become mere transactions rather than opportunities for deeper learning and critical thinking. To counter this, educators must design tasks that push beyond transactional usage, promoting both learner agency and AI literacy. Such tasks should require critical engagement that goes beyond what GenAI can provide alone, encouraging students to question, analyze, and reflect on AI-generated content.

Pedagogic interventions are crucial in guiding students to use GenAI tools effectively, moving from superficial transactions towards deep, critical engagement. By thoughtfully incorporating AI into classroom activities, we can foster not just language skills but also critical thinking and AI literacy. Early adopters argue that students benefit most when taught to navigate these tools instead of being left to their own devices (Mollick, 2023).

The following four tasks, developed for my EAP classes, exemplify this approach.

## **AI-ENHANCED TASKS**

### **Using Prompts to Decode Difficult Texts**

This task aims to enhance students' AI literacy and critical reading skills in EAP contexts. Its objectives include raising awareness of chatbot usage and encouraging students to use AI tools for decoding rather than merely summarizing complex texts. This approach addresses students' tendency to rely on chatbots for summarization, which can hinder the development of crucial academic reading skills. Using a form created in Google Forms (see Appendix C), students engage in this multi-step process:

1. Students select a challenging reading from their coursework.
2. Students then generate three distinct prompts for interacting with ChatGPT about the text.
3. For each prompt, students copy and paste their interaction with the AI.
4. Students reflect on how each prompt helps them unpack the reading, encouraging metacognition about their AI use and reading strategies.

This process engages students' critical thinking skills and promotes AI literacy by requiring them to craft effective prompts and evaluate AI responses. A notable challenge emerged: Students often struggled to transition between AI-generated content and their own ideas, highlighting the need for careful task design.

Analysis of student responses revealed that most prompts focused on traditional academic reading strategies, such as identifying main ideas or clarifying difficult concepts. This alignment with conventional methods suggests that students are applying familiar strategies to their AI interactions, but in a more interactive and reflective manner. Overall, the activity was well-received, demonstrating the potential for integrating GenAI tools in EAP classrooms while fostering critical thinking and AI literacy skills. It encourages students to view AI as a tool for deeper engagement with texts rather than a shortcut for summarization.

### **Identifying Search Terms**

This task exemplifies how traditional assignments can be redesigned to leverage GenAI tools effectively. Identifying appropriate keywords for research projects is a challenge for L2 learners that can be accurately and efficiently addressed using AI. Rather than fighting against inevitable AI use, this assignment integrates it purposefully into the learning process.

Students use ChatGPT or similar large language model (LLM) with a specific prompt to generate and evaluate search terms for their research topic. They input their initial ideas and receive AI-suggested alternatives, which they must critically assess for relevance and usefulness. This approach not only yields better results than traditional methods but also teaches students to interact productively with AI tools.

Student feedback confirmed the effectiveness of this redesigned task. They reported finding relevant search terms more efficiently and discovered terminology they might not have encountered through conventional means. Many noted that the AI-suggested terms broadened their research perspectives, sometimes leading to new avenues of inquiry. By embracing GenAI in assignment design, we create a learning experience that is both more relevant to students' future academic work and more effective in achieving learning outcomes.

### **Creating Interview Questions**

This task transforms a traditional assignment into an AI-driven one, engaging students in AI interaction and evaluation. Students check ChatGPT's knowledge of their interviewee, supplement it if necessary, and input research findings to ensure relevant, well-informed questions (see Appendix D).

Crucially, students must justify their selection from the AI-generated list, demonstrating critical evaluation skills. The assignment also includes a metacognitive element of citing and acknowledging AI use in academic work.

Student feedback was positive. They appreciated the efficiency but recognized the importance of providing detailed input for better AI output, highlighting a key aspect of AI literacy. Some noted that AI-generated questions sparked ideas for further research. Overall, this task illustrates AI's potential as a collaborative tool in academic research while emphasizing the importance of human expertise and critical evaluation.

## Writing AI Statements

This writing assignment focuses on developing students' AI statements, conducted at midterm and final periods. It is designed to help students critically reflect on their use of GenAI tools in their learning process. Following a modified think-pair-share format and utilizing an online Padlet board for collaboration, the task begins with students brainstorming their initial thoughts about using AI tools like ChatGPT. They then use a specific prompt to generate a paragraph summarizing these sentiments through ChatGPT, which is shared on the Padlet board for peer commentary.

A critical component is the reflection phase, where students evaluate whether the AI accurately captured their sentiments and nuances. I emphasize that students are the experts on their own feelings and have the unique authority to judge the AI's accuracy and depth. The activity then moves into a peer discussion phase, followed by a revision process where students interact with ChatGPT again to clarify and refine their statements.

This task serves multiple purposes: It models ChatGPT's potential in helping students express complex ideas, demonstrates collaborative work with AI tools, and encourages critical thinking about AI-generated content. Reception was generally positive, effectively illustrating the symbiotic relationship between human insight and AI capabilities in producing meaningful output.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the integration of GenAI tools in language education represents a significant shift in teaching practices, offering both challenges and opportunities. The workshop at the KOTESOL international conference demonstrated the potential benefits of using GenAI tools to enhance language learning, foster AI literacy, and promote both learner and teacher agency. The tasks designed and implemented during this workshop highlighted the practical applications of GenAI in educational settings, showing that with careful and critical use, these tools can support meaningful learning experiences. Moving forward, it is essential for educators to continue exploring and refining the use of GenAI technologies, ensuring that they enhance rather than replace the critical thinking and human interaction that are fundamental to effective teaching and learning. By doing so, we can harness the power of AI to create more dynamic, responsive, and personalized educational experiences, preparing our students for a future in which AI literacy is as essential as traditional literacy skills.

## THE AUTHOR

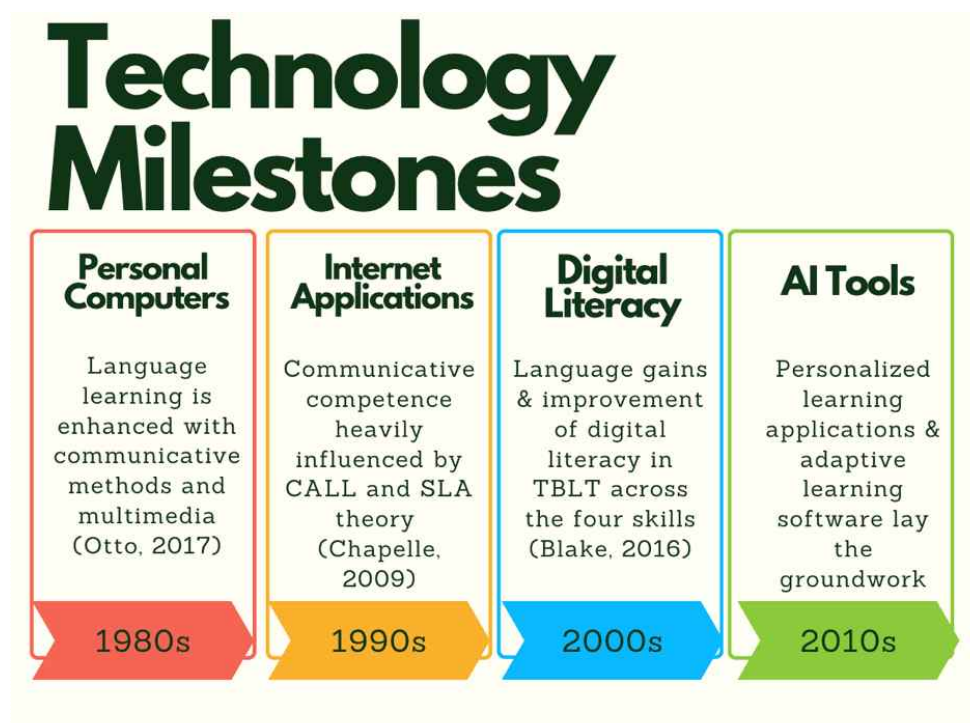
**Sarah Warfield** is a senior lecturer of EAP at NYU Shanghai and currently serves as an English language specialist for the English Language Fellows Program. She has over 15 years of experience teaching L2 learners both in the United States and internationally. Email: saw12@nyu.edu

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## APPENDIX A

### Technology Milestones



## APPENDIX B

### ChatGPT Comparison of Itself to a Parrot

**S You**  
what about a bird

**ChatGPT**  
Comparing ChatGPT's neural network to a bird, it might resemble a parrot. Parrots are known for their ability to mimic human speech, showing an impressive capacity to understand and reproduce complex auditory patterns. ChatGPT, similar to a parrot, can generate human-like text by recognizing patterns in data and mimicking the style and content of human language. However, just as a parrot doesn't necessarily comprehend the depth of the conversations it imitates, ChatGPT operates based on patterns and predictions learned from data rather than genuine understanding.

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## APPENDIX C

### Form for Using Prompts to Decode Difficult Texts

### Using prompts to decode difficult texts

**B I U ↺ ✕**

Use this form to tell me about the prompts that you generated. Fill in all the spaces below.

This **is** an AI assignment when prompted to copy and paste information from the bot.

This **is not** an AI assignment when prompted to give me feedback.

- Do not use a chatbot to help you think of an answer.
- Do not use a chatbot to edit your answer.

This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents. [Change settings](#)

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Which reading from Units 1-3 will you apply your prompts to? Why did you choose this reading?

Some guiding questions to consider:  
Was this reading especially hard? Did you want to know more from the reading? Is it a reading that you will want to use in the future?

Long answer text

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Prompt 1: \*

Use the space below. Copy and paste a prompt that you created.

Long answer text

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Prompt 1: Tell me how what this prompt does and how it helps you unpack the reading. \*

Long answer text

Prompt 2: \*

Use the space below. Copy and paste a prompt that you created.

Long answer text

Prompt 2: Tell me how what this prompt does and how it helps you unpack the reading. \*

Long answer text

Prompt 3: \*

Use the space below. Copy and paste a prompt that you created.

Long answer text

Prompt 3: Tell me how what this prompt does and how it helps you unpack the reading. \*

Long answer text

Prompt 4: \*

Use the space below. Copy and paste a prompt that you created.


Long answer text

Prompt 4: Tell me how what this prompt does and how it helps you unpack the reading. \*

Long answer text

## APPENDIX D

### Creating Interview Questions

 **Talk to the AI:**

Ask the AI if they are familiar with the source(s) from your Annotated Bibliography. Ask the AI to write a summary. Chat with the AI until they write a summary that is correct. The AI will likely not write a complete and/or correct summary on the first try. Continue to chat with the AI until you have a summary(ies) that is correct.

 **Screenshot(s):**

 **Talk to the AI:**

Tell the AI that you want to incorporate ideas from the summary(ies) into your questions. Ask the AI to edit the questions, making them specific to your background research.

 **Screenshot(s):**

## Drama on the World Stage

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Darren A. Kinsman  
*Sendai, Miyagi, Japan*

The 31st Korea TESOL International Conference was themed “Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives.” Shakespeare’s metaphor of all the world being a stage was also a central theme in *Drama on the World Stage*, a workshop the author conducted on the first day of the conference. The objective of the workshop was to give some background on drama in the classroom as an educational approach and to demonstrate how it can promote linguistic, social, creative, and cognitive skills. In groups, participants analyzed a scene from a play that incorporated two key elements. The first was the disappearance of a character named Lucy. The second was an ambiguous relationship among the characters. To write the next few lines of the script and perform the scene, participants engaged with important skills like critical thinking that can help our students transition from classroom life to global life.

### INTRODUCTION

The word *drama* can be traced back to its Greek antecedent: *dran*, meaning “to do or to act” (Harper, n.d.), but the conception of drama has evolved substantially over time. Drama can refer to a genre of literature or its artistic expression in the theater. However, in this section of our discussion, *drama* refers to “theater.”

