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# Osaka JALT Journal

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**W**elcome to the inaugural issue of *Osaka JALT Journal*, published by the Osaka Chapter of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). This annual journal is devoted to outstanding research across the spectrum of language teaching and learning, including empirical studies, theoretical papers, classroom action research, book reviews and practical teaching suggestions.

### Submissions

*Osaka JALT Journal* welcomes papers related to language teaching and/or learning. Papers dealing with classroom practice, theory, and research here in Japan will be given special preference. We also encourage reports based on language learning presentations and workshops given in the previous year. All submissions are open peer reviewed. Please see our website <http://www.journal.osakajalt.org> for more information and guidelines on how to submit an article.

Volume 1 is divided into longer papers and presentation reports covering various JALT sponsored events in and around Osaka in 2013. In our first issue we have nine papers and 10 reports.

### Papers

Our journal begins with various papers on language teaching techniques. **Julie Kimura** takes a look at learner attitudes and motivation towards extensive reading in *Engineering students' attitudes to extensive reading materials*. **Ryan Smithers** explores the effect of project-based learning in *Using projects to increase autonomy, motivation and language learning*. Finally, **Hazel Hashinishi** surveys popular teaching materials in *An evaluation of the junior high school English textbooks in Japan: the issue of fostering students' practical communicative abilities*.

For technology and teaching ideas, **Michael Herke** helps teachers use movie trailers in the classroom in *Movie trailers as classroom text*. **John Rylander, Brett Collins, Rick Derrah, Peter Ferguson,** and **Josh D'Andrea** explore the explicit teaching of speech acts with video-based in *Teacher impressions of a video-based pragmatics course*. Finally, **David Bramley** time travels in *Tap into the future: a study of iPads and interactive eBooks in an e-learning project*.

## Editors' note

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Two papers discuss task-based learning. **Damien Healy** integrates TBL into large, traditional classrooms in *Can tasks help low-level students?* **Sean Gay** compares acquisition rates of task-based learning and direct instruction in *Comparative efficacy research in EFL*.

For professional development, **David Stepanczuk** offers career advice for current and aspiring EFL professionals in *Maybe it's time TEFL professionals started personal branding: A quick guide*.

### Reports

This issue covers a wide variety presentation reports. In *Engaging all: instructional strategies that foster student success*, **Laura Markslag**, **Scott Badiuk**, and **Robert Sheridan** share strategies for creating and maintaining cohesive classes that engage learners' minds, bodies, and souls. **Kim Bradford-Watts** discusses making classrooms run more efficiently and smoothly in *Organising student work*. **Steve McCarty** describes how to maximize an institution's online presence in his report *Optimize your university for global rankings* and presents a linguistic taxonomy in *Bilingualism for language teachers*. Memory-challenged readers will benefit from **Barrie Matte** and **Ben Humphrey's** report on their presentation *Note-taking in language-learning classrooms*. **Greg Rouault** stimulates with *Business simulation game for learner collaboration*. **Robert Sheridan** and **Laura Markslag** describe how to implement learner-made vocabulary cards as cooperative learning tools in *Fun and effective vocabulary card activities*. **Gretchen Clark** reviews her presentation *Braining up vocabulary study with word cards* and **Matt Lucas** integrates technologies in *Teaching TOEFL iBT through Moodle*. Finally, if you are considering submitting a journal article, do not miss **Loran Edwards**, **Paul Beaufit**, and **Theron Muller** writing guidance in *Navigating the world of academic publishing with the JALT Peer Support Group*.

We hope you enjoy this first volume of the Osaka JALT Journal.

Best wishes from the editors,

Robert Sheridan  
Laura Markslag  
Michael Herke  
Joe Alloway

# Engineering students' attitudes to extensive reading materials

**Julia Kimura**

Temple University

## **Abstract**

Biotechnology students at a private university in Wakayama have the opportunity to read graded materials at their leisure during weekday lunch hours. Undergraduate and graduate students choose from among topics in the natural sciences including life science, earth science, and physics. According to the publisher, these materials were created for [presumably native speaking] upper primary/lower secondary students. Students spend approximately 15 to 20 minutes reading a four-page card and answer comprehension questions and check answers for themselves. Strictly speaking, this activity cannot be considered extensive reading for two reasons. First, some students rely on a dictionary in order to assist with understanding of the text. The second problem is that students can only choose from scientific topics and a limited selection of graded readers. However, some students come regularly, even during school holidays, so they must feel that there is some benefit in participating. This study explores learners' behaviors and attitudes towards these materials presumably written for native speakers. In order to find out why students select the materials that they do and to examine the suitability of the materials, the vocabulary load was analyzed and compared to participants' estimated vocabulary sizes. Next, observations and interviews with participants were conducted.

*Keywords:* extensive reading, learner beliefs, vocabulary, undergraduate students

**I**n order to provide a well-balanced language curriculum, four strands of learning need to be addressed (Nation, 2001, 2013; Nation and Webb, 2011). In addition to form-focused instruction, meaning-focused output, and fluency development, learning from comprehensible meaning-focused input is also necessary to meet learners' needs. One valuable source of comprehensible input is extensive reading. Extensive

reading has not only been shown to provide comprehensible meaning-focused input, but has been shown to positively influence language proficiency and students' attitudes towards language learning (Poulshock, 2010).

### **Research Questions**

While Science Research Associates (SRA) materials are by far more popular among our students than graded readers, I suspect that the vocabulary load is too dense for our undergraduates and, as a result, their reading fluency is not developing as quickly as it could. The present study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. Why do students choose the materials and topics that they do?
2. What benefits do students feel that they derive from participating in voluntary lunchtime reading sessions?

### **The Setting**

Engineering students at a private university in west Japan can choose from a selection of Science Laboratory readings or from a small selection of graded readers when they come in for daily lunchtime reading sessions. Students are motivated enough to take 15 to 20 minutes out of their lunch hour to practice reading, but I worry about the high number of low frequency words in the texts. The institution expects graduates to earn 500 on the TOEIC, which is not very high. Therefore, spending time with graded readers may benefit most undergraduates on the campus more than reading the SRA Science Lab materials, considering most learners' more pressing language learning needs. There are a few students however, who decide to go on to graduate school, and for reasons explained later in this paper, they may benefit more from reading SRA

materials than they would from spending time with graded readers. Another big motivator that leads many students to practice reading is that they want to read articles from scientific journals more easily. Students in their third year often have to read English language journal articles for homework not from their English teachers, but from their laboratory supervisors. Ideally, for the purposes of extensive reading for language growth, known words should cover from 96 to 98% of the running words of a text (Waring and Takaki, 2003; Nation, 2001). We know that a lack of vocabulary knowledge provides the biggest hindrance to reading comprehension, so it would be interesting to find out why these learners seem to prefer SRA materials despite the fact that, according to my estimates, the students do not have an adequate grasp of the 2000 most common word families of the English language, which can provide 78.1% of vocabulary coverage of academic texts (Nation, 2001). It is important here however, to explain here the meaning of a word family. Briefly, when counting words, one must consider carefully what unit will be used and for what purpose. A convenient way to count how many words per minute a person can read, the unit will be the token. That is, we count each occurrence of each word, even if it occurs more than once. In order to count the size of a person's productive vocabulary, we will want to count types. Words that are used more than once in a given text are only counted once. Third, we can also count lemmas. Lemmas are headwords and some of their inflected and reduced forms, which will usually belong to the same word class (i.e. part of speech). The value of using the lemma for the unit of counting words is that it takes the learning burden into account. Learning the word *hats* is negligibly more difficult than learning the word *hat*. Likewise, learners who know the word *colour* will very probably also know the word *color*. Finally, one more unit of counting is the word family. One benefit of counting

word families over lemmas is that in addition to inflected forms and alternate spellings, word families also include closely derived forms created by affixes. As learners become more proficient, they gain knowledge of prefixes and suffixes (Nation, 2001). So for the purpose of this study, I will use the fourth unit of counting, the word family, for estimating participants' vocabulary sizes.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Participants are four undergraduate students majoring in engineering: one male first year student majors in genetic engineering, one male third year student majors in genetic engineering, one female third year student majors in biotechnology, and one male fourth year student majors in biotechnology. All four participants gave written consent to participate in the present study before data collection began. The first participant came 24 times during the semester, the second came 14 times, the third came five times, and the fourth came 24 times. According to the records kept by the students, the first student averaged 93.86% correct on the comprehension questions, the second averaged 77.44%, the third averaged 70.53%, and the fourth averaged 66.45% correct. These comprehension scores are approximately in line with their estimated vocabulary sizes.

### ***The Materials***

According to the publisher's website, the Science Laboratory series is written at two reading levels: "A" cards are written below the reading level of a ten year-old and "B" cards are written at the reading level of a ten year-old. All the topics are duplicated so

that students can read two different passages on the same topic, but written for learners with differing reading abilities. In terms of content, however, the cards are geared towards upper primary and lower secondary learners. Each card has comprehension questions for the students to work on and they can check their answers on their own, so selecting the materials and checking the answers for themselves encourages autonomous learning. Either one of two members of the teaching support staff, one of whom is the present researcher, is on duty to help with materials selection and to answer questions. These materials suit our learners because of the topics and their length. Each card is only four pages long and students can read them relatively quickly so this activity requires a smaller time commitment than reading graded readers would. The scientific topics are more appealing to our learners than those of graded readers, which usually cover fictional topics. Also, while the campus library has hundreds of graded readers to choose from, they are not often checked out and there are not nearly enough titles suitable for very low proficiency learners.

We decided to buy the SRA materials because we were looking for easy enough content-based readings for our students to enjoy for pleasure reading that cover topics that our students find engaging. Life Science is the most popular topic, but Physical Science is a close second. A few students read about Earth Science just for a change.

To paint a complete enough picture of students' selections of materials to read outside class and their behavior during lunchtime reading sessions, the study primarily relies on qualitative methods of data collection. First, participants were observed for one lunchtime reading session each. Next, based on the observations, participants were interviewed in person, about what they think about the selection of materials and how they go about making their choices of materials to read. Questions were asked in

English, and participants answered in Japanese or a mixture of Japanese and English. Observations were not relied on primarily for data per se, but rather the data acquired from these observations corroborated data acquired from interviews with the four participants. Observations also helped with the formulation of interview questions. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Participants read over a transcript of the interviews and corrected, added, and elaborated on the information that they had provided. This is what is known as member checking. Students keep logs of which titles they read and when, so these entries also provided useful data. Finally, their responses can later be examined in order to formulate questionnaire items so that a larger sample of the students who participate in lunchtime reading can be surveyed in the future.

### *Estimating Participants' Vocabulary Size*

A bilingual version of the Vocabulary Size Test (Nation and Beglar, 2007), translated by Sasao and Nakata (n.d.) was administered in order to estimate the participants' vocabulary knowledge. Among the four participants, the vocabulary of the third participant, the female, was estimated to be the smallest, at 8000 words, and the vocabulary of the first participant, the first year student, was estimated to be 8900. According to my analysis, the SRA materials that we provide are written at about the 5000 word level, and I expect that students have adequate background knowledge and the vocabulary coverage was found, in fact, to be adequate, so the level of the materials may be suitable for the participants after all.

### *Observation*

Prior to conducting observations and interviews, and administering the Vocabulary Size Test, written informed consent (in Japanese) had been obtained. All four participants are over 20 years old.

Over one lunch period for each participant, I observed the students when they came to lunchtime reading. From these observations I checked to see if they referred to their dictionaries and how often. I also saw what kind of dictionaries they use. I was also able to see if and what new words participants wrote down and if they used a dedicated notebook, word cards, or just a piece of paper. Most students wrote down their answers to the comprehension questions in the texts on specially made record-keeping sheets, but after having completed the reading, the male participants all wrote down new words in a dedicated notebook and the female participant listed new words on loose leaf paper. This was worrying because using word cards has been shown to be superior to listing new words on a sheet of paper or in a notebook. This is in order to prevent serial learning (Nation, 2001). In the future, I will want to show students how studying word cards can be more beneficial than the way in which they are learning new words now. To provide an affective point of view, I was also able to see if they show signs of being engaged, or if they seem bored or confused.

One additional purpose of conducting observations is to help me formulate my interview questions. Furthermore, conducting observations in addition to interviews added support to my findings. While self-report may be problematic because what participants believe or say that they do may be different from what they actually do, observations help to confirm or refute their claims. When examining motivation, for selecting reading materials, for example, it may be interesting not what happens at the

cognitive level, but at the meta-cognitive level. I also have access to their reading logs where students record what they read and when, so I checked what topics they selected and how often they participated.

### *Interviews*

From the observations and reading logs, I formulated interview questions so that I could ask participants specific questions about why they choose the topics that they do, how they feel about participating in the reading sessions, and to ask about any behaviors that may have struck me as interesting. As for the interviewing stage, I sent interview questions beforehand, and after considering the participants' level of proficiency, I decided to only provide questions in English. During the interviews, I occasionally used Japanese when participants either did not understand the questions or know how to answer. I conducted the interviews one-on-one. I used English for the most part, which may have motivated participants to cooperate because they will have a chance to practice their English in a meaningful way, but when it proved to be too difficult, I invited, or permitted, participants to use Japanese when they get stuck.

### *Member Checking*

After promptly transcribing the interviews, participants read over the transcriptions. Of course, I wanted them to check the transcripts soon after the interviews to prevent any forgetting. I asked participants to check over my transcripts for three reasons. First, I hoped that they could correct any errors, especially transcribed portions of the interview that were in Japanese. Next, they were able to clarify any points that they had made. And finally, member checking allowed participants to elaborate on their ideas.

### **Data analysis**

To answer the first research question of why do students choose the materials and topics that they do, interview data indicated that participants chose the SRA materials (over the graded readers) because:

1. The subject matter of the SRA series is interesting and educational.
2. Students were relatively unfamiliar with graded readers.

As a matter of fact, the fourth participant admitted that he had never even seen a graded reader.

Though some participants claimed to be unfamiliar with graded readers, in addition to the engaging content, expository text, such as that of the SRA materials, may help prepare learners to read journal articles and other academic text should they decide to go on to graduate school (Gardner, 2004). In order to answer the question of what benefits students feel that they derive from participating in voluntary lunchtime reading sessions, students replied that:

1. They can learn about English as well as new or unfamiliar topics in the natural sciences.
2. Though many graded readers have comprehension questions at the end of the story, the SRA materials have comprehension questions at the end of each paragraph or section as well as at the end of the passage. The comprehension questions help students because students can check their comprehension periodically as they go, and the questions summarize the content of each paragraph.
3. Students felt that their reading skills had improved in terms of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speed.

The second participant said that he liked having the comprehension questions because

he could check if he understood the reading or not, and the first participant felt that in a way, the questions provided a summary of the preceding paragraph(s). Furthermore, the fourth participant found the comprehension questions to be a source of motivation because they made it easier for him to continue reading.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study fill in a gap in the literature, specifically, the lack of qualitative methodologies used in Second Language Acquisition research. Not only does this study rely on qualitative observation and interview data, estimates of the participants' vocabulary sizes provide quantitative data. From further study, we will be able to find out about learner beliefs and attitudes towards materials that may not be at our students' level, but which are nonetheless engaging enough for students of English as a foreign language to want to read regularly. We will also be able to find out about why they select the materials that they do when given the choice between "authentic" materials written for native speakers over materials that have been specifically designed for learners of English. Furthermore, as articulated by the third participant, the only female, there are more general benefits in addition to improving vocabulary and reading skills that can be derived from participating in the reading sessions. She said that she did not have occasion to use English in her day-to-day life, but when she comes for reading time, she feels like she is stepping into "The World of English".

### ***Limitations***

This study can fill in a gap in the literature on Applied Linguistics research, and that is the lack of qualitative studies. While the analysis of the reading materials and estimate

of participants' vocabulary size relies on quantitative methodologies, I chose to mainly focus on their behavior and introspections. One could even quantify the students' attitudes towards the readings by asking if they would recommend the materials to a friend or classmate, or by asking them to rate the reading on a scale. However, we can best find out the answers to the "why?" questions by talking to students about their beliefs. Certainly conducting interviews runs the risk of not being reliable because of the self-report nature; observations of the students while they are reading can either add to or take away some support from what they report.

The study's biggest weakness would be the unreliability of interview data. Interviews do not constitute cognitive research because researchers do not really know for sure what participants feel or believe, and the participants themselves may lack this kind of awareness too, for that matter. In order to create thick enough description that readers can decide for themselves how transferable findings are, the researcher needs to look at the question from various points of view. This is known as triangulation. In this kind of study, it could well be that variety of investigation methodology is as important as what I am investigating. In the present study for example, I observed and interviewed the participants, but I also could have asked them to keep journals, which would be one more way of conducting methodological triangulation.

Another weakness is the small number of participants. Due to the laborious nature of qualitative research, we can collect data from fewer participants than if we were to conduct quantitative research. In the present study there were only four participants, so a larger number of volunteers would have provided more and perhaps richer data. However, participants were selected in order to provide a balance of different years, and on the campus, we have many more male students than female

students.

Additionally, it would be good to ask the participants to keep journals on what they are reading and ask them to write about if they enjoy the readings, for example, but from a practical standpoint, this would have not been a realistic expectation, because doing so would entail participants to do more work than they are willing to put into their studies. Just convincing students to participate in voluntary lunchtime reading sessions is a feat in itself.

Finally, longitudinal qualitative studies are still lacking in Second Language Acquisition research. Future researchers should conduct similar studies over at least one academic year, which would certainly contribute to the fast-growing body of knowledge of extensive reading in both English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign language contexts.

### **Future Research**

This study raises a number of questions, especially concerning student beliefs about extensive reading.

- Are students aware of the benefits and drawbacks of different learning materials?
- Do students consciously and deliberately apply vocabulary learning and reading strategies?
- What is the nature of students' motivation to participate in extensive reading programs?
- What is the nature of students' motivation with respect to materials selection? How would this most effectively be quantified and measured?

## Conclusion

This study reports on how four participants choose materials when participating in free voluntary reading sessions. In addition, I highlight benefits these four participants feel that they have derived from participating in the lunchtime reading sessions.

In this study I explored learners' attitudes and beliefs about reading in English. Although initially I suspected that in terms of the level of difficulty of the vocabulary may hinder reading comprehension, and in turn, enjoyment, the participants' estimated vocabulary sizes may not have had such a negative effect on either of these.

There are clear implications for both teachers and researchers. Teachers should offer assistance and advice when students select reading materials, in addition to teaching learning strategies. This study also makes suggestions for further research with respect to learners' beliefs and use of language learning strategies.

Finally, learners should be made aware of the many tangible and intangible benefits of reading for pleasure in English, in order to help them to become autonomous, lifelong learners.

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## Using projects to increase autonomy, motivation, and language learning

**Ryan W. Smithers**

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### **Abstract**

This generation of learners, Generation Y, need skills that will allow them to use their technical prowess to learn how and where to search for knowledge, and they need to be given the latitude to express learning in ways that reflect their unique ontological and epistemological values. Project-based learning (PBL) has been viewed in the literature as an instructional strategy that addresses the needs of today's students and allows them opportunities to engage in the learning of authentic material autonomously. In light of the literature, this qualitative study (n=27) examines the effectiveness of PBL on a group freshman taking a compulsory English Communication course at a Japanese university to determine the value of PBL as a teaching strategy. Specifically, this study seeks to determine if students are prepared to invest more time and effort on a project compared to a typical term test, and if they prefer PBL over teacher-centered approaches to language learning. The data revealed that most students spent more time on their projects compared to standardized test preparations, and they resoundingly agree that PBL is better than standardized testing because they enjoyed learning English, collaborating with their classmates, and communicating in English.

*Keywords:* project-based learning (PBL), student-centered learning, teaching strategy, motivation, autonomy

**T**he problem of how to best educate this generation of students, Generation Y, so that they develop the capacity and interest for learning on their own (autonomously) is a dilemma common to all academic disciplines.

Accordingly, autonomy theory has received much attention across all academic disciplines, but especially in the field of language learning because of the commonly

held belief among second and foreign language practitioners that autonomy is vital to effective learning (Benson, 2011). Unfortunately, research to date has yet to convince educators and institutions to aggressively promote autonomous learning practices in the classroom. One teaching strategy that has met with success in primary and secondary schools among students studying sciences, math and social studies is project-based learning (PBL). In the field of second and foreign language studies, especially at tertiary institutions, PBL has yet to be seen as a viable teaching strategy. This study, therefore, examines the effectiveness of project-based learning at a tertiary setting to demonstrate; (1) that PBL is an effective teaching strategy that promotes autonomous learning; (2) that PBL is especially poignant for today's students—Generation Y, and; (3) that students engaged in project work of their own choosing are more likely to be motivated to learn and spend more time and effort on learning.

### **Literature Overview**

Since the purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of project-based learning as an autonomy promoting teaching strategy on a Generation Y demographic, the review of the literature will begin with an investigation of autonomy theory. This will hopefully bring clarity to a confusing concept so that when autonomy is discussed in this paper, the reader will have a clear understanding of what is meant by this term. Following this, an examination of Generation Y and their most salient character traits will be conducted so as to highlight that ways in which PBL is well suited to the demographic that attends our tertiary institutions today. Finally, the literature review will close out with an analysis of PBL.

### *Autonomy Theory*

The concept of autonomy in the field of language teaching was begun in 1971 by Yves Châlon, but was soon taken up by Henri Holec upon the untimely passing of Châlon in 1972. In its infancy, the theory and practice of learner autonomy was influenced by the need to provide advanced or nearly advanced adult ESL learners with opportunities for experimentation with self-directed learning. At that time, it was believed that when advanced or nearly advanced L2 proficiency levels were attained, further improvements in fluency were best achieved when L2 learners were engaged in the self-directed study of authentic learning materials or were in classrooms with pedagogical principles and strategies that promoted semi-autonomous learning (Benson, 2011).

From these beginnings to present, there have been ongoing debates about what autonomy is supposed to mean and how it should be esteemed. These debates have especially escalated since the turn of the century, with the total number of studies published since the start of the 21st century greatly surpassing the total number of studies that were published from the early beginnings of autonomy to the end of the 20th century (Benson, 2007). The reason for a lot of the confusion has been linked to the definition of autonomy. Holec's early definition, the definition which initiates most discussions on autonomy, has been singularly aligned with self-directed learning and independence, and as such was heavily criticized for being linked to individualism and behavioristic psychology (Benson, 2011). Consequently, Holec redefined autonomy in a way that dispelled a lot of the initial criticism that was levelled against it. He declared that autonomy was "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (1981, p. 3) and stressed that learning was the sole responsibility of an individual. This means that all of the choices regarding the tasks associated with the learning of an L2 are put on the

learner. Little (1996b) further clarifies Holec's position by stating that autonomous learners accept the onus for the setting of learning objectives, they identify what is to be studied and how such studies should proceed, they choose and scrutinize their own foreign language acquisition approach, and they are responsible for the assessment of what has been acquired. Furthermore, Wenden (1986) states that because autonomous learning is empowered by metacognitive knowledge, autonomous learners not only come to an understanding that there are effective opportunities for learning an L2, they are successful at utilize opportunities for learning. This means that autonomous learning includes a capacity for involvement in social interactions and encompasses learning that takes place during collaborations between a teacher and learner or between groups of learners.

### *Generation Y*

The term Generation Y refers to a generation of people born between the early 1980s and early 2000s. This generation of people, also known as Millennials, is unlike previous generations of students that have progressed through our academic institutions. These students were born into a world of information technology. The most salient characteristic of this generation is its comfort with technology. These students are 'digital natives' that like to multitask (Prensky, 2001), and as a result, they see smart phones, computers and information technology as an integral part of their lives (Reilly, 2012). In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center (2012) that highlighted the self-expressive nature of this demographic, it was learned that three out of four Millennials have a profile on a social networking site, and one in five have posted a video of themselves online. A survey of 509 Millennials revealed that 85% believed

their technical prowess will allow them to work more effectively and 89% want to be given the freedom to work on projects as they see fit (Mielach, 2012). Furthermore, Twenge et al. (2010) found that this generation is apt to be more extrinsically motivated than the generations that have gone before them.

So what does this mean for teachers? For one, it means that traditional approaches to language teaching that focus on linguistic forms need to be rethought. Teacher-centered classrooms and standardized testing that does little to stimulate learning beyond assessing knowledge about specific content will in all likelihood fail to effectively engage Generation Y in the acquisition of a foreign or second language. Secondly, teachers need to take advantage of educational technology tools because as Blumenfeld et al. (1991) discovered, technology motivates and helps facilitate successful learning. This was confirmed in a study of 277 freshmen in Britain. The study revealed that this generation believes that tools such as wikis, blogs, and chat rooms can help them learn in school (Sanders & Morrison, 2007), and according to Oblinger (2003), they want their information served up fast via the web or videos.

### ***Project-based Learning***

Project-based learning (PBL) is an approach to language teaching that is designed to engage students in meaningful investigations of authentic materials. Students are given the opportunity to work on their own or in cooperation with others to learn new concepts. Project work requires that students apply what they have learned and challenges them to represent their newly acquired knowledge in an authentic product. In addition, projects require students take ownership of a project by choosing a topic that typically involves; (a) answering a question (i.e. How do some EFL learners obtain

perfect TOEIC scores?); (b) a discussion on a topic of interest (i.e. How airplanes fly?); or (c) a choice to make (i.e. Should taxes be raised to 10 %?). Students are thus stimulated into autonomous learning through the gathering and processing of information while seeking to answer their initial research question. The results of students' investigations culminate in a final product (i.e. multimedia presentation), and conclude with peer and self-evaluations.