In ancient Greece, amateur actors and a chorus staged tragedies, comedies, and satyrs (a comedy drama). These plays were inextricably enmeshed within a larger context of theater, religion, celebration, and general edification of the masses (Bailey, 2006). With the expansion of the Roman Empire, drama was overshadowed by other forms of “theatrical entertainment” (Klar, 2006). In Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church would use drama for educational purposes and suppress it when non-Christian forms of drama gained in popularity (Durant, 1965). The Jesuits appeared to be deeply committed to drama, recognizing its potential to educate not only the audience, but also the players (Wetmore, 2014), bringing us much closer to the contemporary educational approach called *drama in the classroom*, which will be addressed in more detail later. The status of drama in Europe after the Protestant Reformation is complex; as has often been the case throughout history, some groups made use of drama for its educational power, while others worried about drama’s persuasive

influence being used by groups with incompatible views.

Before continuing, it is essential to define some of the more germane terms used in this paper. *Theater* refers to a building where plays and other spectacles are held or can mean “entertainment that involves the performance of plays” (Collins, n.d.-a). *Theater* typically refers to a play performed in front of an audience with costumes, props, specialized lighting, and so on. Traditionally, *drama* referred to a play performed in a theater or the script (sometimes called a *play*). However, some educators differentiate *drama* from *theater* because they hold that theatrical performances can undermine what students learn by participating in drama activities.

A *performance* is related to “entertaining an audience by doing something such as singing, dancing, or acting” (Collins, n.d.-b). However, it can refer to simply doing something in front of other people, like a drama activity, a speech, or a presentation. Advocates of *drama in the classroom* often are not interested in their students doing any type of performance when they are engaged in drama activities, though it is not ruled out. Drama in the classroom involves using drama techniques and activities as a learning tool and does not require performances. *Drama activities* refers to drama and theater activities modified for classroom learning, like role-plays and improvisations.

## DRAMA AS A TEACHING TOOL

By the early twentieth century, many progressive educators promoted drama and theater as educational tools (Hornbrook, 1998). One early adopter was American educator Sylvia Kamerman. In 1941, she wrote, “There is hardly a medium which offers the teacher a greater and more comprehensive opportunity for pupil participation than the use of drama in the classroom” (p. 295). She was referencing students engaging in plays that helped them understand concepts like democracy and subjects like history (Kamerman, 1941). There did not seem to be a strict division between drama and theater yet in this time period.

By the 1950s, however, progressive British educators like Dorothy Heathcote advocated both using drama as a teaching tool and treating it as a process. This idea soon spread to the United States, Canada, and Australia (Davis, 2013). She also advocated for the more formal *process drama*, which emphasized improvisation and a complex role for the teacher as both a player and a facilitator. Since that time, numerous other approaches related to drama and theater as educational tools have emerged, some emphasizing the process of drama and others the performance side, but not without their critics.

David Hornbrook, author and British educator, has called into question many of the claims made by those who promote drama as an educational tool. He favors using drama in education but not if it means separating drama from theater and then using drama as a teaching tool in non-drama courses (Hornbrook 1998). However, his criticisms were in the context of the British school system and governmental legislation. In contrast, this paper focuses on a much narrower topic, a simple approach that uses drama activities and techniques as a learning tool.

This approach is called “drama in the classroom” and was well elucidated in

the 1990 article, *Using Drama Techniques in Language Teaching* by Hyacinth Gaudart. This drama approach is arguably the easiest for teachers unfamiliar with drama and theater to implement, since staging public performances is not part of the approach. Using role-plays in the ESL/EFL context is an example familiar to most language teachers.

## **PREPARING OUR STUDENTS FOR THE GLOBAL STAGE**

How can we prepare our language students for the global stage? First, we can ensure that they get the linguistic skills they will need. Fortunately, some drama activities foster the four basic language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Students will also need to be adept at what are called “the 4Cs”: critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Halverson, 2018). Is drama in the classroom capable of filling this task as well? The qualified answer is “yes,” but it depends upon the activity selected and its implementation. The empirical backing for such claims may be scant, but it is a matter of commonsense that when students are working together to put on a play, for example, they are putting certain skills to good use, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and so on. It is in this light that we present the potential benefits of drama in the classroom. Some drama activities can be quite complex, while other can be simple.

Although simple activities like having students read a dialog aloud demand a certain amount of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, one could question how effectively these skills are being used in this activity. However, teachers can greatly increase the efficacy of this activity with just a few alterations and additions. For example, the teacher can ask students to

1. alter or personalize the content of the dialogue in some way, fostering autonomy, creativity, critical thinking, and engagement.
2. choose an emotional state while reading, fostering empathy and influencing intonation, body language, and gestures.
3. mirror the staging present in the dialogue’s accompanying picture, fostering engagement, communication, and collaboration.
4. familiarize themselves with the dialog so they can scan the text when delivering their lines rather than reading each word, fostering reading skills and fluency.
5. perform the dialogue for their group or the class, fostering skills associated with public speaking, communication, paralanguage, and collaboration.
6. film their performance on their smartphone and look critically at the video, fostering self-evaluation and increasing motivation.

These suggestions are simple to implement but greatly increase engagement and efficacy. In the next section, the paper describes the drama activity the author used at the conference, which was designed to allow students to simultaneously hone multiple skills in a meaningful and engaging way. Before introducing the activity, the role of performance within the “drama in the classroom” approach should be addressed.

## **THE ROLE OF PERFORMANCE IN “DRAMA IN THE CLASSROOM”**

Should we avoid performances when using the “drama in the classroom” approach? Although performances can potentially distract students from the objectives of a drama activity, they can also offer educational benefits. Performance can build communication skills (Giebert, 2014), decrease anxiety related to public speaking (Balgos, 2020), cultivate a sense of community, and create a context in which students can use their L2 while under pressure in a supportive environment. In the next section, this paper presents an activity that uses drama and limited performance in a way that promotes the use of numerous linguistic, social, and cognitive skills.

### **INTERPRETIVE SCENE-WRITING ACCOMPANIED BY PERFORMANCE**

This article demonstrates that drama in the classroom has the potential to facilitate language learning, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Whether these skills manifest depends on the activity selected, its implementation, and other variables like class size and composition. Generally, the more a drama activity asks of the students and the more active the students are in the learning process, the more benefits will be realized.

One such activity, an interpretive scene-writing activity accompanied by a performance called *Junction* was showcased in my workshop. It was an interpretative scene-writing activity accompanied by short performances. By having the participants engage in the activity rather than hear a lecture about it allowed them to experience first-hand the skills that are utilized to complete it.

After being given some historical background on drama and drama in the classroom, participants formed groups and were shown one page of script from a play called *Junction*, written by the author (see Figure 1). The relationships between the characters were intentionally left ambiguous. In the story, a character named Lucy is missing, but no other details were supplied. Each group had to write a few more lines and then perform the scene in front of the other groups. The activity had participants using all four language skills and all of the 4C skills. The steps in the activity are listed below. Participants in the workshop had to do the following:

1. Read and understand the script.
2. Read the text critically to determine the relationship between the characters.
3. Determine who Lucy was and explain what happened to her.
4. Write the next few lines of the script in a way consistent with their interpretation of the text.
5. Practice their performances.
6. Perform their play for the other groups.

Each group had their own creative interpretation of the scene, which influenced their performance. Once completed, the participants were asked to comment on the activity, which allowed for reflective learning.

FIGURE 1. Screenshot of the Script Shown to Participants in the Workshop

**Junction**  
By Darren Kinsman

**Characters** Alice, Camden, Mel

**Alice:** Camden, are you listening?

*[Camden quietly stares at the framed photo on the floor.]*

*[Alice takes his hand and softens her tone.]*

**Alice:** Just tell me what happened.

**Camden:** It's complicated.

**Alice:** Complicated?

*[She takes a deep breath.]*

**Alice:** Start at the beginning.

**Camden:** Lucy was with us for the whole day...Everyone was having fun when...

*[Mel enters the room.]*

**Mel:** What's going on?

*[She notices Camden.]*

**Mel:** Camden, what happened to you? Is that blood? Did you have an accident?

**Camden:** Lucy's gone.

**Mel:** What do you mean, gone? Where is she?

**In groups of three:**

**1. Discuss:**

What is the relationship between Alice, Camden, Mel, and Lucy?

Who is Lucy and what happened to her?

**2. Write:**

Write the next few lines of the play.

**3. Practice:**

Practice the entire script with the emotional content you feel is appropriate for your interpretation of the scene. Don't forget nonverbal communication (gesturing, facial expressions, stance, etc.)

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

For thousands of years, drama has been used to entertain and to educate, but it was not until the 20th century that drama was separated from performance and used as a pedagogical tool. Drama in the classroom is an approach that capitalizes on this division without rejecting performance and can be easily implemented by teachers with no drama experience. There are now hundreds of drama activities of various types that teachers can use. Selection is more efficacious when it is informed by the educational outcomes desired and a critical evaluation of the activity.

Drama activities that involve interpretative scene writing and performance, like the one carried out during the workshop, can simultaneously foster linguistic, social, and cognitive skills in an engaging and meaningful way. The performative element is retained but limited to the classroom, giving students access to many performative benefits without the drawbacks of stage performances, which can be both time-consuming and elicit anxiety. Such activities provide our students with motivation and focus, and give them memories and life skills that they can carry with them throughout their lives as players on the global stage.

## THE AUTHOR

**Darren A. Kinsman** lectures at five universities in Sendai, Japan. After receiving a BA and a BEd, he relocated to Japan in 1998. Since then, he has taught at language schools and a private high school, where he instructed students in both drama and choral singing in addition to traditional subjects. He received a CELTA qualification in 2003 and a MA in 2014. He believes in the power of drama and performance to create contexts for authentic and meaningful learning to take place. Email: KinsmanProfessional@protonmail.com

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## **Icebreaker Activities for a Discussion Course in the ESL Multicultural Classroom**

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Aulia Djunaedi

*Yongsan University, Yangsan, Gyeongsangnam-do, Korea*

South Korea has gone global, as foreign workers and international students can be found just about anywhere throughout Korea. While smaller cities are still in the adaptation stage, with one or two nationalities in their classrooms. Seoul and bigger cities have already become accustomed to having not only tourists and foreign workers but multinational students on the campuses and in the classrooms of their universities. For a discussion course that requires teamwork and the exchange of opinions, it is necessary to start the class with icebreaker activities. In this way, both the teacher and students get to understand and practice multicultural awareness. Multicultural awareness promotes cultural exchange programs and intercultural dialogue that creates an appreciation for colorful perspectives. This workshop presentation demonstrated two simple activities that help create a harmonious atmosphere at the beginning of a semester.

### **INTRODUCTION**

My experiences and frustrations inspired this workshop. I work with multicultural students in an environment still adapting to a multicultural atmosphere, which presents significant challenges. In addition, I teach classes on literature and public speaking. These disciplines require cooperation between learners and the teacher as well as open-mindedness among participants. This openness is essential for fostering self-reflection, discussion, debate, and presentation.

For the class to proceed effectively, incorporating a game in the first session is essential. Like English as a foreign language (EFL) education, classroom games are widely recognized as valuable tools for engaging students and enhancing learning outcomes (Houser, 2020). Specifically, games can act as effective icebreakers in university EFL classrooms, creating a positive and interactive learning environment that encourages student participation and collaboration. Additionally, using games as icebreakers helps reduce student anxiety and fosters a sense of camaraderie among classmates.

Inspired by James Banks (2019), an American educator specializing in multicultural education, I structured the workshop with several activities designed to break the ice among the participants. These activities included building a two-meter tower out of paper, sharing what comes to mind when seeing perilla leaves and lettuce, and discussing favorite colors on specific items along with their cultural significance. The workshop began with an overview of James Banks'

theories and concluded with a discussion on how the meaning of colors varies according to nationality, ethnicity, and culture. The participants included a table of eight teachers from Mongolia, three Americans, and several students from diverse backgrounds.

## WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

### Paper Tower Activity

In the workshop, I introduced a game where participants had to build a two-meter tower using only paper. One of the two fortunate groups received tape and glue, while the others had no additional materials. At that time, there were four tables, each seating four to five people. Some participants knew each other, some were acquainted with one or two people, and many were meeting for the first time. The purpose of this activity was to foster tolerance and collaboration, critical skills not only in the EFL context but in any subject that incorporates discussion, debate, or group work as part of its learning activities, assignments, examinations, or projects.