Project-based instruction as an autonomy-promoting strategy is bearing much fruit across various academic disciplines (for a comprehensive list see Intel, 2007). A summary of the most salient findings can be seen highlighted in a study conducted by Blumenfeld et al. (1991). Their study revealed that PBL has the potential in students to; (1) increase interest in learning; (2) enhance problem-solving skills; (3) foster deeper understanding of concepts and information; and (4) improve competence in cognition and metacognition.

### **The Study**

This study, a follow up to a pilot study conducted by Smithers (2013b), qualitatively examines the effect PBL had on twenty-seven first-year students studying English Communication at a four-year engineering university in Japan. The study sought to discover the merit of implementing a PBL activity in lieu of the kind of mid-term and final exams that are typical of teacher-centered learning pedagogies. At the start of the year, during class orientation, the students were told that they would have to make a presentation, either individually or in groups up to a maximum of three members, to demonstrate English communication skills. The students were given the freedom to evidence their English communication skills any way they liked, but with two

stipulations; one, they had to speak in front of the class for between four and six minutes per individual; and two, they had to be involved in the evaluation process. Of note, the evaluation of the students by the teacher was worth 25% of their final grade and peer evaluations were worth 10%. The peer evaluation rubric (see Figure 1) was based on a rubric that was collaboratively designed by the teacher and students in the pilot study conducted by Smithers (2013b). The teacher's rubric was based on the same variables as the student-designed rubric, except that each variable was worth five points.

*Figure 1. Rubric used by students.*

**Presentation #\_\_\_\_\_**

<b>Body Language</b>	<i>/2</i>
<b>Voice Clarity &amp; Audibility</b>	<i>/2</i>
<b>Eye Contact</b>	<i>/2</i>
<b>Easy to Understand</b>	<i>/2</i>
<b>Interesting</b>	<i>/2</i>

(0=Poor, 1=Fair, 2=Good)      **/10**

### ***Research Questions***

To determine the merit of using PBL as a teaching strategy to promote autonomous learning, this study sought answers to the following two research questions:

- (1) Is choosing your own speaking assignment better than taking a term test? Why?
- (2) Did you spend more time preparing for your presentation than you usually prepare for a term test?

### ***Procedure***

The interview was conducted informally in class with students at the end of the spring semester. The students were told that they did not have to answer the questions if they did not want to, and if they chose to answer, they were instructed to answer anonymously in writing in the language of their choosing—Japanese or English. Of note, all of the students in attendance that day chose to answer the questions, with twenty-five of the twenty-seven students answering in Japanese. Of the two that answered in English, only one answered entirely in English. The other one wrote his/her answer in both English and Japanese.

### **Results and Discussion**

In response to the first question, twenty-four out of twenty-seven students answered that they felt that choosing their own speaking assignment was better than taking a term test. Of the three that did not answer yes, only one student felt it was not better because he/she believed that term test preparations promote more studying. The other two non-yes responses were too vague to effectively conclude how the students felt. Some of the reasons why students liked choosing their project were as follows:

- It seems very important to use English to do something.
- For my presentation I needed to make my own English sentences and look up English words in a dictionary.
- I can use body language for communication.
- Because I think about English.
- Because I can communicate with my friends.
- I can get a chance to speak English.

- It is so fun.
- To hear other students' presentations makes my English better.
- I can enjoy English.
- I get to practice speaking English in front of other people.
- It gave me a chance to study English eagerly.

In regards to the second question, Table 1 revealed that 55% of students spent more time preparing for presentations than term tests, while 18% spent an equal amount of time, and 7% of respondents declared that they were willing to invest more time studying for their tests.

**Table 1**

*Breakdown of Answers in Relation to Research Question Two*

Number of students that answered 'yes'	15
Number of students that said they studied the same amount	5
Number of students that answered 'no'	2
Number of students who did not answer the question	5

Some important information can be gleaned from the responses to the research questions. Firstly, according to the students' various responses as to why they preferred projects to standardized testing revealed that the projects students chose were meaningful to them because they were authentic. In a survey of adult EFL learners, Smithers (2013a) revealed how students not only desire more authentic materials as their language proficiency improves, they also derive more satisfaction from the

learning experience, and their motivation to learn increases when engaged in the study of authentic tasks. Likewise, Nunan (2004) demonstrated that students engaged in meaningful activities also results in greater levels motivated learning. Taylor (2013) reports on the necessity of authentic material by declaring that when students interact with authentic material they will not only be able to acquire grammatical knowledge, but will also improve in overall language proficiency.

The data also revealed that the majority of these learners were willing to spend more time preparing for their presentations, which required them to be autonomous. In line with autonomy theory, as reported in the literature review, these students were given sole responsibility for the setting of learning objectives for their projects. They also needed to identify what was to be studied, and they needed to determine a course of action. Although this study agrees with Kohonen (1992), who states that autonomy includes the notion of interdependence, there was in fact very little class time devoted to projects, which meant that the majority of the planning and preparations took place outside of the classroom, but this was beneficial for this group of Millennials in two ways. First, giving them the opportunity to research and prepare for their presentations autonomously allowed them the freedom to not only multitask, but most importantly, use technology to research their projects, something that the review of the literature revealed this demographic desires. This is especially important in light of the fact that this group was also described as being more extrinsically motivated than any other generation of learners. This needs careful consideration and strengthens the call to incorporate PBL into classrooms because according to Ryan and Deci (2000), students need to be intrinsically motivated if high-quality learning is to take place. Second, higher levels of commitment to the projects gave students the opportunity to strengthen

their sense of self-efficacy, which is vital to students in light of the fact that language learning is a long and arduous process. Each time a difficult task is completed with success, self-efficacy is strengthened in a way that sets students up so that they will be mentally tougher to meet each future challenge with a more positive and determined outlook (Bandura 1977).

In regards to the interaction and collaboration that took place among students, some further support for PBL can be found. One of the student's comment confirms what Chang (2010) discovered, that positive interaction with peers results in enthusiasm for learning and allows students the opportunity to develop stronger self-images, which translates into increased potential for language learning success (Gao & Lamb, 2011; Ushioda, 2013).

In regards to the second question, the data, from a purely pragmatic perspective, reveals that teachers should try to incorporate at least one PBL task into their curriculum because, in addition to what was gleaned from student comments, 74% of respondents declared that they invested at least as much time and effort into learning as preparing for a term test. This speaks volumes, especially in light of findings by Alan and Stroller (2005). They declare that PBL is better than standardized testing because it results in "increased content knowledge and language mastery" (2005, p.10).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, PBL is a fruitful teaching strategy. This one strategy helped interject new energy into the classroom, as evidenced by 89% of the respondents stating that they felt projects are better than standardized testing because they were motivated to study and speak in English with and in front of their classmates. In addition, they became role

models for each other, and they demonstrated independent problem solving skills in that they needed to figure out how to convey their ideas and thoughts in English, a skill that will stay with them long after they have graduated and left teachers behind. The students were engaged in autonomous learning. That is, the authentic tasks that they chose resulted in higher levels of motivation, which will strengthen their sense of self-efficacy so that they are now more mentally equipped to persevere over the long term at the acquisition of English as a foreign language. This study also concluded that PBL is an excellent strategy for teachers to use so that pedagogies are in line with character traits of the demographic of students who reside in tertiary institutions today—Generation Y. Lastly, the students demonstrated patterns of motivated learning in that they enjoyed learning and were willing to spend more time and effort studying English than they would have had they been preparing for a typical term test.

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# **An evaluation of the junior high school English textbooks in Japan: The issue of fostering students' practical communicative abilities**

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## **Abstract**

This paper is an evaluation of the junior high school English textbooks in Japan based on the framework provided by Littlejohn (1992, 1998). As a result of the changes in the course of study for foreign languages to increase classroom activities for practicing communication (MEXT, 2008b), ELT textbook publishers have needed to respond with new editions. Therefore, it is timely to examine these new versions of textbooks to see if they are following the proposed guidelines. The results indicate that the majority of tasks place learners in a responding position, allowing them little or no control over what they are to say or how they are to say it. Many tasks require learners to repeat input supplied by the materials identically or with substitution, with little demand for deeper mental operations such as hypothesizing, analyzing and so on. It appears that the oral abilities aimed at are repetition and reproduction of the target language, but not communicative abilities. The findings show that most of the activities in the textbooks may only be categorized as 'mechanical' or 'pre-communicative'. Hence they prepare students for the communicative activities, which themselves, account for only a small percentage of the total activities.

*Keywords:* communicative abilities, communicative activities, tasks, textbook evaluation

**I**t has been widely accepted that a textbook is an essential component of the language classroom and plays an essential role in foreign language acquisition. In Sheldon's (1988) words, textbooks "represent for both students and teachers the visible heart of any ELT programme" (p. 237). In some situations, textbooks may serve

as the basis for much of the foreign language input that learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. Evaluation of textbooks to see if they are appropriate and to identify their strengths and weaknesses, therefore, is of utmost importance.

According to Sheldon (1988), we need to evaluate textbooks because it will help teachers or program developers in making decisions on selecting the appropriate textbook, and the evaluation of the merits and demerits of a textbook will familiarize teachers with its weaknesses and strengths. Textbook evaluation can help teachers understand what areas of the textbook need further modification, and what adaptations of the materials are necessary. Cunningsworth (1995) suggests that an in-depth evaluation of a textbook enables examination of the appropriateness of the textbook in serving demands of the syllabus and educational needs of the students.

This paper is an objective description and subjective analysis of activities and tasks in the Japanese Education Ministry approved textbooks *New Crown* English series 1, 2, & 3 based on the framework provided by Littlejohn (1992, 1998). The course of study for foreign languages for lower secondary schools mentions that it has increased class hours and vocabulary size so as to increase classroom activities for practicing communication (MEXT, 2008b). As a result of these changes, ELT textbook publishers have needed to respond with new editions. Therefore, it is timely to examine these new versions of textbooks to see if they are following the proposed guidelines.

### **Purpose of the study**

The rationale for doing this descriptive analysis of a textbook series is to examine in depth what the textbooks contain so as to determine whether there is a match between

what the textbooks are supposed to achieve and what is there.

### **MEXT guidelines**

According to the course of study for foreign languages for lower secondary schools, the overall objectives are “to develop students’ basic practical communication abilities such as listening and speaking, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages” (MEXT, 2008a). Language activities should be conducted to enable students to talk and write about their own thoughts using English and “to develop a practical command of English which would allow students to understand English and express themselves in English” (MEXT, 2008a). It is stated that activities in which “students actually use language to share their thoughts and feelings with each other should be carried out”. Students “should be able to perform language activities in which they have to think about how to express themselves in a way appropriate to a specific situation and condition” (MEXT, 2008a).

MEXT has set a goal to enable students to come into greater contact with English. MEXT mentions that it has increased the class hours from 105 to 140 per year as well as the target vocabulary size from 900 to 1,200 words so as to increase classroom activities for practicing communication (MEXT 2008b). As a result of MEXT changes, ELT textbook publishers needed to respond with new editions. Therefore, now is an opportune moment to examine new versions of textbooks to see how they are coming to grips with the MEXT changes.

### **Definition of communicative activities**

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), activities compatible with a communicative approach are those which “engage learners in communication”, and “require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction”. Morrow (1981) states that activities that are truly communicative have three features in common: “information gap, choice, and feedback”. Tait (2001) also claims that communicative activities are “fluency-based activities”, and they are “based around a realistic situation”, and that “students should be required to negotiate for meaning”.

In Richards’ “Communicative Language Teaching Today” (2006), activities are categorized into three different kinds of practice – mechanical, meaningful, and communicative. “Communicative practice refers to activities where practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is not totally predictable” (p .16).

Littlewood (1981) groups activities into two kinds: pre-communicative activities and communicative activities, the latter of which is divided into functional communication activities that require students to use their language resources to overcome an information gap or solve a problem and social interaction activities that require the learner to pay attention to the context and the roles of the people involved, and to attend to such things as formal versus informal language.

### **Research questions**

This paper examines in depth what the textbooks contain so as to determine whether there is a match between what the textbooks are supposed to achieve and what actually

offer. This study addresses the following research questions.

RQ1. Do the textbooks fully follow the MEXT guidelines?

RQ2. How many of the activities in the textbooks can be categorized as communicative activities?

## **Method**

### ***Materials***

For the purposes of this evaluation all three books in the *New Crown* English series published in February 2012 are examined. *New Crown* is a government approved textbook series used for general English education for junior high schools in Japan. It is also one of the most popular and best-selling textbooks in Japan. Both the student's books and the teacher's manuals are used for the analysis. Although there is a possibility that different teachers will teach the materials in different ways, the analysis in this research paper is conducted based on the instructions written in the teacher's manuals. Since the length of the three textbooks would make it impractical to analyze their entire contents, this paper analyzes about 50% of the materials (lessons 1, 3, 6 & 8 of each book) and records the proportion of the materials examined.

### ***Analysis***

This paper adopts Littlejohn's (1992; 1998) framework because his focus is on materials as a pedagogic device, as an aid to teaching and learning a foreign language, which fits better with the proposed research questions. Furthermore, Littlejohn focuses on the methodology of the materials, and the linguistic nature of their content. It is a well-designed checklist that contains evaluation criteria that are clear and concise, and it

provides a very economic and systematic way to ensure that all relevant items are considered for evaluation.

At level 1, this paper draws “deductions about the processes through which users of the materials are likely to have to go and the demands which will be made upon them” (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 35). The materials are subdivided into their constituent ‘tasks’ and the nature of these tasks are analyzed.

At level 2, this paper deals with subjective inference and deduces aims, principles of selection and sequence, teacher and learner roles, demands on learner’s process competence, and the roles of the materials. Since the level 2 analysis deals with the implications of the materials, it will form the discussion section of this paper.

## **Results**

### ***Level 1 : What is required of learners?***

The first level analysis starts with ‘what is required of learners’. It includes “a description of the ‘tasks’ involved, where the specific nature of the process, classroom participation, content and the location of decision-making is set out”. It involves “careful examination to first divide the materials into their constituent tasks and then to undertake their analysis” (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 62).

The first step in the analysis of tasks was the division of each extract (lessons 1, 3, 6 & 8 of each book) into its constituent tasks, employing the four criteria for the definition of ‘task’ written in the Introduction section. This produced a total of 348 tasks. Task features were then listed under the relevant areas of the schedule. There are a total of 69 features spread over the four main areas. Tables 1 to 3 (see Appendices) show the incidence of each of these features across the three books, together with an average

for all of the books. Definitions and examples of each feature are included in Table 4 (see Appendices).

*Section I: What is the learner expected to do?*

Section 1 of the schedule, set out in Table 1(see Appendices), considers what the learner is expected to do. Table 1 shows that under A *Turn-take*, the predominance of tasks that place learners in a ‘scripted response’ position is notable (feature 2, average 90.02%), as is the correspondingly low score for tasks that involve learner initiation (feature 1, average 9.24%). Table 1 shows that under B *Focus on*, the learner’s attention is put more on *meaning* (feature 5, average 66.95%) than on *language system* (feature 4, average 17.84%) and *meaning/system/form relationship* (feature 6, average 15.21%).

The third area in this section, C *Operation*, shows that repetition is found very strongly throughout the extracts (total of averages for features 7 to 11 = 71.07%). Identical repetition (feature 7, average 38.23%) and repetition with substitution (feature 9, average 27.64%) are the main types of repetition carried out in class. Other main types of operation include *decode semantic/propositional meaning* (feature 16, average 19.69%), *attend to example/explanation* (feature 28, average 15.93%), *express own ideas/information* (feature 30, average 14.65%) and *select information from given text* (feature 17, average 7.85%). The predominant features like different forms of repetition stand in sharp contrast to the low scores for the remaining features listed under operation, such as *apply general knowledge* (feature 25, average 4.62%), *translation* (feature 31, average 2.24%), *analyze language form* (feature 22, average 1.87%), *apply stated language rule* (feature 24, average 1.42%), *compare samples of language* (feature 21, average 0.75%), and *research* (feature 29, average 0.37%). Other features, such as

*categorize selected information* (feature 19), *hypothesize* (feature 20), *formulate language rule* (feature 23), *negotiate* (feature 26), and *review own FL output* (feature 27), are not found at all in the extracts.

### *Section II: Who with?*

Section II of the schedule concerns the learner's mode of participation in classroom work and is set out in Table 2 (see Appendices). Three main types of features are *learners with whole class simultaneously* (feature 34, average 31.85%), *learners individually simultaneously* (feature 35, average 23.15%), and *learners in pairs/groups simultaneously* (feature 37, average 20.42%). While feature 32 *teacher and learner(s), whole class observing* (average 12.05%) and feature 36 *learners in pairs/groups, class observing* (average 9.72%) have lower scores, feature 33 *learner(s) to the whole class* has much lower scores (average 2.81%).

### *Section III: With what content?*

The third section of the schedule considers the content involved in tasks, the results of which are set out in Table 3 (see Appendices). For all of the books, input content occurs in the vast majority of cases as *L2 words/phrases/sentences: written* (feature 39, average 60.71%) and *L1 discourse: written* (feature 43, average 13.86%). Feature 42 *L2 extended discourse: aural* (average 10.29%) and feature 44 *L1 discourse: aural* (average 7.40%) have lower scores.

Regarding the source of the content, feature 45, *materials*, is overwhelmingly dominant (average 95.59%) for all three books. Content originating from *learner(s)* (feature 47) is proposed, on average, in 3.72% of the tasks, and content originating from

the *teacher* (feature 46) is only 0.69% of the tasks on average. Feature 48 *outside the course/lesson* is not found at all. The main types of nature of the content of the three books are *linguistic items* (feature 50, average 38.43%) and *fiction* (feature 52, average 36.91%). Feature 53 *personal information/opinion* has lower scores (average 17.11%), while feature 51 *fiction* (average 5.61%) and feature 49 *metalinguistic comment* (average 1.94%) have much lower scores.

In terms of output, learners are called upon to produce *L2 words/phrases/sentences: oral* (feature 56) in the majority of tasks (average 62.38%). Another main type of feature is *L2 words/phrases/sentences: written* (feature 55, average 25.92%). With regard to the source of the content, feature 61 *materials*, is overwhelmingly dominant (average 83.12%), while content originating from *learner(s)* (feature 63) accounts for 16.88% of the tasks on average. Feature 62 *teacher* and feature 64 *outside the course/lesson* are not found at all. Regarding the nature of the content, two main types are *linguistic items* (feature 66, average 40.18%) and *fiction* (feature 68, average 36.91%), while feature 69 *personal information/opinion* has lower scores (average 18.15%).

## Discussion

At this final level of description, this paper attempts to “draw together the various aspects of the materials as have been noted at level 1 and suggests the aims and principles of selection and sequencing which underlie the materials and the implications the materials may have for learner and teacher roles” (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 78).

### ***Aims***

From the analyses set out in level 1, it seems that the main aim of the textbooks is the development of learners' language skills in English. Since the percentage of tasks requiring learners to *hypothesize* (0%), *apply general knowledge* (4.62%), *research* (0.37%), and *express own ideas/information* (14.65%) is very low, there appears to be little evidence of aims which go beyond language learning, for instance, in the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, knowledge of the world, and learners' own ideas and attitudes. Since the majority of the input is in the form of written words, phrases, and sentences, and about three-fourth of the tasks require learners to produce oral output in words, phrases and sentences, language development is primarily viewed in terms of reading and oral abilities. However, it should be noted that as the majority of the operations require learners to repeat input identically or with substitution, the oral abilities aimed at seem to be repetition and reproduction of the target language, but not communicative abilities.

### ***Principles of selection***

The majority of the content supplied as input to learners consists of written words, phrases and sentences. The source of content is overwhelmingly the materials themselves with less than 1% of tasks requiring teacher-contributed content and less than 4% requiring learner-contributed content. About 38% of content is non-message bearing linguistic items, and the second main content is fictional in nature. The principle of selection relating to content seems to be that linguistic items, which are assumed to be useful to the learners, are to be presented. Then, fiction and personal ideas/information are selected in preference to non-fiction. The high percentage of non-

message bearing linguistic items indicates that only these ‘surface’ aspects of language are selected for presentation to the learners and that the principles of selection operate in relation to language. In Littlejohn’s (1992) words, it appears that “language is largely conceived of as consisting of items of vocabulary and grammatical forms which occur in common patterns, with language meanings being viewed as a matter of semantic or propositional content” (p. 81).

### ***Principles of sequencing***

The materials are characterized by a high degree of patterning and standardization. Activities are sequenced in order to provide a flow of activity which moves from an initial *introduction*, a *teacher presentation*, a *text and question*, then followed by *oral repetition*, *reading aloud*, *oral practice* and *written practice* by the students. The *interview*, *presentation*, *speech making*, and *writing* activities, which require students to use the language in a freer way to communicate, are not present in every unit and thus are not in the regular sequence.

### ***Classroom roles of teachers and learners***

One of the most striking points to emerge from the analysis of tasks is that learners are placed in a predominantly responding position in classroom interaction. Learner initiation, involving freer language expression, is evident in only an average of 9.24% of the tasks, with Book 1 having a much lower than average score of 4.48%.

Three basic modes of classroom participation account for most of the participation modes proposed by the materials. These are *learners with whole class simultaneously*, *learners individually simultaneously*, and *learners in pairs/groups*

*simultaneously*. Together, these modes account for 75.42% of tasks. A focus on *decoding semantic/propositional meaning* and *selecting information from given text* is principally required by tasks where learners are to work individually simultaneously. When learners are required to perform an operation together with the whole class, the operations are mainly identical repetition of input.

Given the high incidence of tasks requiring identical repetition, reproduction of text supplied by the materials, and the decoding of semantic/propositional meaning, where clear right or wrong responses are required, the teacher assumes a strong controlling role. Learners are placed in a position where they have little responsibility for and control over their own learning. The provision of teacher's notes in the teacher's manuals, which set out the precise words to be produced by the teachers, decide what teachers and learners are to do and the modes of classroom participation. In Littlejohn's (1992) words, "For teachers, the precise instructions which the materials give reduce the teacher's role to one of managing or overseeing a preplanned classroom event" (p. 83).

### ***Learner roles in learning***

As shown in the analyses, the materials most frequently place learners in a responding position in terms of discourse role. It should also be noted that the emphasis of tasks is on language at an item level, with 60.71% of the input and 88.30% of output in words, phrases and sentences. As Littlejohn (1992) puts it, "learning is conceived of as the gradual accumulation and synthesis of components of linguistic knowledge, such as rules of patterns of linguistic form or individual items of vocabulary" (p. 84). This is primarily accomplished by repetition or reproduction of texts supplied in the materials. Language is seen as "comprising a fixed body of knowledge which can be subdivided

into various components and which can be sequenced for classroom presentation, and learning is mainly seen as filling the learners with this knowledge” (p. 85).

The majority of tasks require learners to express themselves within a given framework or use language that has been specified. Reproduction of the language provided by the materials appears to be the main characteristic feature of the vast majority of tasks. This reproduction occurs either as identical repetition of input or repetition with substitution of elements provided by the materials. Similar to Littlejohn (1992), the analyses show that classroom work appears to center on ‘closed’ task types, where there are only a limited numbers of possible answers and where neither the teacher nor students contribute much to the answers. The ‘closed’ nature of the classroom discourse is also reflected in the limited range of operations called for in the majority of tasks. Four basic operation types (*repeat input identically*, *repeat input with substitution*, *decode semantic/propositional meaning*, and *select information from given text*) account for the majority of the operations required of learners. What one may term ‘deeper’ or more cognitively demanding operations such as *hypothesize*, *analyze language form*, and *formulate language rule*, account for less than one percent of the work proposed by the materials. It is also notable that *negotiation* is not present at all as a feature of tasks. An average of 14.65% of tasks call upon learners to *express own ideas/information* but in most of the cases this is done to provide opportunities to practice aspects of the language system which have been introduced earlier in the materials.

### ***Role of materials as a whole***

The analyses show that the principle role of the materials as a whole is the structuring of

the teaching and learning of English. Most of the decisions regarding what, when, and how the language should be taught and learned, such as the modes of classroom participation and the operations called for, have already been made. As shown in the teacher's manuals, these decisions are made in details, giving the precise instructions to the ways in which the teacher and learners are to interact. It seems that few variations or initiations from the teacher and learners are left to chance.

### **Pedagogical implications**

Since the *New Crown* English textbooks are government approved textbooks that are being used in junior high schools, they are supposed to follow the MEXT guidelines. The guidelines state that one of the objectives of English lessons is “to enable students to talk about their own thoughts using English”, and that language activities should be conducted “to develop a practical command of English which would allow students to understand English and express themselves in English”. Activities in which “students actually use language to share their thoughts and feelings with each other” should be carried out and students “should be able to perform language activities in which they have to think about how to express themselves in a way appropriate to a specific situation and condition” (MEXT, 2008a). However, the analyses show that the majority of the operations require learners to repeat input identically or with substitution. Students are placed in a predominantly responding position and learner initiation, involving freer language expression, is evident in less than 10% of the tasks. It appears that the oral abilities aimed at are repetition and reproduction of the target language, but not communicative abilities since students do not have to “think about how to express themselves in a way appropriate to a specific situation and condition” (MEXT, 2008a).

It was also found that interview, presentation, speech making, and writing activities, which require students to use the language in a freer way to communicate, are not present in every unit and account for a very low percentage of the activities. Furthermore, only a small percentage of tasks call upon learners to express their own ideas/information but in most of the cases this is done to provide opportunities to practice aspects of the language system that have been introduced earlier in the materials. Therefore, it appears that the MEXT (2008a) guideline for “activities in which students actually use language to share their thoughts and feelings with each other should be carried out” is not fully followed.