In a university's dynamic and collaborative environment, teamwork is crucial for fostering academic excellence and personal growth. Effective teamwork allows students to gain numerous benefits that enhance their university experience and prepare them for future challenges. Consequently, the game activity I introduced and applied – building a tower with paper – had multiple objectives. Beyond creating a smoother collaborative atmosphere for the first class, it aimed to improve communication and interpersonal skills, ultimately cultivating leadership and responsibility for future discussions, debates, and projects.

After the game, in a multicultural classroom, it is essential to understand the students' backgrounds before beginning the main lesson. Drawing inspiration from James Banks, I structured the workshop into several activities designed to break the ice among learners. As mentioned above, these activities included building a two-meter tower out of paper, discussing their thoughts when seeing perilla leaves and lettuce, and sharing their favorite colors on specific items along with the cultural significance of those colors (Banks, 2019).

Gorski (2010) describes *multicultural education* as “a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and responds to discriminatory policies and practices in education” (II. A Working Definition of Multicultural Education section, para. 1). Additionally, multicultural education encompasses two key meanings: (a) It is an ongoing process aimed at helping students from diverse cultural backgrounds and with different values to embrace a diverse world, and (b) it seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students, including those from various racial, ethnic, and social-class groups (Banks, 1995, 1997).

To begin the activity, I shared my own personal experiences and culture related to food. The group consisted of about four tables of participants, with eight teachers from Mongolia, three Americans, and a handful of students from various backgrounds. Notably, all participants were female, and their ages ranged from 20 to the late 50s. Except for the Mongolian educators, the attendees lived in South Korea. This diversity in ethnicity, occupation, and age significantly

influenced the outcomes. However, gender did not seem to affect decision-making; instead, personal taste played a crucial role.

### **Food and Cultural Significance Activity**

During the discussion on food, I showed pictures of a bowl of lettuce and perilla leaves and asked participants what dishes came to mind. Most responded with “salad” for the lettuce, while no one mentioned anything about the perilla leaves. Interestingly, no one could relate to the Korean eating style of wrapping, known as *ssambap*. To create *ssambap*, Koreans typically start with a lettuce leaf, add a perilla leaf, and then include the main dish, which can be grilled, braised, or marinated pork, beef, or fish, often stir-fried. Using an icebreaker related to food created a positive and engaging atmosphere in the class.

### **Color Perception Activity**

I incorporated questions about colors into this workshop because color is an accessible and non-controversial topic for everyone. We learn about colors early in life, and they offer a window into culture. Colors paint our world, but our perception of them is profoundly shaped by cultural influences. From language to symbolism, how we experience and interpret hues is intricately woven into our societal understanding (Girard, 2019).

Colors also represent a spectrum of meaning within language, for example, the language we use to describe colors. English distinguishes between “blue” and “green, while Russian differentiates between “light blue” and “dark blue.” This linguistic variance reflects how cultures prioritize and differentiate specific colors within their color vocabulary.

Furthermore, colors are deeply connected to cultural symbolism. In Western cultures, white symbolizes purity and innocence, while black signifies mourning. Conversely, in India, white is associated with death, and red signifies auspiciousness. In China, red represents good fortune and prosperity, whereas in America and Canada, green symbolizes good luck. Additionally, in Japan, pink is associated with femininity and softness, while in Western cultures, it is often linked to sweetness and romance (Jung et al., 2018).

Beyond linguistic and symbolic aspects, our cultural background influences how we perceive the emotional impact of colors. Studies have shown that certain colors evoke specific emotions across cultures, though the intensity of these emotions may vary. For example, blue often evokes feelings of peace and tranquility but may also be associated with sadness in cultures where blue is linked to mourning (Cheung, 2021).

In the workshop, I distributed sheets of paper with images of objects such as tumblers, hats, bags, and toy cars. Participants shared their favorite colors for these items. In a subsequent activity, participants wrote down their favorite colors associated with four prompts: *happiness*, *sadness*, *boredom*, and *feeling rich*. They then shared their responses with the class.

The results showed that participants with the same ethnicity or nationality often had similar perceptions of the prompts. However, favorite colors for the four items were more varied, influenced by ethnicity, generation, gender, and

personal taste. This activity highlights the importance of understanding cultural influences on color perception to foster cross-cultural communication and understanding. Recognizing these differences is crucial to prevent misunderstandings, particularly in marketing, design, and diplomacy. By appreciating the diverse ways people perceive color, we can bridge cultural divides and build understanding (Kim, 2023).

Therefore, how we perceive and interpret color reflects how we perceive issues and matters. This perception is not merely a matter of individual preference but a complex tapestry woven from the threads of language, symbolism, and experiences. As we navigate an increasingly interconnected world, recognizing the cultural lens through which we perceive color becomes essential for fostering empathy, understanding, and appreciating the diverse ways we experience the world.

## CONCLUSION

I hope these activities help students from different backgrounds and nationalities feel comfortable with each other, creating a positive learning environment for teamwork and projects. Having a multicultural classroom is relatively new in Busan and the surrounding province of Gyeongsangnam-do, but it will soon become a familiar scene (Jahng & Lee, 2013).

## THE AUTHOR

**Aulia Djunaedi** currently works at Youngsan University, where her primary role is as an ESL and EGL teacher; she also manages an English club and delivers lectures. She serves on the Global Affairs team in a secondary capacity. She holds a master's degree in TESOL and a doctoral degree in English linguistics. She has also been the membership officer for the Busan-Gyeongnam Chapter of KOTESOL from the beginning of 2024. Email: oliayippie@gmail.com // oliayippie@ysu.ac.kr

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## Active Learning Tasks to Encourage Speaking and Thinking From Different Perspectives

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Kristina Kauss

*Wonsam Middle School, Yongin, Korea*

As teachers, we need to constantly adapt to help our students get out of the rut of thinking that textbooks are the only way to learn the material. We often need to change up our teaching strategies from lecturer to facilitator to help improve our students' understanding. Some ways to do this are by considering student motivation, facilitating creative thinking and active learning, incorporating different learning domains, and doing activities so teachers and students learn to see things from different perspectives. This workshop looked at active learning tasks that can be used as stand-alone activities, as well as individually or within learning groups, and can be adapted to most levels and lessons while helping everyone master the material through seeing people and situations from different angles. The activities included perspective role-playing, scaffolding, building upon previous activities, looking at situations from different perspectives, role-play with dramatic reading, rocket ball (hot potato) – vocabulary and conversation, spoken and written progressive storytelling, and integrated activities.

### INTRODUCTION

This workshop focused on innovative strategies for fostering active learning and engagement in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms for students from elementary school age through to adults. The workshop's emphasis was on transforming traditional, passive learning activities into dynamic, task-based learning (TBL) experiences. The ideas and strategies presented were designed to help educators cultivate a more interactive and communicative classroom environment, thus improving language acquisition and retention among students.

### Workshop Overview

Kristina Kauss, an experienced educator with extensive teaching experience in Canada, Korea, and the USA, led the workshop. Her session was designed to address the challenges teachers face in engaging students and improving their language skills through active learning methodologies. The workshop covered various strategies for transforming passive learning exercises into interactive, student-centered activities that promote deeper understanding and language use.

## **Key Concepts and Theoretical Foundations**

The workshop's foundation was built on several key educational theories and models, particularly Dewey's ideas on experiential learning (Dewey, 1938; Roberts, 2003) and Stephen Krashen's theories on language acquisition (as summarized by Schütz, 2019) in the different learning domains: cognitive domain, affective domain, and psychomotor domain (Anderson et al., 2001; Dave, 1975; Krathwohl et al., 1964). Krashen's (2011) compelling input hypothesis further supports this by advocating for meaningful interaction in the target language, highlighting the necessity of natural communication over rote memorization (Kauss, 2022a, 2022b).

Kristina Kauss emphasized the importance of these theories in shifting from a passive to an active learning paradigm. By engaging students in task-based activities, educators can foster a more immersive and effective language learning environment. The workshop provided numerous practical examples of how to implement these theories in the classroom.

## **Difference Between Active and Passive Learning**

Kauss began by distinguishing between active and passive learning. Passive learning typically involves listening to lectures and reading textbooks, where students are recipients of information. In contrast, active learning requires students to participate in activities that involve discussing, analyzing, and applying information. This approach not only enhances understanding but also improves retention and encourages critical thinking (Kauss, 2023a, 2023b).

## **Facilitation Over Lecture**

A significant portion of the workshop was dedicated to the role of the teacher as a facilitator rather than a lecturer. Kauss argued that teachers should step back from providing all the information directly and instead guide students through tasks that promote discovery and problem-solving. This method allows students to develop their skills through active participation and collaboration (Kauss, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b).

## **Integration of Freedom Writers' Principles**

Kauss drew parallels between her approach and the principles espoused by Erin Gruwell (1999) and the subsequent educational methods developed from that work. The focus on student-centered learning, personal relevance, and empowerment through storytelling are central themes that resonate with Gruwell's Freedom Writers approach (Kauss, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b). By encouraging students to share their own stories and perspectives, educators can create a more inclusive and motivating learning environment.

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS, KEY ACTIVITIES, AND METHODOLOGIES**

### **Task-Based Learning Projects**

Task-based learning (TBL) projects were emphasized as a means to provide real-world context and relevance to language learning. Examples included planning a vacation, cooking a menu, and creating a class game board. These projects require students to use language authentically and collaboratively, which enhances their practical language skills (Kauss, 2023a, 2023b).

#### **Implementation Steps**

- Define a project that is relevant and interesting to the students.
- Break the project into smaller, manageable tasks.
- Assign tasks to groups or individuals, ensuring that each task requires communication and collaboration.
- Provide scaffolding, such as question prompts or visual aids, to support students' language use.

### **Incorporating Active Learning and TBL in the Curriculum**

The workshop provided actionable steps for incorporating active learning and TBL into the curriculum. Educators were encouraged to adapt existing textbook exercises into more engaging formats, such as turning surveys into scavenger hunts or transforming grammar exercises into interactive games. These adaptations not only make learning more enjoyable but also ensure that students are actively using the language in meaningful contexts.

### **Perspective Role-Playing with Dramatic Reading**

Role-playing was emphasized as a powerful tool for language learning. It allows students to practice real-life situations in a controlled environment, improving their conversational skills and confidence (Lyons, 2014).

A particularly engaging example from the workshop was combining perspective role-playing with dramatic reading. This activity involves students reading a text aloud with randomly chosen exaggerated voices and gestures to convey different character perspectives. This method not only makes reading more fun but also helps students practice pronunciation, intonation, and emotional expression (Kauss, 2022a).

#### **Implementation Steps**

- Select a text with distinct characters and dialogues.
- Assign characters and voice types to students.
- Have students practice reading aloud with their assigned voices.
- Encourage interaction and discussion about the characters' perspectives.

### **Progressive Storytelling as a Speaking Activity**

By adapting progressive storytelling from a writing activity to a speaking activity, educators can encourage more spontaneous language use and creativity.

This method reduces the pressure on grammar accuracy and focuses on communication and idea generation (Barrett, n.d.; Kauss, 2022a, 2023a).

Kauss introduced progressive storytelling as a method to develop students' speaking and creative thinking skills. This technique involves students collaboratively creating a story, with each student contributing a part. This activity not only enhances language skills but also fosters teamwork and creativity (Barrett & Anderson, 2019).

### **Implementation Steps**

- Start with a storytelling prompt.
- Have students add to the story one sentence at a time, speaking aloud.
- Optionally, write key points or sentences on the board to help track the story.
- Conclude with a discussion or reflection on the story created.

### **Scavenger Hunt Surveys**

Kauss demonstrated how scavenger hunts can be adapted for language learning by incorporating language tasks into the activity (Sellari, 2016). To make traditional surveys more engaging, Kauss suggested transforming them into scavenger hunts. This involves students finding answers or objects related to the survey questions, thus promoting movement and interaction. This method not only makes learning fun but also contextualizes language use.