In order to improve students’ communicative abilities, communicative activities should be used. One question we could ask is: how many of the activities in the *New Crown* textbooks can be categorized as communicative activities? According to Morrow (1981), activities that are truly communicative have three features in common: “information gap, choice, and feedback”. Richards and Rodgers (2001) also state that activities compatible with a communicative approach are those which require the use of information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction. However, the analyses show that reproduction of the language supplied by the materials appears to be the main characteristic feature of the vast majority of tasks, and classroom work appears to center on ‘closed’ task types, where there are only a limited numbers of possible answers. Overall, the features ‘information gap’, ‘choice’ and ‘negotiation of meaning’ are not found in most of the tasks and thus most of them cannot be called communicative activities. Richards (2006) asserts that communicative practice refers to activities where the practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, and where the language used is not totally predictable. Since the majority of output of

content is from the materials and only 16.88% is from the learners, and only 18.15% of nature of output is personal information/opinion, it appears that the using of language within a real communicative context is not the focus and that most of the language used is predictable. Therefore, this paper argues that most of the activities in the textbooks may only be categorized as ‘mechanical’ or ‘pre-communicative’. Hence, they prepare students for the communicative activities, which themselves, account for only a small percentage of the activities. Tahira (2012), in her paper about MEXT’s new guidelines, states that “there remains a big gap between the stated policies and what is actually done in the classroom”, and that “in spite of a stated policy shift towards a focus on communication, the teaching principles advocated by MEXT are not fully practiced and understood” (p. 3).

### **Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research**

This study, however, is not without limitations. The tasks and activities of four lessons (about 50%) of each book were analyzed. A larger sample size selection might be considered for further research, and it would be more likely to arrive at a more comprehensive evaluation result. Furthermore, the analyses were conducted based on the textbooks and the teacher’s manuals. There might be possibilities that teachers in the actual classrooms conduct the lessons differently. Analyzing materials is quite different from analyzing ‘materials-in-action’. Littlejohn (1998) asserts that “precisely what happens in the classrooms and what outcomes occur when materials are brought into use will depend upon numerous further factors, not least of which is the reinterpretation of materials and tasks by both teachers and learners” (p. 181). Takeda et al. (2006) also state “how the textbook is utilized in the classroom depends on other factors, such as the

number of instructional hours, teachers' beliefs, institutional needs, students' learning styles, classroom sizes, and social constraints" (p. 74). Therefore, for future research, interviews with teachers, observations of some English lessons in junior high schools, interviews with textbook authors, and interviews with MEXT advisors could be carried out so that a more comprehensive and reliable evaluation result could be obtained.

### **Conclusion**

The analyses show that the textbooks do not fully follow the MEXT guidelines which state that activities in which "students actually use language to share their thoughts and feelings with each other" should be carried out and students "should be able to perform language activities in which they have to think about how to express themselves in a way appropriate to a specific situation and condition" (MEXT, 2008a). The results indicate that most of the activities in the textbooks may only be categorized as 'mechanical' or 'pre-communicative', and communicative activities account for only a small percentage of the activities. Therefore, this paper suggests that more communicative activities should be added in the textbooks in order to foster students' communicative abilities in English.

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## Appendices

**Table 1. Percentage of tasks having identified features:**

**What is the learner expected to do?**

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Average
I. What is the learner expected to do?				
A. Turn-take				
1 initiate	4.48%	11.17%	12.08%	9.24%
2 scripted response	94.96%	87.88%	87.22%	90.02%
3 not required	0.56%	0.95%	0.70%	0.74%
B. Focus on				
4 language system (rules or form)	20.74%	16.23%	16.54%	17.84%
5 meaning	65.34%	68.84%	66.67%	66.95%
6 meaning/system/form relationship	13.92%	14.93%	16.79%	15.21%
C. Operation				
7 repeat input identically	42.86%	37.00%	34.83%	38.23%
8 repeat input selectively	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%	0.33%
9 repeat input with substitution	38.57%	23.00%	21.35%	27.64%
10 repeat input with transformation	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
11 repeat input with expansion	2.86%	5.00%	6.74%	4.87%
12 retrieve from short-term memory	33.37%	25.38%	24.06%	28.27%
13 retrieve from intermediate-term memory	63.71%	54.23%	54.17%	57.37%
14 retrieve from long-term memory	5.87%	16.29%	20.92%	14.36%
15 formulate items into large unit	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
16 decode semantic/propositional meaning	15.71%	22.00%	21.35%	19.69%
17 select information from given text	1.43%	12.00%	10.11%	7.85%
18 calculate	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
19 categorize selected information	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
20 hypothesize	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
21 compare samples of language	0.00%	0.00%	2.25%	0.75%
22 analyze language form	2.25%	2.23%	1.12%	1.87%
23 formulate language rule	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
24 apply stated language rule	0.00%	2.00%	2.25%	1.42%
25 apply general knowledge	0.00%	6.00%	7.87%	4.62%
26 negotiate	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
27 review own FL output	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
28 attend to example/explanation	8.57%	19.00%	20.22%	15.93%
29 research	0.00%	0.00%	1.12%	0.37%
30 express own ideas/information	2.86%	22.00%	19.10%	14.65%
31 translation	2.23%	1.11%	3.37%	2.24%

**Table 2. Percentage of tasks having identified features: Who with?**

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Average
II WHO WITH?				
32 teacher and learner(s), whole class observing	7.86%	13.07%	15.23%	12.05%
33 learner(s) to the whole class	2.86%	2.83%	2.75%	2.81%
34 learners with whole class simultaneously	34.89%	32.30%	28.35%	31.85%
35 learners individually simultaneously	26.65%	21.20%	21.60%	23.15%
36 learners in pairs/groups, class observing	9.31%	10.50%	9.35%	9.72%
37 learners in pairs/groups simultaneously	18.43%	20.10%	22.72%	20.42%

**Table 3. Percentage of tasks having identified features: With what content?**

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Average
III With what content				
A. Input to learners				
a. Form				
38 graphic	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
39 L2 words/phrases/sentences: written	62.28%	61.24%	58.61%	60.71%
40 L2 words/phrases/sentences: aural	3.06%	3.59%	3.48%	3.38%
41 L2 extended discourse: written	3.28%	4.46%	5.35%	4.36%
42 L2 extended discourse: aural	10.29%	10.03%	10.54%	10.29%
43 L1 discourse: written	13.48%	14.29%	13.81%	13.86%
44 L1 discourse: aural	6.43%	7.50%	8.26%	7.40%
b. Source				
45 materials	96.06%	95.23%	95.48%	95.59%
46 teacher	0.38%	0.54%	1.16%	0.69%
47 learner(s)	3.56%	4.23%	3.36%	3.72%
48 outside the course/lesson	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
c. Nature				
49 metalinguistic comment	1.36%	2.07%	2.38%	1.94%
50 linguistic items	43.28%	38.43%	33.71%	38.43%
51 non-fiction	3.38%	8.87%	4.57%	5.61%
52 fiction	36.14%	35.99%	38.60%	36.91%
53 personal information/opinion	12.86%	16.00%	22.47%	17.11%
B. Expected output from learners				
a. Form				
54 graphic	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
55 L2 words/phrases/sentences: written	29.79%	24.12%	23.84%	25.92%
56 L2 words/phrases/sentences: oral	62.38%	62.35%	62.41%	62.38%
57 L2 extended discourse: written	1.01%	1.46%	1.58%	1.35%
58 L2 extended discourse: oral	0.69%	2.02%	3.37%	2.03%
59 L1 words/phrases/sentences: written	0.57%	0.69%	1.12%	0.79%
60 L1 words/phrases/sentences: oral	5.56%	8.24%	8.79%	7.53%
b. Source				
61 materials	91.71%	80.96%	76.68%	83.12%
62 teacher	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
63 learner(s)	8.29%	19.04%	23.32%	16.88%
64 outside the course/lesson	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
c. Nature				
65 metalinguistic comment	1.39%	1.58%	2.25%	1.74%
66 linguistic items	51.86%	37.23%	31.46%	40.18%
67 non-fiction	2.36%	4.43%	2.26%	3.02%
68 fiction	36.14%	35.23%	39.36%	36.91%
69 personal information/opinion	10.00%	22.00%	22.47%	18.15%

**Table 4. Definitions and examples of aspects of tasks****(adapted from Littlejohn's (1992; 1998) framework)**

<i>I WHAT IS THE LEARNER EXPECTED TO DO?</i>		
FEATURE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
<b>A. TURN-TAKE</b>		
1. Initiate	the learner's discourse role and discourse control	free discussion
2. scripted response	the learner is expected to express what he/she wishes to say without a script of any kind.	guided writing
3. Not required	the learner is not expected to initiate or respond	listen to explanation
<b>B. FOCUS</b>		
4. language system	where the learner is to concentrate his/her attention	substitution tables
5. meaning	a focus on rules or patterns	comprehension questions
6. meaning/system/form relationship	a focus on the message of the language being used.	tracing anaphora
<b>C. OPERATION</b>		
7. repeat identically	what the mental process involves	oral repetition
8. repeat selectively	the learner is to reproduce exactly what is presented	dialogue frames
9. repeat with substitution	learner is to choose before repeating given language.	substitution drills
10. repeat with transformation	the learner is to repeat the basic pattern of given lang. but replace certain items with other given items.	change statements into questions
11. repeat with expansion	the learner is to apply a (conscious or unconscious) rule to given language and to transform it accordingly	composition outlines
12. retrieve from short-term memory	the learner is given an outline and is to use that outline as a frame within which to produce further language	oral repetition
13. retrieve from intermediate-term memory	the learner is to recall items of language from short term memory, that is, within a matter of seconds.	recall vocabulary within lesson
14. retrieve from long-term memory	the learner is to recall items from intermediate term memory, that is, within a matter of minutes. Here taken up to the length of the lesson (apprx.50 minutes)	recall vocabulary from last lesson
15. formulate items into larger unit	the learner is to recall items from prior to the present lesson.	discussion
16. decode semantic/propositional meaning	the learner is to combine recalled items into, e.g., complete sentences, necessitating the application of consciously or unconsciously held language rules	read a text for its meaning
17. select information	the learner is to decode the 'surface' meaning of given language.	answers questions by reading a text
18. calculate	the learner is to extract information from a given text.	solve math problem
19. categorize selected information	the learner is to perform mathematical operations	sort information into groups
20. hypothesize	the learner is to analyze and classify information selected through operation 17.	deduce meanings from context
21. compare samples of language	the learner is to hypothesize an explanation, description or meaning of something	compare accounts of the same event
22. analyze language form	the learner is to compare two or more sets of language data on the basis of meaning or form	find the stressed syllable in a word
23. formulate language rule	the learner is to examine the component parts of a piece of language	devise grammar rule
24. apply stated language rule	As 20, but learner is to hypothesize a language rule.	change direct to reported speech
25. apply general knowledge	the learner is to use a given language rule in order to transform or produce language	answer questions on other countries
26. negotiate	the learner is to draw on knowledge of 'general facts' about the world	in groups, write a set of instructions
27. review own FL output	the learner is to discuss and decide with others in order to accomplish something	check own written work
28. attend to example/explanation	the learner is to check his/her own foreign language production for its intended meaning or form	listen to a grammar explanation
29. research	the learner is to 'take notice of' something	look for information relevant to a personal project
30. express own ideas/	personally find relevant information from sources not provided in the classroom	propose a solution to a

information	knowledge or other ideas	complex problem
31. translation	change phrases or sentences from L2 to L1 or from L1 to L2	translate a sentence from L2 to L1

**II WHO WITH?**

FEATURE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
32. teacher and learner(s), whole class observing	the teacher and selected learner(s) are to interact	a learner answers a question; other learners listen.
33. learner(s) to the whole class	selected learner(s) are to interact with the whole class, including the teacher.	learner(s)' feedback on group work.
34. learners with the whole class simultaneously	learners are to perform an operation in concert with the whole class	choral repetition
35. learners individually simultaneously	learners are to perform an operation in the company of others but without immediate regard to the manner/pace with which others perform the same operation	learners individually do a written exercise
36. learners in pairs/groups; class observing	learners in pairs or small groups are to interact with each other while the rest of the class listens.	a group 'acts out' a conversation
37. learners in pairs/groups, simultaneously	learners are to interact with each other in pairs/groups in the company of other pairs/groups	learners discuss in groups