### **Implementation Steps**

- Create a list of survey questions related to the lesson topic.
- Turn each question into a clue or task that requires students to find something in the classroom or school.
- Have students work in pairs or groups to complete the scavenger hunt.
- Follow up with a discussion or presentation of their findings.

### **Assessment and Feedback**

Kauss also discussed the importance of formative and summative assessments in active learning environments. Formative assessments, such as peer reviews and self-assessments, provide ongoing feedback that helps students improve continuously. Summative assessments, like projects and presentations, evaluate students' overall understanding and application of the material learned (Kauss, 2022b).

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Kauss grounded her methodologies in established language acquisition theories, particularly Stephen Krashen's (2011) compelling input hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input, and the affective filter in language learning (Kim & Krashen, 1997). By creating engaging and interactive activities, the workshop's strategies aimed to lower students' affective filters, thereby enhancing their language acquisition process.

## Implementation and Impact

Implementing these active learning strategies requires careful planning and adaptation to the specific context of each classroom. Teachers must consider their students' proficiency levels, interests, and learning styles. The potential impact of these strategies includes improved language proficiency, increased student motivation, and enhanced critical thinking skills.

## Implementation and Challenges

Implementing active learning strategies requires careful planning and flexibility. Teachers need to design activities that are appropriate for their students' proficiency levels and learning styles. Additionally, they must create a classroom environment that encourages participation and collaboration. Kauss acknowledged that some challenges include managing diverse classrooms, ensuring all students are engaged, and balancing active learning with curriculum requirements (Kauss, 2022a).

While the benefits of active learning are well-documented, several challenges may arise in its implementation. These include the following:

- **Resource Availability:** Effective active learning often requires materials and resources that may not be readily available in all educational settings (Sulisworo et al., 2018).
- **Teacher Training:** Teachers may need proper training to design and facilitate active learning activities effectively (Unin & Bearing, 2016).
- **Classroom Management:** Active learning activities can be more challenging to manage than traditional lectures, requiring clear instructions and effective classroom management strategies (Russell, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The workshop by Kristina Kauss provided valuable insights and practical strategies for transforming passive learning activities into engaging, task-based learning experiences and active learning strategies in EFL classrooms. The successful implementation of these strategies has the potential to enhance students' language learning experiences and outcomes significantly. By implementing perspective role-playing, progressive storytelling, and other TBL projects, educators can foster a more interactive and communicative classroom environment. These methods not only improve language acquisition and retention but also empower students to take an active role in their learning journey. The workshop underscored the importance of making learning relevant, interactive, and student-centered.

## THE AUTHOR

**Kristina Kauss** is a Canadian teacher who has taught elementary, middle school, high school, university, adults, and teachers in Korea, Canada, and the USA since 1997. She has over 16 years of teaching experience in Korea. Email: kristinacalling@live.ca

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## **Pecha Kucha Sessions**

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## KOTESOL After Korea

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Kara Waggoner

*Baker College, Cadillac and Muskegon, Michigan, United States*

Some foreign teachers in South Korea are apprehensive regarding employment opportunities as they transition back to their home countries. KOTESOL can be an invaluable organization for its members to learn not only about instructional strategies but other highly needed and sought-after skills as well. These additional skills should later be leveraged in a globally competitive job market, as they can complement almost any role. This paper will describe three skills that I was able to learn with KOTESOL (Korea TESOL) that I now utilize at my job in the United States.

### INTRODUCTION

Like many foreign teachers, after I felt my time in Korea coming to a close, I wondered what I would do next when I moved back to the United States. Specifically, I pondered what kind of employment I could find in an unsteady job market during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. I came across a job posting for a faculty developer position at the Baker College campus in my hometown. Many of the duties outlined in the job description matched the kind of work I did at Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul. I cautiously applied and had my CV and cover letter ready just in case I needed to apply elsewhere. Much to my surprise, I was offered the job and happily accepted.

As with any new job, I felt scared and out of place during my first year at Baker, despite how kindly I was welcomed by the faculty and staff. Imposter syndrome was strong as I met a barrage of seasoned employees speaking in an onslaught of unfamiliar acronyms and in terms I had to reacquaint myself with after being away from the U.S. for 8.5 years. Thanks to the coworkers who mentored me and took me under their wings, I'm very slowly becoming one of those seasoned employees.

I was fortunate to be able to visit Korea again in 2023, two years after I left. Past KOTESOL president David Shaffer invited me to attend the Daejeon-Chungcheong Chapter's Thanksgiving Symposium, since that was to occur while I was in the country. During the symposium, I caught up with old friends and told them about what I had been doing at my new job in the U.S. As I was doing this, I came to the realization that many of the skills I had learned with KOTESOL were helping me in my position at Baker College.

## **EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS**

Through KOTESOL, I learned how to present effectively and to engage the audience in a variety of modalities. By observing other excellent presenters, I was able to improve my presentation skills. I noticed that many of the best presentations I attended at KOTESOL included images, charts, and graphs to enhance what the presenter was saying. I do this now with any slide deck or materials I make to ensure that my message is clear and concise. Many of the faculty at Baker College are experts in their fields but might be newer to education, and this tactic might help lessen the distance between their respective industries and the presentation's education-specific content.

Another KOTESOL guiding question that will always be with me when I present is "What can I teach attendees today that they can use in their learning environments tomorrow?" Remembering that many of our faculty are not trained teachers, I keep in mind that master's degree-level educational jargon will not always be the best way to convey my points. This is not due to any cognitive lack on their part, but as in any industry, education has its own specialized vocabulary. Presenting educational literature and research in plain language and finding examples of everyday application connects these ideas in ways our faculty will find beneficial.

## **NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

Despite my fear of new technology, I honed the technical skills through KOTESOL that are needed in a 21st-century higher education institution. When I was asked to be the web editor for the Seoul Chapter, every bone in my body screamed, "No!" However, I told myself that I was going to try new and scary things, so I said, "Yes." In doing so, I sharpened an invaluable set of skills that serves me every day. Very patient members taught me about the technical aspects of the role while I allowed myself to become comfortable with the uncomfortable. I adhered to the maxim that "we learn more from our mistakes than from our successes," and goodness knows, I made many mistakes.

However, as time went on, I had big and small successes that I could celebrate, too. When I was finally able to coordinate uploading information on the KOTESOL website and then create the accompanying event on the Seoul Chapter's Facebook page without asking for anyone's help, I breathed a sigh of relief. I felt like I was finally able to meaningfully contribute to the organization. My fear of technologies that were new to me also made me empathize with our faculty at Baker College, as they are sometimes scared and frustrated as they learn skills, too. Having gone through these kinds of experiences and emotions with KOTESOL reinforced my desire to patiently and kindly help others as they learn to navigate Canvas, Google, VidGrid, etc.

In addition to helping our faculty, learning technology skills also helps me contribute to my department at Baker College. I am able to quickly understand the intricacies and recognize the unique functions of many new platforms our college takes on. I create spreadsheets that help my team track the attendance at our professional development events and aggregate the demographic data to better

meet the needs of our faculty. Becoming adept with Google Workspace allows me to seamlessly integrate all of the Google apps to disperse and collect information quickly and efficiently for my colleagues. I am now able to adapt to new technology changes at my job because I practiced these skills with KOTESOL.

## **INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND COMPETENCY**

Finally, through KOTESOL, I learned how to embrace intercultural communication and competency. In Korea, intercultural communication often meant communicating with those who spoke a language other than English in a way that was comprehensible. At Baker College, I had to learn about the cultures of departments and programs that were completely foreign to me: health sciences, human services, information technology and engineering, criminal justice, and nursing. My only saving grace in any science-based class was rudimentary knowledge of Greek and Latin, which is what I focused on when I happened to walk into a vet tech class where the students were dissecting a cat to learn about the endocrine system.

In another instance, I was leading a professional development session, and I asked how a resource I was discussing could support the attendees' students in their respective courses. An IT instructor explained to the audience the steps she would use to help the students in her classes. At one point when the IT instructor was talking, I remember thinking, "She is speaking in English, but not in a way that I understand." After instances such as these, I humbled myself and became committed to learning about the majors the faculty at Baker College teach. I read news articles, listened to some podcasts, and found creators on social media platforms to learn from so I could understand what the instructors were teaching. By taking the time to learn about their world, I became committed to embracing a culture that is slowly becoming less confusing to me.

## **CONCLUSION**

Lean into other KOTESOL members and learn what you can from them as they share their skills, knowledge, and talents, while also remembering to share what you know. I found great satisfaction in service to the TESOL profession through KOTESOL, and what I have learned has served me ten-fold. The wonderful members of KOTESOL have done a phenomenal job over the years of upholding Kotter's guiding principle of "Teachers helping teachers." By cultivating an environment of lifelong learning, they helped me go further together with those I serve at Baker College. *Gamsa-hamnida*, thank you.

## **THE AUTHOR**

**Kara Waggoner** is a faculty developer with the Center for Teaching Excellence at Baker College in Michigan, USA. She serves as co-chair of Baker College's DEIJ West Michigan Chapter and on the DEIJ Events Committee. She has previously taught learners of all ages

Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives

and language proficiencies in Seoul, South Korea, and in Arizona, USA. Email:  
kwaggo04@baker.edu

## Audiovisual Media for EFL Classrooms: Reflection and Suggestions for Practice

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Andrew S. Nelson

*Yachay Tech University, Urcuquí, Ecuador*

Although incorporating the arts into various curriculums has proven benefits for students, EFL coursebooks and curriculums tend to lack arts-based materials such as literature and film. Much has been said about the value of incorporating literature into the EFL classroom. However, audiovisual media, such as popular movies, series, and anime, are more familiar than literature for many students and have many of the same benefits that literature can provide. Furthermore, discussing various features of audiovisual media could support the introduction of literary texts for students who may be less familiar with them. This reflective article reviews the benefits of using audiovisual media in the EFL classroom, presents two assignments that centrally feature audiovisual media, and provides a walk-through of the scaffolding provided for these assignments. This reflection will interest EFL educators teaching at the undergraduate level looking to motivate students and improve their development by incorporating audiovisual media activities.

### INTRODUCTION

The arts are an important part of any curriculum, and certain governments, including that of South Korea, have made moves to give the arts a larger place in their educational systems. According to Kang (2019), in 2011 the South Korean Ministry of Education set a national education policy that incorporated the arts into STEM education, creating a new acronym, STEAM (pp. 1–2). Placing more emphasis on the arts, as this policy change has done, can support student development in positive ways. Of the change, Kang explains that “its added component, i.e., arts, was inspired by the concurrent social discourse on education for creativity and a well-rounded citizen in the twenty-first century...” (p. 2). Clearly, the South Korean government and other entities recognize that arts education can empower students to greater success in contemporary society, which is often said to require greater innovation and creativity.

The positive effects of the STEAM initiative have been documented in recent studies. According to Kang (2019), “Meta-analysis showed that students’ experiences with STEAM were effective in cognitive and affective learning ... [and] the effect was higher in affective domains” (p. 1). Additionally, investigations that interviewed “college students who had STEAM experiences in grade schools showed that the effects [of STEAM] could be long-term” (p. 19). Other positive results of STEAM education have been shown by Mater et al. (2023), who found that “STEAM activities helped motivate students, enhance their interest in

learning, and push them to perform the required educational tasks and come up with creative ideas” (p. 1240). In a time when the greater part of the world’s educational systems seems to be pushing toward greater and greater emphasis on STEM, studies such as these make a good case for not leaving arts education behind.

One educational area where the arts have quite a small place is in EFL coursebooks. For example, a survey of 44 coursebooks commonly used in Kuwait showed that they included very little literature (Al-Saeed & Alenezi, 2000). Despite this lack, much has been said about the value of incorporating the arts, particularly literature, into foreign language education. Keshavarzi (2012), believing that “much of the material that is used in English [language teaching] curriculum[s] lacks passion, intellectual excitement, and fun,” proposed the use of literature, which he found to be more motivating for students than traditional course materials. In his words, “Literary texts are meaningful, authentic, and relevant to learners’ lives. They yield [the] greatest opportunity for engagement, reflection, and hence, learning exists in them” (p. 1).

However, incorporating literature into the EFL classroom can pose certain challenges. First, access to literature varies around the world: Some countries have well-developed, free public libraries and affordable outlets for purchasing books, while others do not. Second, many learners who are unfamiliar with literary texts may find them daunting even when written in their native languages, not to mention in a foreign one. This lack of experience could create resistance among students and difficulty for teachers. Added to the probable lack of literary texts in their coursebooks, EFL teachers can find their intentions to include literature in their course materials hindered by these obstacles.

In contrast, audiovisual media, such as movies, series, and anime, are popular and easily accessible in much of the world: The various streaming services that exist are affordable, and devices on which to reproduce them are widely available. Young adult EFL students also seem to be much more drawn to audiovisual media than literature. Therefore, audiovisual media presents none of the problems that teachers might encounter trying to include literature in their curriculums. Although some may lament this apparent displacement of written literature by audiovisual media, I would argue that much of the same value that authors such as Keshavarzi (2012) claim for literature can also be attributed to movies, series, and anime.

## **BENEFITS OF AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA IN THE CLASSROOM**

Various benefits of using literature in the language classroom are also true of using audiovisual material. First, literature has been argued to help students become more familiar with the culture of the target language, which is arguably an important aspect of foreign language learning (Alemi, 2011; Khatib et al., 2011). Not only do learners need to learn vocabulary, but they also need to internalize the social and cultural features of the language. This is a goal that audiovisual media can accomplish as well as, or even to a greater extent than, literature, as this type of media both reflects the culture and helps to shape it

more quickly and with greater impact than do books. Another benefit of using literature is that it involves “richer and more varied” language than what language textbooks usually provide (Alemi, 2011, p. 178). This is also true for audiovisual media; it can give students the opportunity to see how language is actually used in meaningful and authentic ways. Literature can be classified as an authentic text, involving “many significant themes and contexts which are missing in most EFL textbooks” (Duff & Maley, 1990, p. 6, as cited in Alemi, 2011, p. 178). Audiovisual media fits this description as well. Furthermore, literature is suggested for use in the English language classroom because it can interest students. Alemi (2011) stated that using literature in the language classroom can allow students to see the connection between the subject matter and contexts of literature and their own lives, which is engaging for them (p. 178). The same can be said of audiovisual media. Finally, Khatib et al. (2011) have found literature to be useful in the language classroom because it provides extensive reading practice, improves knowledge about the world, and can even be used to develop emotional intelligence. I would argue that all of these benefits, with the substitution of “extensive listening practice” for “extensive reading practice,” are also true of audiovisual media. The benefits can even be amplified in the context of audiovisual media because of its greater popularity with students and the ubiquity of this type of media in students’ daily lives. In fact, “students today are exposed to more texts in the form of images than any other generation” (Hasanah, 2014, p. 911).

## **TWO AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA-CENTERED ASSIGNMENTS**

In this section, I describe how I successfully incorporated two assignments in which audiovisual media takes center stage and the scaffolding I provided to help students successfully complete them. These assignments were completed during a 16-week semester in an English for academic purposes course with B2-level university students in northern Ecuador.

### **Extended Scaffolding: Presenting and Practicing Vocabulary**

Before requiring students to do the assignments described in the following two sections, I provided extended scaffolding experiences for students over a number of weeks that were meant to improve their ability to participate in discussions about audiovisual media.

First, I offered explicit instruction on vocabulary related to film. This vocabulary was recycled multiple times, and students practiced it over 16 weeks. Although the amount of exposure to a word/lexical item that is necessary for mastery is still contested, most agree that multiple exposures are needed for retention, hence the repetition. Students had to use the planned vocabulary at least three times a week by taking part in group conversations. Further, McCarten (2007) states that “vocabulary acquisition is also facilitated by ... making vocabulary personal” (as cited in Young-Davy, p. 29), so vocabulary was also practiced within the context of students’ own experiences and opinions. Before

discussions, students were prepared with internet links and preparatory work.

Explicit vocabulary teaching involved exposing students to lists of film-related words including various genres and other useful terms such as *dialogue*, *special effects*, and *hard to follow*. Students used the information in the following links:

- <https://promova.com/english-vocabulary/drama-movies-vocabulary>
- <https://www.espressoenglish.net/10-english-phrases-for-describing-movies/>
- <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/movie-genres-list/>

Once presented, the vocabulary was practiced in the context of a class discussion on movies using the *Internet Movie Database* website (*IMDb*; <https://www.imdb.com/>). *IMDb* is an online database containing information about movies and television series, including information such as cast, directors, genre, plot summary, trailers, and movie posters.

In an example discussion, I projected the website and asked students to volunteer to name their favorite movie, which I then looked up in the database. We first looked at the page for the movie *Spider-Man* (2002). The students noticed that the page displayed a Parents' Guide, which announced that the movie was rated PG-13 in the United States "for stylized violence and action." I took this opportunity to talk about movie ratings because my students wanted to know the differences between PG, PG-13, and R-rated movies. *IMDb* provides worldwide ratings, so we were also able to observe the differences in how countries rate movies. For example, in Iceland, the rating for this movie was age 10, while in Germany it was rated age 12. This discussion allowed us to think about cultural differences in attitudes toward the appropriateness of violence in programming for different age groups. The discussion continued in this way as we used the *IMDb* website to identify the movie's other features, such as genre and plot, and I took advantage of the teachable moments that presented themselves during this process.

Next, students were instructed to look up their favorite movie, series, or anime in *IMDb* using their smartphones. They took notes about their movie's genre, rating, plot, and other relevant features, and they also found pictures. Then they shared the information they had found about the movies with their classmates. When the students shared this information, I continued to take advantage of teachable moments. For example, when a student shared information about the movie *Shrek*, I went on YouTube and found a video clip where Shrek uses a simile to explain that "Ogres are like onions." After we watched the clip, I explicitly taught them about similes, metaphors, and the differences between them. I asked them to notice the vocabulary and grammar used in the phrase "ogres are like onions," and I asked for students to write examples from their own lives, for example, using a simile to describe a member of their family or to describe how they did on their last math test. If they wrote the simile incorrectly, I brought their focus back to the words that Shrek used in the clip, and they were able to make sure that their simile included the word *like*.

In a similar technique, students were introduced to various terms that are common in audiovisual media and literature alike. For example, we used clips from *The Simpsons* and *Saturday Night Live* to understand the concept of satire,

clips from *Better Call Saul* to study flashbacks, and clips from *Cast Away* to appreciate irony. In the days following these discussions, we practiced and reinforced the vocabulary using online quizzing programs such as Quizlet, Quizziz, and Kahoot.

The vocabulary and concepts for talking about audiovisual media gained from these activities were applied in a series of homework assignments and a presentation, which are described below.

## **Video Reflections**

In the video reflection assignment, students watched five movies outside of class during the semester and wrote a one-page reflection on each. This assignment allowed students to practice the terms and concepts related to audiovisual media that were being discussed in class. The assignment instructions can be found below:

### VIDEO REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

#### Part 1

For each movie that you watch, write a 1-page response (minimum 300 words). In your response, answer one or more of the following questions about the movie. Answer the question(s) you choose in as much depth and detail as you can. The purpose of this reflection is to show that you watched the movie, understood most of it, and that you reflected on what you saw, so please include specific details from the movie to support your answer.

- Did you learn anything from this movie? If so, what was it?
- What do you think was the message of this movie? Do you agree or disagree with it?
- What did you like best about the movie? Why?
- What did you like least about the film? Why?
- Did anything that happened in this movie remind you of something that has happened in your own life or that you have seen happen to others?
- Would you recommend this movie to a friend? Explain your reasons.
- What feelings did you share with any of the characters in the movie?
- What life lessons can be learned from the choices made by the characters in this story?

#### Part 2

Write down 5 new words that you learned from the film. Include the word, a correct definition or translation, the context where you found it, and any additional information that helps you remember what the word means.

#### Persuasive Video Presentation

After students had had sufficient exposure to the target language about media for about eight weeks, they had to produce a recorded presentation in which they

persuaded the audience to watch their favorite movie, series, or anime. The instructions for the presentation follow:

### PERSUASIVE VIDEO PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

Instructions: In a 5–7-minute video presentation, convince the viewer to watch your favorite anime/series/movie. In addition to reasons why the viewer should watch it (special effects, dialogue, banter, humor, etc.), include information about genre, characters, plot (NO SPOILERS!!), and where the viewer can watch it (Netflix, HBOgo, Disney+, etc.).

Language points:

- Use phrases from the links below.
  - <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/movie-genres-list/>
  - <https://englishpost.org/talk-about-movies/>
- Use causatives. For example: “The movie is so scary that it will make you jump out of your seat.”
- Use persuasive language.
- Use signposting and transitions.

Other requirements:

- You must appear in the presentation. We’ll talk about how to do this.
- Your presentation should be memorized. Don’t read from a script.
- Use PowerPoint or another presentation software.
- You may want to include short clips from the movie. This is fine, but you must speak for at least 80% of the time.
- You may be required to upload the video to another platform such as Flipgrid so that your classmates can view it.

This video assignment was an effective means to determine what movie vocabulary the students had learned, and it also gave them the opportunity to practice persuasive language, which was another learning objective of the course. The students were able to successfully use language related to genre as well as describe features of the media they watched.

### **Reflection on Assignments**

The lessons and assignments described in this section were enjoyable for the students, and they were fruitful for improving students’ ability to talk about media. At the end of the semester, students commented that they particularly enjoyed the persuasive movie presentation assignment and that they were proud of themselves for being able to talk about a video they liked in a sophisticated manner.

Lessons and activities with audiovisual media like those described in this article could also serve to scaffold the subsequent introduction of literature into the classroom. Hasanah (2014) affirmed that “teachers can take advantage of [the ubiquity of images] by using the media to engage students and help them better appreciate literature” (p. 912). For example, the terms used for discussing

audiovisual media that we learned and practiced in class, such as *plot*, *foil*, *metaphor*, *mood*, and *foreshadowing*, were valuable for allowing students to think and communicate about this type of media. These terms and concepts were borrowed from the field of literature studies; in the study of literature, these terms are known as *literary devices*, a wide set of tools, techniques, and choices that writers use to communicate their messages. Conducting lessons and activities that foreground these “literary” devices in the context of audiovisual media, then, can be applied to the discussion of literature. Students can use these terms and concepts to interpret and analyze audiovisual media and then later do the same with literature. In this way, students can approach potentially unfamiliar texts from a place of related experience and thereby increase their confidence and decrease their resistance to working with literature.

## CONCLUSION

The incorporation of arts into EFL teaching and other fields has many valuable effects for students, and one art form that is easy to incorporate is audiovisual media. However, students need scaffolding and repetition in order to learn the terms and concepts needed to discuss this type of media. Lessons and assignments that involve students’ preferred audiovisual materials can be very motivating for them and can support their linguistic development and cultural knowledge of the target language. Students’ greater knowledge of and familiarity with audiovisual media can then be used as a point of departure for the introduction of literature, which may be more remote for many students. Using audiovisual media in the classroom should be encouraged because it is motivating for students and effective for language learning. Finally, collaboration between literature teachers and EFL teachers to develop teaching techniques, student activities, and assessments that can be used in the classroom would have great value.

## THE AUTHOR

**Andrew Nelson** is an English teacher from Nashotah, Wisconsin, USA. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance and a Master of Arts in TESOL, both from the University of Wisconsin–River Falls. During his graduate studies, he worked as an English tutor, an English for specific purposes consultant (agriculture), and an English teacher in Taipei, Taiwan, and Bożkowie, Poland. He has extensive experience teaching adults and teaching at the university level. He has been teaching at Yachay Tech University (Ecuador) since August 2017, where he employs a teaching philosophy that includes helping students become self-directed learners. Email: nelson.composition@gmail.com

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## Applicable Instructions for Prepositional Uptake: Reviewing and Reassessing the Data

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Thomas Sean Jeffery

*Kyungpook National University, Daegu, Korea*

This article is designed to discuss in detail the techniques and methods that were used to gather the data presented in the KOTESOL 2024 presentation and research article on temporal prepositional uptake (Jeffery, 2023). Its aim is to help instructors, guiding them to improve students' temporal uptake (specifically *at*, *on*, and *in*). It will briefly review the topic and then give practical activities that instructors can use in their classroom as these were not discussed previously. It will expand upon effective methods and techniques that were used in aiding temporal uptake. Also, it will offer potential suggestions for research and alternative ways that the data could be assessed in subsequent studies.