**III WITH WHAT CONTENT ?**

FEATURE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
<b>A.INPUT TO LEARNERS</b>		
<b>a. Form</b>		
38. graphic	form of content offered to learners	
39. L2 words/phrases/sentences: written	pictures, illustrations, photographs, diagrams, etc.	a world map
40. L2 words/phrases/sentences: aural	individual written L2 words/phrases/sentences	a list of vocabulary items
41. L2 extended discourse: written	individual spoken L2 words/phrases/sentences	prompts for a drill
42. L2 extended discourse: aural	L2 texts of more than 50 written words which cohere, containing supra-sentential features	a written story
43. L1 discourse: written	L2 texts of more than 50 spoken words which cohere, containing supra-sentential features	a dialogue on tape
44. L1 discourse: aural	L1 written discourse	a question in L1
	L1 spoken discourse	an instruction in L1
<b>B. SOURCE</b>		
45. materials	where the content comes from.	
46. teacher	content (or narrowly specified topic) supplied by the materials	dialogue/text in the coursebook
47. learner(s)	content (or narrowly specified topic) supplied by the teacher	teacher recounts own experiences
48. outside the course/lesson	content (or narrowly specified topic) supplied by the learner(s)	learner recounts own experiences
	content not supplied in the classroom or via the materials	encyclopedia
<b>C. NATURE</b>		
49. metalinguistic comment	type of content	
50. linguistic items	comments on language use, structure, form or meaning.	a grammatical rule
51. non-fiction	words/phrases/sentences carrying no specific message	a vocabulary list
	factual texts/ information	a text about a foreign culture
52. fiction	fictional texts	dialogue between imaginary characters
53. personal information/opinion	learner's own personal information or opinion	details of learner's interests
<b>B. EXPECTED OUTPUT FROM THE LEARNERS</b>		
<b>A. Form</b>		
54. graphic	form of content to be produced by learner	
55. L2 words/phrases/sentences	pictures, illustrations, photographs, diagrams, etc.	a plan of one's house
56. L2 words/phrases/sentences: oral	individual written words/phrases/sentences	write sentences using a specified word
57. L2 extended discourse:	individual spoken words/phrases/sentences	response to a drill
	texts of more than 50 written words which cohere,	a story in writing

written	containing supra-sentential features.	
58. L2 extended discourse: oral	texts of more than 50 written words which cohere, containing supra-sentential features.	an oral account of an event
59. L1 discourse: written	L1 written discourse	translation from L2 to L1
60. L1 discourse: oral	L1 spoken discourse	discussion in L1
<b>B. SOURCE</b>		
	where the content comes from.	
61. materials	content (or narrowly specified topic) supplied by the materials	dialogue/text in the coursebook
62. teacher	content (or narrowly specified topic) supplied by the teacher	teacher dictates a personal text
63. learner(s)	content (or narrowly specified topic) supplied by the learner(s)	learner recounts own experiences to other learners
64. outside the course/ lesson	content not supplied in the classroom or via the materials	encyclopedia
<b>C. NATURE</b>		
	type of content	
65. metalinguistic comment	comments on language use, structure, form or meaning.	a grammatical rule
66. linguistic items	words/phrases/sentences carrying no specific message	naming objects
67. non-fiction	factual texts	knowledge from other areas
68. fiction	fictional texts	a story
69. personal information/opinion	learner's own personal information or opinion	details of learner's interests

## Movie trailers as classroom text

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### **Abstract**

This paper builds on ‘Films in the Classroom’ approach that has taken off with the advent of digital media, first with DVDs and more recently non-physical files. There are some advantages to using movie trailers over full-length feature films or television programs: 1) Because they are short, several can be used in one class; 2) There are thousands available; 3) Teachers won’t lose as many students who have difficulty moving beyond ‘like/don’t like’ perspective of a movie consumer into movie-as-learning-opportunity. 4) Digitized media is portable and flexible. 5) Most importantly for busy teachers, preparation time is substantially reduced as trailers are usually less than two minutes in length.

*Keywords:* classroom activities, multimedia, films, materials development

**T**eachers and students alike both look forward to movie day in the classroom and not for the reasons we may think. There is something magical about movies. They offer an escape to other times, places, and cultures. Movies can provide vicarious experiences that many of us will never have. Who among us will ride a horse for days through the dry desert, fire off a revolver, rob a bank or date impossibly perfect people? It is this vicariousness and verisimilitude that has captivated audiences since the early days of film. Contemporary teachers want to exploit the educational possibilities of this magical medium but several challenges exist, namely the length of films themselves, the lack of existing materials to turn films into appropriate classroom materials and the time needed to create these materials. Stempleski (2002) reminds us that, despite best teacher efforts, students may not be able

to perceive film as anything but entertainment, let alone as a valuable language learning resources. Teachers must train students to watch movies in a new way. This paper proposes that using movie trailers – short, condensed ads for the films – as texts rather than full length movies greatly reduces the preparation time needed and, as a result, affords increased flexibility in real world use, and can offer a training ground for both teachers and students looking to integrate film into language learning.

### **Background**

Over the past few years, several language teaching researchers have provided broad outlines for using television or film in the classroom (Fluitt-Dupuy, 2001; Seferoglu, 2008; Stempelski, 2002; Voller and Widdows, 1993; Webb, 2010; Whatley, 2012). These frameworks highlight the appeal of the medium for teachers and students alike, describe a variety of activities, and point out the possible pitfalls unique to using video in the classroom. I describe some of the highlights in the following sections.

### ***Listening***

Webb (2010) suggests that pre-learning low frequency vocabulary can have a positive effect on listening comprehension when watching TV programs. It may be appropriate to pre-teach low frequency vocabulary in movie trailers too. Webb also points out that out of all genres, science fiction may have the highest percentage of low frequency vocabulary. Teachers would do well to consider this when choosing trailers. In order to determine which words need to be pre-taught, teachers would have to watch the trailer very carefully or make a transcript and run it through a vocabulary profiler such as Tom Cobb's VocabProfile (<http://www.lex Tutor.ca/vp/>). Seferoglu (2008) has students keep a

pronunciation notebook throughout the length of the course, in which they record features of pronunciation new to them. Stempleski (2002) suggests devising activities that require repeated viewings or listenings. Sherman (2003) advises that activities be used three or four times, as students need several trial runs to get the most benefit.

### ***Speaking***

Speaking is a naturally occurring part of group work and any activity that requires cooperation will, ideally, involve a lot of incidental L2 communication. Sherman (2003) describes hundreds of activities in which students must communicate with each other to complete the task. One example that would suit a trailer viewing is to write the names of the characters on the board in a circle. Students then watch the trailer, draw connecting lines and label the relationships, comparing with their classmates' work (139).

### ***Writing***

Researchers have provided several ways to link writing to video watching. Fluit-Dupuy (2001) outlines a unit on argumentative writing through movie reviews in which students draw on a wide range of sub-skills to write several drafts of a reaction and assessment of a movie. Seferoglu (2008) asks students to keep a film journal, recording one entry for each film they watch during the course. In each entry the students are required to respond to themes, images, audio and dialogue in the movie as well as specific questions on the verisimilitude of events portrayed in the film. Baines and Dial (1995) created a unit in which students write their own screenplays over a series of cumulative lessons. These activities can be adapted for use with movie trailers. Teachers can prepare worksheets with questions regarding themes, characters, setting and

dialogue in a trailer or series of trailers.

### ***Wrap up***

All articles highlight the importance of teacher preparation before and participation during the lesson. Stempleski says, “(t)he teacher plays a key role in the success or failure of any video used in the language classroom.” (364) Video is not something an instructor can throw on and expect learning to magically occur. Teachers should preview the trailer in order to find and preteach low frequency vocabulary, and link viewing to appropriate four skill communicative activities.

### **Key Movie Trailer Features**

This section highlights the appealing features of trailers for use as teaching materials.

#### ***Duration***

They are short. Most trailers clock in between 90 seconds and three minutes, making all aspects of preparation less time consuming. This is particularly important for transcribing any monologue or dialogue in the trailer as they rarely have subtitles. Short duration also makes repeated viewings more realistic.

#### ***Multimodality***

Trailers are multi-modal. They contain video, stills (when paused), audio, and often text. Instructors would do well to familiarize themselves with the A/V equipment, specifically pausing, fast forwarding and rewinding. Scrambling to find the precise spot again under pressure can be frustrating and time consuming. It is best to practice a bit in

advance to make the class as stress free as possible.

### *Accessibility*

Unlike feature films and broadcast television, trailers are readily available for viewing online. Many students can access trailers from their smart phones, school CALL labs or home computers for reviewing or preparing their own activities.

### *Clear Plot Elements*

Usually offering clearly delineated plots, crises and characters, trailers have to be clear and concise in order to be appealing to audiences.

### *Availability*

There are thousands of trailers available on YouTube and Apple's website, increasing the likelihood that teachers can find materials that better match student interests.

### *Portability*

Trailers are portable. Downloading trailers to a portable device or computer is easy.  
(See Appendix 1)

## **Ten Teaching Ideas**

In this section I present ten teaching ideas featuring movie trailers as text.

- Focus on listening. Two classic activities that combine listening, reading and writing: straight dictation or create a quick fill in the blanks.
- Focus on plot. What is the likely story arc? Have students write or discuss major

plot points and character interactions.

- Focus on characters. Who says what? Identify protagonists, antagonists, and their motivations. Groups can share and compare.
- Focus on genre. Comic, tragic, melodramatic, and heroic, etc. Pairs or groups can identify the characteristics of each mode and evidence of their presence in the trailers.
- Writing. View trailer without sound and compose a dialogue. Write a trailer for a real or possible new movie.
- Responses. Dialogue in trailers is often limited to a) one line or b) one line and a response. Have students write hypothetical responses to a) or alternatives to b).
- Mini review. Have students write short reviews of the trailers by answering the 5Ws and their initial impressions.
- Does the speech in a trailer use jokes or differences in register? Students can identify and analyse the different registers in the speech samples. How do differences in registers reflect the story or move the plot?
- Write a screenplay (stage direction, setting details, and dialogue) for a trailer.
- Comprehension questions. Prepare questions (Multiple choice, True or False, Open Answer, Matching) for pre and post viewing. Students can compare and discuss answers. Students can then choose a new trailer and compose a similar worksheet for homework which can be used as a future class activity.

### **Discussion**

There are some limitations to using movie trailers in the classroom. Trailers don't generally come with subtitles, the lack of which can make even a short clip

overwhelming for low level learners. YouTube's captioning function is unreliable but that in itself could be made into an activity. Students listen and correct the – sometimes very funny – captions. Trailers often have frenetic pacing, prioritizing impact over story development; following or fleshing out the story could be difficult. Humor might be lost on some students. The strength of movie trailers – their brevity – is also their weakness. A trailer alone won't fill up an entire class. However with imagination and practice, both teachers and students can exploit all the features of movie trailers for better language acquisition.

### **Conclusion**

Trailers are a way for teachers to get video in the classroom without all the work that full-length feature films or TV shows demand. Teachers can quickly find trailers relevant to the topic, grammar structure or other teaching point they want to draw attention to. Students can be trained to find trailers and make activities themselves, transforming the classroom into a student-centered place of learning.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### *Using Movie Trailers in the Classroom*

*These instructions were tested on a Mac Book Pro and a Firefox internet browser. I assume this would also work on Firefox for Windows. There are video download add-ons for the Chrome browser as well.*

1. Turn on computer and open Firefox browser.

Firefox can be downloaded for free: <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/>

2. Go to 'Tools' menu and click on 'Add-ons'

3. In the search box in the upper right hand corner, type 'Video Download Helper' (hereafter DLH)

4. Click 'Add to Firefox'.

5. Restart Firefox.

6. Go to Youtube.com

7. Search for the trailer of your choice. If you are not aware of the movies out there, just type 'movie trailers' in the search box and browse through the results. We will use the trailer for the recent movie *Elysium*.

8. If DLH is installed correctly and the video is downloadable, you should see this icon on the toolbar rotating:



If something is amiss, it looks like this: No colors, no rotation, no go.

9. If you can see the three colored balls spinning, an arrow will appear beside the icon. Click on it, and you will see the available files:



10. Mouse over a file and another options menu will appear:



11. *.mp4* is the easiest file to work with and is in HD as well.

12. Double click on the video file and confirm that you have sight and sound.

Next step: This assumes you are able to get the trailer video from your computer out to the students either via projector or in the CALL lab.

## Appendix 2

Online Trailers:

<http://trailers.apple.com>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/movieclipsTRAILERS>

A search will reveal many more; these are just two results from the top page.

# Teacher impressions of a video-based pragmatics course<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Over the last decade, a set of video-based materials designed for the explicit teaching of a range of speech acts has been undergoing continual development. For the most part, materials instruction has been limited to a set of universities where the primary author and material developer has been employed. Material improvements, therefore, were limited to a small set of teaching contexts and student language learning profiles. In order to expand the range of feedback concerning the efficacy of the instructional materials, over the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years, additional teachers and contexts were included in the materials piloting. This allowed for a fuller picture of the benefits and limitations of the materials. This article attempts to present that picture.

*Keywords:* instructional pragmatics, pragmalinguistics, sociopragmatics, video-based teaching methods, explicit instruction, materials design and piloting

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an earlier version of research presented at the 2013 JALT National Conference in Kobe entitled *Instructional pragmatics in the Japanese context: Materials piloting project at a junior high school, high school and university.*

Originally designed for instruction in the context of a women's university—where student levels were predominantly pre-intermediate—the pragmatics materials in question focus on the explicit instruction of ten speech acts: *greetings, compliments, introductions, invitations, farewells, apologies, requests, offers, suggestions* and *complaints*. At the heart of instruction are video clips used to highlight each of the speech acts. Over time, as the materials have developed, the database of video clips has grown to approximately 1,000 clips in total (though most lessons implement between six to ten clips). All clips originate from various English-medium T.V. and movies sources—mostly created originally for American audiences but some for audiences in the U.K. and New Zealand. The clips are short, averaging only ten to fifteen seconds in length, and highlight the first pair-part and second pair-part interaction reflective of one (or, on occasion, several) of the speech acts of interest.