### INTRODUCTION

The original study took place over five years at an elementary school in Korea and involved more than 100 students. It focused on the misuse and error rates of the three most frequent temporal prepositions *at*, *in*, and *on* with regards to Korean English language learners, who appeared to be creating reoccurring errors across multiple grades regardless of ability (Jeffery, 2023). It found that Korean and English are two languages where significant temporal prepositional differences exist, leading to confusion and noticeable error rates in Korean English language learners. In English three main temporal prepositions exist (*at*, *on*, and *in*), whereas in Korean there is only one, pronounced “ey” (어 in Korean script). Literature on the topic demonstrated that generally, when notable differences exist between L1 and L2 languages regarding prepositions of time, grammatical errors frequently occur (Arjan et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2020; Lorincz & Gordon, 2012; Zheng & Park, 2013). Therefore, Korean English language learners have to consider the context in which the preposition should occur from the sentence that each is situated in, a process quite unlike that of their own language.

The topic is further complicated when considering the nature of temporal prepositions. They are unavoidable single-syllable words that do not possess direct meaning outside of the context of the sentence, acting mostly as functional grammar units. The methods that the author used were found to improve subjects' temporal uptake from 13% to 43%.



The second activity that proved to significantly aid temporal uptake was verbal fill-in-the-blank activities. Students would be paired together, with one reading prepared sentences that omitted the temporal preposition from the sentence. After the sentence was read, the other subject would respond with the omitted preposition. Here it was useful to start to pair together multiple sentences or contexts where several temporal prepositions were omitted to push students' temporal understanding (see Figure 2 for an example).

**FIGURE 2. Temporal Prepositions - Student Reading Prompts**

- (1) We will go swimming **on** Wednesday.
- (1) The professor's lecture always started **at** 10 a.m.
- (1) My birthday is **on** May 3rd.
- (1) Korea developed very quickly **in** the 1980s.
- (1) He runs **in** spring.
- (1) I will go to the park **in** summer.
- (1) We had lunch **at** 1 p.m.
- (1) We eat steak **on** Mondays.
- (1) Daegu is cold **in** winter.
- (1) Dad says **in** 2023 we can travel to Italy.
- (1) I hate cold weather; **in** January, it will be -10 degrees.
- (1) I am always slow waking up **in** the morning.
- (1) I have an important work meeting **on** Wednesday the 23rd.
- (1) **At** Christmas, my family spends time together.
- (1) I learned how to swim for the first time **in** 2022.
- (2) My husband cooks us dinner **at** 8 p.m. these days because his boss makes him work later **in** winter to meet the company's deadlines.
- (2) My favorite day is Wednesday because, **on** Wednesdays, classes don't start **in** the morning.
- (3) The flight will leave Paris **on** the 23rd of May **at** 6 a.m. **in** the morning.

*Note.* An example of a written prompt that could be used for the self-guided activity mentioned. One student would take the prompt, reading it out to his/her partner but leaving out the crossed out preposition. Upon completion, the partner would verbally state the missing preposition or prepositions. The prepared sentences should increase in difficulty, as the number of prepositions removed increase as the students progress through the exercise. Ideally, each student would only do three or four sentences chosen at random by their partner before switching partners with another team in the class, creating varied exposure.

Other activities that demonstrated successful results include variations of written "unscramble activities." Students would be required to rearrange a prepared sentence that is grammatically out of order and also does not include the required temporal preposition. As the students put the sentence into the correct order, they would also fill in the missing temporal preposition. In doing so, they would demonstrate not only that they understood the temporal preposition required but also that they understood its correct grammatical location within the sentence. Again, it was found that a timer and reward system helped to create a sense of urgency in this activity.

## FINDINGS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The most significant discovery was that when assessing the data, it showed that male students benefited significantly from using spatial prepositions to help

scaffold their temporal prepositional uptake. This was in spite of the fact that both male and female students were already fully aware of spatial prepositions and their appropriate uses (Jeffery, 2023). Put simply, the males seemed to find it advantageous to review prepositional phrases such as *on the table* before learning *on Wednesday*. Spatial prepositional reinforcement in male students resulted in an 11% improvement when compared to female subjects who improved by 2.8% when the same method of instruction was used. This has significant implications for those instructing in all male environments, as the data implies the benefits of spatial scaffolding prior to temporal uptake.

The potential reasons for this difference are too varied to analyze here but do pose interesting questions for future research. This gender difference in the need for spatial scaffolding could be in part due to the developing language structure in young males needing to be processed from concrete concepts before developing to more abstract ones in a way that simply wasn't necessary for females. It could be because female students naturally possess a more nuanced understanding of abstract notions, or possibly a mixture of both.

A second consideration that was never discussed was that the data assessment of the youngest age group (age 10) appeared to show evidence that females were scoring higher on temporal prepositions in the pre-testing phase prior to the temporal instruction, perhaps indicating a deeper natural understanding of abstract temporal notions at a younger age. This finding was not published in the initial study because the number of participants was small (22), and when considered statistically, the data yielded an insignificant result and, hence, could not be considered. However, with a larger data set of specifically younger participants, this could be a worthwhile consideration.

A further issue for this research is which of the three activities mentioned in the Approaches and Methods section yielded the most significant improvement when used in aiding temporal uptake. All three were found to be effective, after Figure 1 had been discussed and analyzed. When assessed in totality the methods used yielded a significant result, however, which specific technique was most effective remains unknown.

## CONCLUSION

The methods discussed in Approaches and Methods should yield significant temporal uptake for those needing to improve students' temporal ability. The initial research discovered that males are aided by spatial scaffolding, unlike their female counterparts (Jeffery, 2023). However, the reasons for both of these outcomes are still unknown and would be an interesting area for future research.

## THE AUTHOR

**Thomas Sean Jeffery** obtained his MA from the University of Birmingham and has published his research on methodological and pedagogical differences between Korean and non-Korean instructors as well as his work on gender differences when assessing temporal prepositional uptake. He has presented his research at several KOTESOL events. Email:

tomjeffery\_@hotmail.com

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## APPENDIX

### Pre- and Post-Test Worksheets

#### Pre-Test Worksheet

Korean Name \_\_\_\_\_

English Name \_\_\_\_\_

Prepositions of time help to tell you when something happens. These include words such as “**on**,” “**at**,” and “**in**.” Can you fill in the blanks using these words?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Friday, we went to the restaurant.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3 p.m., we ate ice cream.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Christmas, we get presents.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ the morning, I did not wake up.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ summer, Daegu feels like Africa; that’s why it has the nickname “Dafrica.”
6. \_\_\_\_\_ December 25th, maybe I’ll eat chocolate.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ 2021, there was not much snow in Daegu.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ the 1950s, South Korea and North Korea had a war.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ winter, Daegu can get very cold.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Chuseok, we don’t have to go to school!

#### Post-Test Worksheet

Korean Name \_\_\_\_\_

English Name \_\_\_\_\_

Prepositions of time help to tell you when something happens. These include words such as “**on**,” “**at**,” and “**in**.” Can you fill in the blanks using these words?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Tuesday, I went to the dentist.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 1 p.m., we eat lunch.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ August, it gets too hot!
4. \_\_\_\_\_ the evening, I have dinner with my family.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ winter, Korea gets so cold!
6. \_\_\_\_\_ May 15th, we have sports day.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ 2020, there was a lot of rain in Daegu.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ the 1970s, South Korea built its first highway.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ spring, Daegu can be very pretty.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Seollal, we spend time with our families.

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## **Dialogue Session**

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# Pearson English Curriculum in Mongolia: Challenges, Triumphs, and Lessons Learned

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Daniel Lindbergh Lang

*U.S. Peace Corps, Metropolitan Education Department, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia*

Nyamsuren Sainjargal

*Metropolitan Education Department, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia*

This paper presents an overview of the implementation of Pearson's English curriculum in Mongolia, particularly the Wider World curriculum. It provides background on the history of English education in Mongolia, the partnership between the Mongolian Ministry of Education and Pearson, and details of the pilot program. The paper discusses the key components of the Wider World curriculum, including its emphasis on developing 21st-century life skills. Challenges faced during implementation include limited internet infrastructure, unequal access to technology, and the need for teacher training. The paper also highlights the successes and lessons learned, including the positive impact of the training provided by Pearson and the efforts made by schools to improve their digital resources.

## INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency has become crucial for Mongolia to compete globally, opening doors to educational and professional opportunities worldwide. Since the nation's democratic transition following socialist times, English has directly factored into the nation's strategy for development (Marav & Choi, 2023). Recognizing this, the Mongolian government has sought to enhance English language education, equipping citizens with the skills to thrive in a globally interconnected society.

One of the most significant recent steps in this direction has been the partnership forged between the Mongolian Ministry of Education and Science and Pearson, an international educational materials and assessments provider. This collaboration was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on November 1, 2023, to continue to align Mongolia's English education with international standards and best practices.

## BACKGROUND

We begin with a history of English language education in Mongolia, which has developed relatively recently. The nation formally introduced English education in

1956 when the National University of Mongolia became the first institution to offer English courses. Not until the 1990s and Mongolia's democratic revolution, however, had English taken off.

The first decade of English education in Mongolia began by introducing and codifying the first standards by which teachers and students would teach and learn. In the academic year 1992–1993, secondary school teachers underwent intensive English training programs, preparing them for the nationwide implementation of English language instruction. By the 1997–1998 academic year, all educational institutions in Mongolia had incorporated English language teaching to some extent, starting from the 5th grade. The year 1998 marked another significant milestone: the first national standards for English courses were implemented. This was followed by the first national English textbooks and curricula in 2001, further solidifying the country's commitment to English language education.

Revisions and reforms characterized the following two decades of English education in Mongolia. The education system shifted toward a more student-centered approach in 2004 (Nyamkhuu et al., 2024). The emphasis on student-centered learning has persisted for the past two decades. In 2008, the nation adopted a major overhaul of the national English program. After those six years, the period between 2014 and 2016 saw the establishment of a new core curriculum for English and Russian education, further refining the country's approach to language instruction.

In the last five years, new national programs have continued to enhance how Mongolians receive English education. In 2019, standard and advanced elective course options were launched, catering to varying proficiency levels and students' interests. Most recently, in 2022, the "English for All" initiative was unveiled. This underscores the government's decision to elevate English as Mongolia's primary foreign language, providing more access to English language education for all Mongolian citizens.

## **PEARSON PILOT PROGRAM**

In recognition of the need to further enhance the quality and effectiveness of English language instruction, the Mongolian government turned to Pearson. A study conducted by the Education Evaluation Center between 2015 and 2019 highlighted the need for improvements in teaching quality, curriculum implementation, and overall proficiency levels. With Pearson's reputation for quality education, the government identified it as an excellent partner.

In response to these findings, the Ministry of Education and Science began a pilot program in collaboration with Pearson, using the company's Wider World curriculum. The pilot targeted students in Grades 5 through 9 across 38 schools in 21 provinces, involving a total of 29,300 students, 260 teachers, and over 40 staff members.

The Wider World curriculum, published in its second edition in 2022, was selected for its comprehensive approach to language learning. In addition to developing English language skills, the curriculum emphasizes cultivating 21st-century life skills, referred to as "personal and social capabilities" (PSC). These skills are

designed to equip students with the necessary competencies for success in the global workforce, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication.

The pilot program proved to be a success, demonstrating the potential of the Wider World curriculum to elevate English language education in Mongolia to new heights. Encouraged by these positive results, the Ministry of Education and Science chose to implement the curriculum on a broader scale, starting with 5th- and 6th-grade students in the 2023–2024 academic year. The plan is to gradually extend the program to cover Grades 3 through 7 in the 2024–2025 academic year, ultimately reaching students from Grades 3 to 12 by 2026. While higher grades will use Wider World, 3rd- and 4th-grade classes will use Pearson's *Rise and Shine* English textbooks.

## **Challenges**

While implementing the Pearson curriculum in Mongolia has been a significant step forward, challenges have remained. One of the greatest obstacles has been the limited internet infrastructure in rural and urban areas. As the Wider World curriculum employs a blended learning approach that integrates online components with traditional classroom instruction, reliable internet connectivity is essential for its intended delivery.

Unfortunately, not all schools in Mongolia have been able to provide the necessary internet access yet. This has complicated how schools implement the curriculum. Additionally, the unequal distribution of computers and other digital devices among students has further compounded the issue. Put simply, many learners lack the means to engage with the online components of the curriculum.

Another challenge that emerged is the need for extensive teacher training. The Wider World curriculum represents a departure from traditional teaching methods, requiring educators to adapt to new pedagogical approaches and technologies. Many teachers have found themselves needing to figure out unfamiliar concepts and techniques, requiring comprehensive professional development programs to ensure the effective delivery of the curriculum.

## **Triumphs**

Despite these challenges, implementing the Pearson curriculum in Mongolia has also witnessed notable triumphs. Schools across the country have taken proactive steps to address the issue of limited internet access. By collaborating with internet service providers and securing funding from government and school sources, many institutions have upgraded their internet infrastructure, ensuring more reliable connectivity for their students and teachers.

Additionally, schools have actively sought funding opportunities to acquire tablets and other digital devices, enabling more students to access the online components of the curriculum. The Ministry of Education and Science has also played a crucial role in this endeavor, actively working to expand internet access throughout the country. As an added benefit, the improved infrastructure and resources also benefit education in other subjects that require digital connectivity. Perhaps one of the most significant triumphs has been the establishment of

dedicated “digital rooms,” or computer labs, within schools. These spaces, equipped with 25 to 40 tablets, have been specifically designed to facilitate online learning, providing students with a conducive environment to engage with the digital components of the curriculum.

Pearson, for its part, has been providing comprehensive training and support to teachers. Funding has been limited, however, so only some teachers have been able to undergo the direct training. Trainees have thus been expected to mentor fellow teachers. Through a combination of in-person and online sessions, the company has equipped educators with the knowledge and skills to navigate the Wider World curriculum. Furthermore, when school management has encountered challenges in understanding the implementation process, Pearson staff in Mongolia have collaborated closely with the Department of Education and Science to conduct additional training, ensuring a smooth transition for stakeholders. Officials expect to continue conducting teacher training at every level to ease the transition.

## **Lessons Learned**

Pearson’s implementation in Mongolia has been a valuable learning experience, offering insights and lessons that can inform future English language education. One of the primary lessons learned has been the critical importance of addressing the digital divide. While the Wider World curriculum’s blended learning approach offers numerous advantages, its successful implementation is contingent upon ensuring equitable access to technology and internet connectivity for all students. Not bridging this divide can result in large differences in educational opportunities and outcomes.

Another key lesson has been the need to investigate comprehensive teacher training and ongoing professional development. Introducing a new curriculum, particularly one that involves a significant shift in teaching methodologies and the integration of technology, requires substantial investment in building the capacity of educators. Without proper training and support, well-designed curricula can fall short of intended impacts.

Furthermore, the experience in Mongolia has highlighted the importance of cultural relevance and local contextualization in curriculum design. While the Wider World curriculum provides a global perspective on language learning, incorporating more localized content and drawing direct comparisons between Mongolian and English language and culture can enhance the learning experience for students and facilitate a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The implementation of Pearson’s Wider World curriculum in Mongolia represents a significant milestone in the country’s ongoing efforts to enhance English language education and align it with international standards. Despite the challenges encountered, the collaboration between the Mongolian Ministry of Education and Science and Pearson has yielded positive results, setting the stage for further progress.

Moving forward, it will be crucial to continue addressing the issues of technology access and teacher training, while also exploring ways to enhance the cultural relevance of the curriculum materials. By doing so, Mongolia can better equip its citizens with the English language skills and 21st-century competencies needed to succeed in an increasingly globalized world. Sustained investment in digital infrastructure, ongoing professional development for educators, and the incorporation of localized content will be key to maximizing the impact of this initiative.

Ultimately, the partnership between Mongolia and Pearson demonstrates the potential for international collaboration in advancing educational outcomes. As the world becomes more interconnected, such collaborations will play a vital role in ensuring that citizens gain the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in an ever-evolving global landscape.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work thanks Naidalmaa Miyajav for providing additional documents and resources about Pearson's implementation across Mongolian schools.

## THE AUTHORS

**Daniel Lindbergh Lang** is a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer, serving in English education and community development at the Metropolitan Education Department of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Lang previously taught English and Mandarin Chinese in the Humanities Department at the National University of Mongolia, Erdenet School. Both a U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship awardee and an American Center for Mongolian Studies Intensive Summer Language Program fellow, he speaks Mandarin Chinese and Mongolian. Lang graduated with honors from the University of Nevada, Reno. Email: dlindberghlang@gmail.com

**Nyamsuren Sainjargal** is the foreign language methodologist at the Metropolitan Education Department of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. She is responsible for secondary school foreign language teachers across the capital, especially English and Russian educators. Nyamsuren is a U.S. Embassy in Mongolia English teaching mentor and has been closely involved in implementing the nationwide Pearson English curriculum. She graduated from the Mongolian National University of Education and has taught English and methodology in public secondary schools for over a decade. Email: nyamsurensainjargal@gmail.com

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## **Conference Overview**

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**Presentations of  
The 31st Annual Korea TESOL  
International Conference – 2024**

*Players on the World Stage:  
From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives*  
April 27–28, 2024; Seoul, Korea & Online

The 2024 Korea TESOL International Conference Committee gratefully recognizes the following individuals for providing thought-provoking talks, presenting research, conducting workshop sessions, and leading discussions of various types at the 31st Korea TESOL International Conference.

**PLENARY/FEATURED/INVITED SESSIONS**

Boyoung Lee	Meeting Halfway with Learners
Aya Matsuda	From EFL Students to EIL Users: Preparing Students for Today's Globalized World
Aya Matsuda	TEIL as a Tool for Decolonizing and Anti-Racist Pedagogy
Guy Cook	Setting the Stage: The EFL Classroom in the First Quarter of the 21st Century
David Paul	Using Classroom Games Effectively with Young Learners
David Paul	Fun and Effective Classroom Game Activities
Robert J. Lowe	Native-Speakerism and (Dis)empowerment: An Autoethnography of Success and Failure in Language Teaching and Learning
Robert J. Lowe	Duoethnography in ELT: Research, Reflection, and Practice
Eun Sung Park	Resilient Roots, Global Growth: Transnational Identities as Assets in the English Classroom
CedarBough T. Saeji	Dressing Up in the Korean Past: Hanbok Wearing as Play Informed by Popular Culture
CedarBough T. Saeji	K-Pop as a Teaching Tool
David Kellogg	Rote, Role, Rule: Halliday, Vygotsky, and Shakespeare on Play Development
David Kellogg	METAPHOR IS WAR: Forming and Forgetting Science Concepts Through Language Play
Michael Hurt	How Korea Got Cool: Ethnography and the Korean Style
Eunjee Ko	Exploring the 2022 Revised National English Curriculum: Deciphering What to Teach and How to Teach It



Nafiye Cigdem Aktekin	A Comprehensive Examination of a Lecturer Language Support Program and Its Evaluation Using the RE-AIM Framework
Vo Duy (Alan) Tan	A Study on the Vocabulary Needs of Vietnamese Learners in EMI Programs
Ninj Erdene Khurel	A Teacher Evaluation Model: A Study of Effective Teaching Practices
Cristina Tat, S. K. P. Gay	Act Locally, Think Globally: SDGs as Core Content for a 24-Course EAP Program
Sanae Oda-Sheehan	All You Need Is Yourself: Self-Talk to Improve Speaking and Communicative Skills
Maria Teresa Martinez-Garcia	Assessing the Use of Real Texts in the Foreign Language Classroom: Viewpoints of Educators
Junko Chujo	Bridging EFL Classroom Learning and Real-World Communication
Kevin Kester	Building Peace Through Higher Education in Divided and Conflict-Affected Contexts
Rowena Marie Chua	Can I English? Japanese Students' Beliefs About Language Learning
Rani Nur Aini	Creative Problem-Solving in the Indonesian University: EFL Students' Perceptions of Teacher-Students Interaction
Kornkanok Hapl	Current Trends in Gamification for ELT in Thailand: Perspectives of Pre-Service Teachers
Nicholas Y. Duvernay, M. Watson, Garrett DeHond	Deciphering Authenticity: The Detection of Texts Generated by AI Obfuscation Services
Max Watson	Determining Authenticity in the Era of ChatGPT
Undarmaa Maamuujav, E. Erdenebaatar	Developing Postsecondary EFL Students' Academic Language/Literacy Through an Integrated Approach
Eric A. Ambele	Embracing Translanguaging: Perspectives from Thai University Educators
Hassan Nejadghanbar	English Language Teachers' Social Media Branding: Identity Construction and Audience Perceptions
Yi-Hsuan Chao	Enhancing EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension in English Podcasts with Live Caption
Yukie Saito	Enhancing English Language Learning Through Conversations with AI Avatars in Virtual Reality
Kiwan Sung	Enhancing Secondary EFL Learners' Consciousness on WE and ELF
Ashton Dawes, M. Melnikova	Evaluating the Efficacy of Student-Sought AI Feedback on Written Work
Jeffrey Maloney	Examining Different Englishes' Accentedness, Intelligibility, and Familiarity at an International University
Francisco Jose Melara Gutierrez	Exploring Teachers' Needs in the Pursuit of Excellence in English Language Education

Yu-Wen Chiu	Harmonizing Vocabulary Acquisition: Exploring Lexical Coverage in Pop Song Lyrics for Adolescent Language Learners
Nathanael Rudolph	Here We Are, Hear Us: Student Narratives of Being and Belonging in Japan
Fitri Pangestu Noer Angrainy	Implementation of Differentiated Instruction in Improving EFL Students' Reading Comprehension
Abdelouahed Laachir	Implementing Project-Based Learning in a Pre-Service English Class
Della Putri Kandilla	Informal Digital Learning of English on Indonesian High School Students: A Case Study
James Emmet Owens	Instructing Students on Responsible Use of AI
Acep Gafar Auliya	Language Teacher's Identity Negotiation in Border-Crossing Context: An Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry
Minkyung Kwon, A. Jo	Learned Helplessness and Burnout in Korean EFL Teachers and Their Coping Mechanisms
Ting Yun Chen	Learning Compound Noun Stress with Audio Support: A Comparison Study
Naheen Madarbakus-Ring, Liam Ring	Let's Get to Business: Learners' Reflections on Second Language Extensive Listening
Akie Fukushima	Leveraging Humor for Interactional Management: CA Analysis of Novice Learners' Peer-Interaction
Bethany Lacy	Localizing Global Issues in a University EFL Setting Through Picturebooks
Shaun Manning	Manipulating Task Types to Develop Different Aspects of English Speaking
Andriani Miftakul	Middle School Students' Perceptions: Gamification Using Digital Flashcards on English Vocabulary Learning
Eun-Young Julia Kim	Nativeness in EFL Teacher Recruitment: Changing "Terms" and Conditions
Hà Nguyễn	Navigating the Educational "Stage:" EFL Students' Preferred Formative Assessments
Adam Murray	Peer Evaluation for Intermediate Level Students
Sin-Yi Chang, Kevin Kester	Re-Bordering EMI: Reflections on Theory and Practice in EMI in Higher Education
Vicky Chang	Shaping EAP Writing Success: Feedback Practices for Optimal Outcomes
Nina Marie Bonifacio	Sociocultural Influences in Implementing Communicative Language Teaching in Japanese Junior High Schools
Edward Cooper Howland, Ashton E. Dawes, Andrej Krasnansky	Staying Tuned In: Tracking Student Interests in Podcasts for Extensive Listening
David Anstey	STEM and EAP Education at an EMI University in China