Though the theoretical underpinnings of speech act research—as it pertains to second language acquisition (SLA)—originated from the work of John Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969), clips selection was guided by principles set forth by Conversation Analysis (CA) researchers Harvey Sachs (1992) and Emanuel Schegloff (2007). The notion of first pair-parts and second pair-parts is central to the way CA researchers view the “generic orders of organization” (Schegloff, 2007; xiv) and enabled for a relatively systematic framework for deciding what clips would be included into the database as reflective of any individual speech act.

One element characteristic of CA notions of the way speakers organize talk-in-interaction is by considering “how...the resources of the language, the body, the environment of the interaction, and position *in* the interaction fashioned into conformations designed to be, and to be recognizable by recipients as, particular actions

– actions like requesting, inviting, granting, complaining, agreeing, telling, noticing, rejecting, and so on” (Schegloff, xiv; italics in original). In the turn-taking system outline originally by Sachs, utterances that conform in shape to and are reflective of certain actions such as requesting (e.g., *I really could use a hand with this, or could you possibly take the time to look through this for any problems*) constitute what is known as first pair-part turns in an on-going conversation. A first pair-part such as this makes “conditionally relevant” what is known as a second pair-part, in that if a next speaker (who the first pair-part was intended for) does not respond in some fashion to the first pair-part request utterance some trouble may arise in the talk (i.e., the repetition of the initially stated request that was ignored). Second pair-part turns for a speech act such as requests (though not for all speech acts) generally fall into either of two basic representative categories, “accept” or “reject”. A second pair-part “accept” utterance might appear in the form of the utterance: *sure, no problem, anything I can do to help*; whereas, a second pair-part “reject” utterance might resemble: *uhm:: now’s not really a good time for me*. These are but a few examples in a long list of representative examples that could, when immediately following utterances shaped as requests, satisfy the requirements made conditionally relevant by a first pair-part. Using this basic CA framework of first pair-part / second pair-part sequential organization, video segments were selected for inclusion in the instructional materials.

Interactive tasks designed for use in the classroom were then designed into the materials in the form of a printed student textbook. The first lesson component is a description of the particular speech act of interest. For example, the description of the speech act compliment is: “Compliments are utterances that one speaker uses to point out a positive characteristic of another speaker”. (In prior units learners were made

aware of the difference between a written ‘sentence’ and a spoken ‘utterance’.) This is then followed by examples representative of first pair-part and second pair-part possibilities, such as *you’re looking good* as a first pair-part compliment and *thanks so are you* as a second pair-part.

The second part of the lesson directs learners to imagining how the speech act would be realized in their first language (L1). In this way, learners can become more aware of what the speech act is by having learners provide a range of representative examples that they either use or have observed in use in daily conversations. This also provides a foothold upon which later L1/L2 comparisons can be made. This activity is based on the fact that all communities of language speakers perform speech acts, but though those speech acts might be identical in their intended communicative goal (i.e., in all languages there are such things as the speech acts of ‘to do a request’ and ‘to do a farewell’), the manner in which these are produced—both through the choice of lexis and syntax and through any associated embodied actions—are not inherently the same. L1 behaviors and social practices, as well as linguistic components, can provide a false basis from which L2 speakers may attempt to perform speech acts within conversation, leading to instances of miscommunication or, worse, a lingering sense that the L2 speaker is somehow “rude”.

Once learners are aware of what the speech act is in their L1, the materials shift learner attention to a task designed much along the lines of a “gap-fill”, where examples of either first pair-parts or second pair-parts are provided but without a corresponding “part” (i.e., first pair-parts that lack second pair-parts and second pair-parts missing the initial first pair-part). This task functions on a few levels. First, it provides written input as to what constitutes relevant first pair-parts and second pair-parts for specific speech

acts. Some of the examples given to learners in this task come directly from the later video input, as learners often need to have a written prompt given to them prior to one given in auditory form. Second, it works as a diagnostic tool for instructors to see how familiar learners are with the speech act. For instance, some Japanese learners treat *invitations* as though they were *promises*, displaying this mismatch with example “reject” second pair-parts as *I cannot go because I have another promise*. This task provides a way for instructors to disentangle conflicting notions that potentially stem from L1 interference.

The next part of lesson has learners engage with the videos themselves while performing a set of tasks. The most important task is for the learners to transcribe the talk performed in the video clip. This is inherently a challenge for most L2 learners, as the language is spoken as if it were naturally occurring speech. That is, it occurs at a speed that one might hear native-speakers producing, with the range of sound changes characteristic of connected speech (e.g., assimilation, dissimilation, elision, epenthesis, sandhi variation). Though L2 learners find it unproblematic managing the written input exemplars provided earlier in the lesson, listening in real time often presents itself in the form of task overload, even after repeated listenings. To assist in this regard, the transcripts appear in either of two ways: a) in a similar form as a “cloze” text, where lexical items are provided for the learner (here, in the form of more uncommon words and proper nouns) alongside empty lines where words have been removed, or b) with additional words added into the transcript not present in the auditory input given the learners. In the first form, the transcription task is to “fill in the blank(s)”; in the second it is to cross out any additional words or sounds (e.g., *uhm*, *uh*, *oh*, *ah*) that are not present in the auditory input from the clip. As the units progress from earlier to later in

the course, the transcription task turns from “provided text” to “providing text”, in that less of the transcript is available for learners to rely on. At the same time learners are working to construct transcripts of the auditory input from the clips, they are being prompted to respond to a variety of questions focusing on the context of the talk and the nature of the speaker relationship. It is these two elements—the talk and the speakers—that most closely resemble work done by L2 researchers of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) development (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Those two notions are commonly known as “pragmalinguistics” and “sociopragmatics”.

Going back to the earliest theoretical justification into how best to account for a communicative approach to language instruction and assessment (Canale & Swain, 1980), there was a divide between the “language” speakers used and the “speakers” themselves (namely, the contextual background of the speakers—both physical and societal). For ILP researchers, the divide means that speech acts are understood as both “what is said” (i.e., the utterance-level language produced, which includes both syntactic and lexical characteristics) as well as “who says it and to whom”. The former was given the term “pragmalinguistic” and the latter the term “sociopragmatic”. Just as important as the language features are to the instruction of pragmatics are the social features. This “language plus social” factors into the issue of how well learners are able to recognize “appropriate” first pair-part and second pair-part utterance combinations based on who the nature of speaker relationships. The available resources speakers have when producing talk is understood to be dependent upon the relationship status they maintain (or are socially provided) with fellow speakers. Language teachers, for instance, rely on imperatives when managing classroom activities. Rarely would a teacher opt for the request: *if you had the time, would it be possible for you to open your*

*books to page twenty-six*. Rather, the imperative, *open your books to page twenty-six*, would be more likely. Though it is the imperative could be softened by the word “please”, this utterance hardly constitutes an appropriate request formula for speakers lacking the relatively higher (in comparison to students in classroom) role played by a teacher in this context. A student making a similar request of a teacher in the imperative form *check my grammar on this paper* might not find their “request” as being immediately “accepted” (depending on how generous a teacher felt at essentially receiving a command to do something from a student). Though imperatives do function as request-type utterances, they do so in certain relationships—namely, in relationships where the request is being made of someone with less social status. Such pragmalinguistic / sociopragmatic mismatches often are the root cause of what is known as pragmatic failure. Because simply knowing the pragmalinguistic forms is not enough to ensure smooth realization of speech acts, it is essential that learners engage with sociopragmatic features and pragmalinguistic forms simultaneously. The materials focus learner attention to all aspects of the clip.

The final portion of the lessons is dedicated to learner production of that day’s speech act along with the variety of constraints that the sociopragmatic features can impose. One example of this would be the use of the following chart as a prompt for a brief role-play between two learners.

**Performance Task Two—Description**

For Performance Task Two, your group will be given a series of “Conversation Task” cards. Each card will look like the example below:

<b>CONVERSATION TASK</b>	<b>Card# _____</b>
a. Number of speakers:	2
b. Speaker Relationship:	Distant
c. Speaker Status:	Equal
d. Conversation Context:	Informal
e. FPP Objective:	Invitation
f. SPP Objective:	Accept

Sets of cards, each with differences based on the variables listed in letters ‘a’ to ‘d’, are handed out to small groups along with a timeframe for constructing, memorizing and then rehearsing the speech act. For more able learner levels, conversation tasks may require the conversation to progress from *greeting, compliment, invitation, (reject or accept)* followed by *farewell*, which facilitates a display of learners’ ability to manage multiple turns at talk, which is essentially a form of strategic competence. This way, learners have an opportunity to make the shift from a ‘meta’ level to the practical.

Specific units are then organized around individual speech acts and placed sequentially in a way that reflects both an intuitive sense of how conversations unfold (i.e., *greetings*, for the most part, precede other speech acts such as *initiations, suggestions* and *farewells*) as well as empirical research into the relative difficulty of this set of speech acts (Rylander, Clark & Derrah, 2013). Rylander et al.’s (2013) research supports the notion that Japanese second language (L2) learners (from samples of learners at the junior high, high school and university level) are better able to recognize the first five speech acts than the second five. The set of ten speech acts are set out in the instructional materials in this fashion: *greetings, compliments, introductions, invitations, apologies, farewells, offers, requests, suggestions* and *complaints*.

### **Instructional Contexts & Teacher Impressions**

The discussion of how the instructional method and materials were implemented will focus on the specifics of the three teaching contexts in the following manner. First, a description of the institution will be provided containing: student numbers (in institution and in the treatment classes), the means by which students were streamed (if any) and

placed into the treatment class(es), the approximate amount of English language instruction (based on hours of classroom contact), and the characteristics of the pragmatics treatment over the course of the semester (i.e., which speech acts units taught for how many lessons over what number of classes). Teachers volunteered for the materials piloting phase and were given freedom to choose how best to implement the course into their context. After the basic introduction of the school and its class structure and treatment overview, there will be some discussion of learner performance, motivation and progress, and any individual differences. Each context will end with a section entitled *Teacher Take-away Comments* where the cons and pros of the materials instruction are presented.

### ***Context One: Junior High School***

This junior high school is an all-boys school located in the Kansai region of western Japan. The school encompasses both a junior high and a senior high school, with 554 boys attending the former and 659 the latter (as of the 2013-2014 academic school year). The pragmatics materials were introduced into the 3<sup>rd</sup> year junior high school curriculum, where 186 boys were enrolled. (This report focuses on the spring semester, in which half of the class (n=93) took part. The remaining students were given an identical instructional experience in the fall semester.)

Within the school, the English department employs nine full-time, tenured faculty members, of whom 7 are Japanese and 2 native speakers of English. An additional native speaker of English is employed on a part-time basis. The department follows an English language curriculum prescribed at the national level by the Ministry of Education (MEXT), as well as offering independent English language curriculum

beyond that, which is created by the native-speaking faculty. The national curriculum is taught in four classes over the course of every week, with instruction provided by Japanese teachers. One additional class a week focuses on the independent curriculum established by the native-speaker faculty. Communication classes within these combined strands of the school's curriculum are output oriented, focusing on the development of oral communication skills. Improvement of student skills in basic conversation and presentations are the focus of much of the curricular objectives at this level, with a greater emphasis on literacy skills—especially essay writing and research reporting linked to the development of critical thinking and analytical skills—entering into the curriculum at the high school level. There are no special English classes offered by the school. In total, over the span of an academic year, students will receive approximately 140 hours of English instruction. The composition of students within classes is not based on a streaming or placement system that takes into consideration student English language proficiency levels. To the students, most view the English language education offered by the department purely as a means of entering university.

The spring 2013 pragmatics course was composed of three sections, with between 22 to 24 students placed in each. The term consisted of 14 lessons (with 9 focusing on instructional pragmatics), with each class lasting 50 minutes in length. The classroom where the lessons were provided had a built-in sound system with one large plasma-screen television, as well as a projector and screen. Video clips were shown using the projector using an attached computer, with the sound playing through the class speakers. The schedule for the instructional treatment for the 10 weeks contained a set of pre-test and post-test instructional assessments, a unit each for the following speech acts *greetings*, *compliments*, *introductions* and *offers*, as well as lessons devoted to

performance tasks. The basic plan for each lesson focusing on the speech acts resembled this routine: introduction of the speech act, brainstorming prior knowledge of and experience with the speech act within both the L1 and L2. This was then followed by repeated viewings of the video clips and clip analysis. A 10-minute wrap-up covered the details of the clip contents, focusing on the pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic features within the clips shown during the lesson. No homework was given and students did not have access to viewing clips outside of class.