Jookyoung Jung	Task Effects on Incidental Collocation Learning from Reading
Shaun Manning	Teaching Students to Act Like a Teacher and Improve Their Feedback Literacy
Ubonrat Treephongphan	The Development Writing Ability Using Mind Mapping
Zachary Joel Waber	The Linguistic Stage: Motivation in Global Language Learning
Takako Inada	The Potential of a Student-Centered, AI-Based Language Learning System
Chayata Viriya	The Roles of Standard, Bimodal, and Reversed Subtitles on Vocabulary Learning
Ian Moodie	The Troubling Gap in Occupational Well-Being Between Female and Male Expat English Teachers
Florida Sajor	The Use of Rhetorical Appeals, Hedges, and Boosters: Contrasting Small Cultures
James Owens	Understanding the Difficulties and Obstacles Encountered by Students with Foreign Backgrounds in Japan.
Nur Amalina Miskon	Using Creative Methods and Dialogic Reflection to Explore Criticality in Teachers' Reflections
Tony Cripps	What Support Structure Do Pre-Service English Teachers Need?
Sally Arkley	What We Learn from 300 KEFL First-Year University Students Essay Corpus Data
Haruka Kikuchi	How Affective Engagement Starts: Development of Affiliative Responses of a Resisting Child
Napak Chotswasd	Students' Perceptions and Utilization of Online and AI Tools in Abstract Writing
Katherine Song	Supporting Learners Beyond the Classrooms with Scrabble
Sheba De Guzman	Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and English Students' Self Efficacy, Anxiety, and Academic Achievement
Shinyoung Kim	Pedagogical Dynamics in a Tokyo EFL Speaking Course: Insights from Student Feedback
Shinyoung Kim	Digital Tools in College in Japan: Enhancing Education with Student-Centric Approaches
Chen-huey Idan You	A Corpus-Based Study on Word Use of University Website News
Kara Mac Donald	North Korean Refugee EFL Identity Negotiation: Insights for Sectors Beyond Korean ELT
Clara Lee Brown, J. Mooneyham, N. Monroe	Examining Teachers' Lesson Planning to Enhance English Learners' Opportunity to Learn

### **RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS (ONLINE)**

Linh Huong Tran	Disruptive Behaviour in the EFL Classroom: What Do Students Really Mean?
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Malcolm Barton Kirkwood	Using AI-Generated Comics to Teach Vocabulary!
Joff Bradley	Neuroscience, Memory, and Language Learning: The Disaster Awaiting Us
Yi-chen Chen	AI-Enhanced Digital Storytelling: Fostering Creativity in EFL Learners
Eunjeong Park	The Usefulness of Teacher-Made Authentic Materials for EFL Learners: An Accidental Ethnography
Linh Huong Tran	Disruptive Behaviour in the EFL Classroom: What Do Students Really Mean?
Sayma Ahmed	Transition from Traditional Pedagogy to Self-Regulated Learning for Lifelong Success in ESL Education in Bangladesh
Yutaka Fujieda	Navigating Emotions: English Writing Challenges of Japanese EFL Learners
Anna Pietruszewska	L2 Teacher Judgements of Learner Vocabulary Knowledge. Implications for Cloze Test Design
Hector Ramiro Ordonez Zuniga	Enhancing Speaking Skills Through Poetry: A Phonological and Vocabulary Acquisition Approach
Anh Ton-Nu	Teacher's Awareness of Intercultural Pragmatics in EAL Teaching in Australia
Jing Deng	College Adjustment: A Study of Mainland Chinese Sub-Degree Students in Hong Kong
Noriko Kurishita	Changing Learner Beliefs in an Extensive Reading Community
Lorelynn Castillo	Development of Teacher-Made Material for Intercultural Communication Competence in a Hybrid Learning Context
Hsiao-Wen Hsu	Investigating the Acceptance of ASR-Based Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Training Among Freshman EFL learners
Hà Nguyễn	Navigating the Educational "Stage:" EFL Students' Preferred Formative Assessments
Shan Shan Dai	Chinese University Students' Attitudes Towards China English in an English-Medium Instruction Context
Anastasia Khawaja	Beyond the Classroom: JEDI in Virtual Spaces
Barry Kavanagh	Navigating Language Dynamics: Note-Taking Practices and Test Scores in Academic Lectures
Joseph P. Vitta	Saudi University EAP Writing Program Management: A Case Study
Noriko Nakanishi	Diversifying English Listening Skills: A Study on World Englishes Shadowing
Nattapat-orn Chuleethongrerak	How to Apply Automated Feedback to EFL Writing Classes?
Putri Harum	Teacher Perceptions of the Effect of Extracurricular English Learning in a Modern Islamic Boarding School

Andri Maulana Developing Intercultural Competence Through Food Culture: Indonesian English Teachers' Perspective

### **WORKSHOP SESSIONS (80 MIN.)**

Uyanga Batjargal	Intercultural Communication in ESOL
Kelly Marie Donovan, E. Efremova	Is That Write? Translating Cultural Perspectives and Assumptions
Bruno Guedes Pereira	Using Padlet to Foster Collaborative and Autonomous Learning
I. Y. Tran, M. D. Resuello	Integrating Global Issues in English Classrooms Through Gallery Walk and Visual Thinking Strategies
Kelly Marie Donovan	Learning Through Play: Maximizing Communication by Creating Classroom LARPs with ChatGPT
Kristina Kauss	Active Learning Tasks to Encourage Speaking and Thinking from Different Perspectives
Michael Cheng	Creative Constraints and Grammar Instruction
Yu Jung Han	Boosting Language Production: The Intersection of GenAI and Student-Generated Multimodal Content
Daniel George Moonasar	Transforming the ELL Classroom Through Digital Media Literacy: Equipping Future World Players

### **WORKSHOP SESSIONS (50 MIN.)**

Maria Lisak	"I Don't Want to Play!" Investigating Resistance in the Classroom
Victor Reeser	A Practical Guide to AI for Academic Writing
Becky Sanchez	Beyond the Classroom: Real-World IT Literacy Through Project-Based Learning
Bach Le	Chunking Method for Speaking: Improve Utterance Length and Grammatical Complexity
Roger Fusselman	Course Design for University Electives
Dawn Kobayashi	Fostering Communicative Confidence: Applying Improv Techniques for Confident EFL Communication and Beyond
Katherine Song	Helping University Students Develop Appropriately Professional English
Sarah Warfield	Integrating Artificial Intelligence in EFL Classrooms: Navigating the Future of Language Learning
Tamara Jones	Multiply Learning with Multiword Units
Duc Tien Bui	Rapport and Routines: Key to Long-Term Success in an English Speaking Community
Stewart Gray	Teaching as Storytelling: How to Give Lessons an Engaging Narrative Quality
Alexis Busso	Teaching the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Cultivating Empathy and Cross-Cultural Understanding

Thi Thu Trang Truong	To Hook or Not to Hook: Cracking the Code of Students Engagement
Naheen Madarbakus-Ring	Using Journalling in Second Language Learning Listening Lessons
Claudia Tumba	Rap as a Catalyst: Motivating Students, Enhancing Pronunciation, and Fostering Relatable Learning Experiences
Nasiba Jakbarova	Implementing Intercultural Competence in Language Classrooms
Jonathan Buck	Acting Schools and Student Monologues
Tatiana Ferreira Severo	The Red Carpet to Having Oscar Winning Learners
Cheryl Woelk, Jocelyn Wright	Unmasking Shame with Peace Linguistics: Exploring Shame and Shaming in Language Education
Duc Tien Bui	What Not to Say in an English Lesson: Best Practices of Instructional Language
Joff Bradley	On the Gamification of Language Learning in Seoul and Tokyo
Garrett DeHond	Cooperative vs. Collaborative Writing (or Why Not Both)?

## **101 WORKSHOP SESSIONS**

Aulia Djunaedi	Icebreaker Activities for a Discussion Course in the ESL Multicultural Classroom
Ran Kuperman	Creatively Redesigning Course Units: Procedural Writing
Darren Andrew Kinsman	Drama on the World Stage
James Kimball, Maria Teresa Martinez-Garcia, M. J. Amaral, R. V. Labanda, Tom Wyatt	Project-Based Learning 101
Maria Levy	Useful Technology to Create Independent Vocabulary Learners

## **PANEL DISCUSSION SESSIONS**

Kevin Kester, Kara Mac Donald, Eric Reynolds, Rhea Metituk, Rob Dickey, Joseph P. Vitta	Demystifying the Publishing Process: Tips from Editors
Rhett Burton, Maria Teresa Martinez-Garcia, Reece Randall, Sarah Slagle, Victor Reeser	Bridging the Gap: Blending Online and Offline Teaching in Language Education
James Kimball, Maria Teresa Martinez-Garcia, M. J. Amaral, Tom Wyatt	Reflections on Teachers' Language Learning and Classroom Practice

**DIALOGUES & ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS**

Nyamsuren Sainjargal, D. L. Lang	Pearson's "Wider World" in Mongolian ESL: Insights, Challenges, and Lessons
Travis Compton	Extensive RPGing? Evaluating RPG Video Games for Use in Extensive Reading
Rithy Prum	The New Technologies in Learning and Teaching in Post-COVID-19 Time
Grace Lee	Resisting White Language Supremacy as a Korean Scholar with Marginalized Identities
James Grant Rush, II	The Hermit Life of Hikikomori in South Korea and Japan

**PECHA KUCHA PRESENTATIONS**

Vo Kim	Strategic Pauses: Enhancing English Reading Proficiency for Language Learners Through Targeted Pausing Techniques
Amy Braun	How Group and Pair Activities Elevate L2 Learning in the Elementary Classroom
Thi Lanh Tran	From an English Anxiety Sufferer to a Passionate Learner: Teacher Interventions' Importance
Tom Sean Jeffery	Improving Temporal Prepositions in Korean Students and Exploring Gender Differences in Studying Space and Time
Andrew Shepherd Nelson	Students' Audiovisual Media Knowledge as a Bridge to Discussing Literature
Kara Waggoner	KOTESOL After Korea: Utilizing Our Learned Skills in a Global Market
Eric Flynn	Implementing Scenario-Based Activities and Role-Playing Games in Large Classrooms

**POSTER PRESENTATIONS**

Pui Ieng He	Using ChatGPT to Enhance Students' Creative Writing Skills
Sugene Kim	Japanese College Students' Attitudes Toward Teachers' Translanguaging in EFL classrooms
Yifang Wu	The Effect of Game-Based Learning on Students' Creative Writing
Burmaa Bulia	Code-Switching in Language Education
Clare Kao	Romanticism Program Music's Impact on Creative Storytelling in Taiwan CLIL Classrooms
Yu Ting Wang	A Creative Exploration of Storytelling Through Comics
Thi Hong Tram Nguyen	Enhancing TOEIC Performance: Creativity and Thinking Maps in EFL Reading Comprehension
Akiyo Joto	Examining Segmental Phonemes in English Teaching Materials for Japanese Elementary School Children

Wan-Chien Wang	Children's Emotional Development Through Parent-Child Bilingual Picturebook Reading
Hong Linh Trinh	Assessing Students' Collaborative Problem-Solving Competencies in EFL Classrooms in Vietnam
Li-Mei Chen	Critical Learner Autonomy in the Digital Language Learning Contexts
Ha Tran	Optimising Vocabulary Retention Through the Use of Technology-Based Tools
Yoko Kita	Strategies for University Students Utilizing English Picture Books in English Lessons at Japanese Primary Schools
Ariunbuyan Enkhtsetseg	Interactive Learning: The Benefits of Engaging Students in Their Education

### **PROMOTIONAL SESSIONS**

Maria Levy	TESOL Professional Development Opportunities and Free Resources at Hawaii Pacific University
Paula Gibson, J. Ma	EFL for Global Citizenship: Empowering Through Sustainability Projects
Clara Lee Brown	It Is as Simple as That: Use L1 to Teach L2





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