*Context One: Take-Away Teacher Comments*

There is a range of limitations in using the existing materials for this context. The duration of classes is 50 minutes and this proved to be too short a time frame when trying to introduce and cover all elements of the full lessons plans within the teaching materials and methodology written into each speech act unit. Students required a good amount of time at the start of the lesson initially needing to adjust to amount of written input provided in the student versions of the materials. The task demands of reading blocks of text for this level of language learner is too great and should be simplified. A good amount of work was required adapting the materials as they were to improve the opportunities for students to produce language examples within the time allotted of each class. In addition, few clips within the materials offer examples of similar-age speakers, with an overwhelming majority of video clips containing adults speaking with other adults. For a younger age group such as this, it would probably be more appropriate to have a collection of video clips that show speakers of a similar age-range. The limited listening abilities of the students made it difficult for students to fully engage with the video materials. The amount of analysis required of students at this level presents itself

at times in the form of task overload, and there should be more “fun” activities designed to engage students in the tasks. In addition, currently there are few formalized assessments with which to provide a summative analysis of student learning. More quizzes, speaking tasks and other forms of assessment would greatly improve the course for teachers interested in adopting such material for a junior high school context.

The positive elements of the course are as follows. Students at this level of L2 language education have limited opportunities to engage with “real” English being spoken at a semi-naturalistic speed. Most materials within the curriculum offer learners only the chance to listen to carefully scripted dialogues that focus on specified grammatical points using limited vocabulary and spoken at a measured speed. Getting used to practicing how to parse spoken language containing a range of examples of connected speech is useful for students at this level, even to a limited degree. For the students, this was a completely new way of learning English that they found to be practical in that there was a sense that what was being learned in the classroom possessed an immediate usefulness compared to some of the tasks and activities present within the larger English language curriculum.

### ***Context Two: High School***

The second teaching context was a co-ed high school located in the Kansai region of western Japan. Records show that 642 students attended the school in the 2012-2013 academic year—the year when the instructional treatment was given at this context. The school calendar runs three terms spanning the academic year, with students taking between 12 to 13 classes over the course of these terms. There are 18 teachers within the English department, 11 of whom are full-time and 7 part-time. Of these, 3 faculty

members are native speakers of English. The general goals of the English department align with the curricular standards prescribed at the national level by the Ministry of Education (MEXT), with specific requirements placed on all students that by graduation they display a specific level of English ability (defined as passing the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of the *Eiken* test).

Coursework for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year high school students (the target population who received the pragmatic treatment for the 2012 to 2013 school year) consists of weekly instruction for approximately two hours each of the following skills—reading, writing and oral communication. Though it varies somewhat widely (and often), the average number of class hours per term ranges from 15 to 18 (with lessons lasting 45 minutes). Classes are streamed based on faculty decision, with language proficiency not used in the decision-making process. For the students, some see the English language instruction provided by the department as a valuable tool for both continued study and future employment.

Across the year, for each term, approximately 45 students (with a ratio of 55% female to 45% male) received instruction using the pragmatics materials and methods. The class time was limited to 45 minutes per lesson, and though most classrooms within the school lack equipment to support instruction using technology (e.g., built-in sound systems, projectors and screens, hook-ups for computer access, or televisions) the classroom where the pragmatic instruction took place featured an interactive blackboard that allowed for showing video.

Materials instruction began for each lesson in the students' L1, focusing on raising student awareness of the lesson's speech act. Students were asked to consider how the speech act is commonly realized across L1 contexts. This provided a

foundation for students to conceptualize some of the basics regarding turn-taking conventions as well as how social relationships affect the choices speakers make while realizing a given speech act. This followed with a brainstorming activity in which students attempted to consider how the speech act was realized in English. One or two video clips were then shown as a way of offering confirmation/comparison to the students' expectations and assumptions regarding target language (TL) speech act routines. At this point, there was usually only time enough for a wrap-up discussion of the day's lesson. Both reading and writing homework was provided to supplement the in-class instruction. The reading homework would often take the form of reading through transcripts and answering questions concerning the interaction. The written homework included writing a response to set situation provided to the student seeking a certain outcome to the interaction.

*Context Two: Take-Away Teacher Comments*

As there was a high degree of novelty in this type of material (i.e., the content and instructional methodology), formulating workable lesson plans posed some problems. One initial concern on the part of the instructor was the limited number of tasks designed as formative assessments, which would allow for periodic grading of student performance and development. Early on in the course, one student asked, "What are we supposed to remember for the test?" Another issue in the high school relates to the relatively frequent changes made to the scheduling based on certain events (e.g., school speech contests and trips, where preparations often ended up consuming extra time), which would result in classes being cancelled without the opportunity for make-up lessons. Different classes covering the same material would often have a very different

number of total contact hours for any given course, with differences of between three to five class-hours not uncommon. Regardless of such rescheduling, classes would more often than not be required to sit the same exams for midterm and final. Though institutional scheduling issues itself do not reflect negatively in the materials, there remains an issue of adaptability. Lesson plans aimed at a high school audience should allow instructional flexibility that accounts for changing circumstances common to the educational environment. Additionally, formative assessments should be provided to allow teachers an ability of scoring student progress.

As to the materials, though the introductory portions afforded teachers an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of pragmatics, at times the content was somewhat inaccessible to the students. Students who were, for the most part, interested in improving their English language ability appreciated the challenge the listening materials offered. For other, less engaged, less motivated learners, the difficulty of the materials afforded them the opportunity (excuse) for non-participation (something which is a common occurrence in Japanese high schools and can result in lesson difficulty being reduced prior to instruction at the teacher level). One problem when adapting the pragmatic materials to a wider audience of teachers is that the lesson notes are only in English. A Japanese version would be necessary.

On the positive side, some of the basic concepts regarding speech act realization have easy-to-understand Japanese equivalents, which allowed for the novel content to be relatively approachable for most students. In short, they understood the course on a conceptual level. The videos—being short and varied in number—allotted a degree of “entertainment factor” to the lessons, offering students a reason to stay engaged during the lessons. Videos matched with appropriate methodology motivate the students. The

common framework for each lesson's task allowed for students to develop an understanding over time of what was expected of them for each lesson, and this resulted in an increase of student attention in regards to the details apparent in the videos. Most of all, the central content of the course—how language is used to perform routine, daily actions—is lacking in the existing curriculum offered by the English department. Additionally, the number of repeated listenings built into the lessons greatly benefited the students' overall listening ability, in particular their skill in discerning (i.e., parsing) word boundaries in speech spoken at normal speeds.

***Context Three: University: 1<sup>st</sup> Year***

The third context where the pragmatic materials were piloted occurred at a university located Kansai—in the western region of Japan—where 2 teachers at 2 different levels (1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year) participated in the instructional treatment, each for a duration of one 15-week semester during either the spring of 2012 or 2013. University records show an in-coming class during these years of approximately 3,200, with a total student population enrolled at the various campuses and colleges amounting to just over 13,000. The university *hensachi* is reported as B level. The college that contains the English language department employs 48 full-time limited-contract instructors, with an additional number of part-time teachers outsourced through a recruiting company.

The general goals and objectives of English language instruction vary depending on the class category and year level. At the time of the treatment, students were streamed based on an initial institutional (paper based) TOEFL, with students scoring between 500 and 550 (or those select few scoring above 550) placed into courses designed to prepare students for extended periods of study abroad—ranging from anywhere between

1 to 2 years at partnered universities around the world. Students in this stream are enrolled in 12 hours per week course loads taught entirely in English and conceived of as a type of sheltered “immersion” language program that provides them with 720 hours of instruction over the course of the two-year program. In 2013, there were approximately 10 sections of this stream, with class sizes ranging from 15 to 25 students. The first case described below introduces one semester’s instruction of a class of students streamed at this band.

The instructional treatment for the pragmatic materials was given twice: both times over the course of the spring semester, both times to classes of first-year students in their first semester, and both times to students who had been placed into the highest section of the intensive English program. The 2012 class consisted of 24 students: 17 females and 7 males. The 2013 class consisted of 23 students: 18 females and 5 males. For both years, over the course of the 15-week semester, the pragmatics treatment occupied one 90-minute lesson per week. The classrooms offered an overhead projector and screen, a built-in audio system, and the videos were shown via a second-generation iPad using Good Player software and a VGA cable hook-up.

For each of the two spring semesters, the schedule followed this instructional order: pretest, greetings, compliments, performance task 1, and invitations (with the 2013 class also covering requests). Performance task 2 and a posttest instrument ended the semester. Each speech act was given two class periods of 90 minutes and spanned two weeks<sup>2</sup>, except for invitations and requests, which were given only one 90-minute

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<sup>2</sup> The materials all instructors used was initially adopted to suit these classes, with each speech act (labeled as a “unit”) consisting of two sections designed to be taught over the course of two classes. Due to time constraints, students in the junior high school and

class each. Additional classes were used for in preparation for each of the performance tasks.

*Context Three 1<sup>st</sup> Year Class: Take-Away Teacher Comments*

From a teaching perspective, the notion of instructional pragmatics is relatively uncommon within many TESOL degree programs. Even at the M.A. level, the learning curve for teachers unaccustomed to the underlying notions supporting the course content—especially what might be deemed important in a clip—pose challenges. It takes teaching the course once for the course content and method to “gel”. For students, some task elements were initially unclear or, on the other hand, were simplistic. Lessons rely upon recycled tasks, and only after several iterations from unit section to unit section did certain tasks become clear. Though none of the students in the instructional treatment had heard of “pragmatics,” doing speech acts like Greetings and even Compliments at the start of the semester confused some as to why they were being asked to study something they already “knew”. The notion of what pragmatics is took several lessons to sink in; students merely saw the simplistic nature of the initial concepts. The impression of the first two units of the course was that they were too easy.

On the positive side, once students began to understand that with each speech act came an additional layer of conversational complexity, the course turned an “engagement” corner. As an instructor, the teaching returns increased as the lessons progressed throughout the semester. By the third speech act, students were better versed in how to (and were more willing to) analyze clips for the nuances of each brief

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high school only received instruction on one of the two sections for each unit introduced.

exchange. They displayed an ability to grasp subtleties in meaning from gestures and the prosodic elements that go into “authentic” interactions. It was apparent throughout both semesters’ instruction that there were “light bulb” moments for many students. By the end, the students’ awareness of the overall aim of the course had crystallized. Students became more adept at analyzing talk-in-interaction and, as a result, became more aware of the interconnected nature of language and culture.

One common misconception students often display is a notion that “Eastern” and “Western” cultures handle directness differently in talk. This notion is generalized into the view that in the East talk is handled indirectly, whereas in the West talk is handled directly. Working with the pragmatic elements of this class allowed students to confront this misconception, by analyzing how patterns of talk (in their L1 and L2) often times reveal more similarities than differences. One specific instance of this is how often students improperly use the imperative form when making requests in English. The logic, or what seems to be the logic, is that the use of *please* and *thank you* transforms an imperative (i.e., an order or command) into a polite request. The requests unit helped students to see disparities in their use of the imperative form and to acquire a set of alternative forms they could use in talk.

Overall, students seemed to expand their understanding of what constitutes a TL conversation and, to some degree, their sense that communication is a “strategic” skill. Exercises in the materials are oriented towards raising learner awareness, so knowing or putting a metric onto how much students ‘got’ is quite difficult. In both classes, students responded positively. The students liked the videos and were interested in the language being used, the interactions of the characters, and the settings. The materials provided students with opportunities to hear and start to recognize a variety of speech acts. In

addition, students became more accustomed to the prosodic elements revealed within the various speech acts, and, as a result, they gained a greater confidence in their abilities to recognize different types of interactions. The course content is unique. Just for sheer difference of instruction and focus, the students seemed on task. The tasks were not too challenging and required the students to think of things that they already knew and recognized but, perhaps, had never really thought about. It was clear that this was not only for how they conceptualized talk in English, but also for their awareness of talk-in-interaction in their L1.

***Context Three: University 2<sup>nd</sup> Year***

The final case study occurred at the same university, with the course term spanning the 2013 spring semester. Unlike in the university intervention above, the streaming for this class resulted in a different student body make up. Not only were these students from the second-year class, but they were also placed into a different set of courses for their two-years within the English language program. Unlike the more highly proficient students enrolled in the courses described above, the students in this course had been streamed into one of 44 possible levels for students scoring below the 500 cut-off mark. Average scores for students within this stream range and an annual basis from 430 to 450. The course curriculum is less demanding, and there is less of a motivation (both on the student's and the institution's part) for students placed into this stream to enter into the university's 1- to 2-year study abroad exchange program. Even still, many students from this stream are successfully admitted for shorter study abroad experiences, usually ranging from several weeks to a semester's duration (or even up to a year). Though not entirely standardized, the curriculum for this stream is designed at the skill-level, rather

than in regards to any specified content. Teachers possess a relative amount of freedom when creating and implementing instructional methods and materials, and there are few measures in place to unify the curriculum either horizontally across skills or vertically from semester to semester and first-year to second-year. Students in this stream receive 180 minutes of instruction per week, which amounts to less than half of what is given to students from the case study described above. Class sizes range from 20 to 25, in principle, and are scheduled into classrooms identical in nature to that described above (i.e., projector and screen, built-in audio system and computer accessible plug-ins for running video for instruction).

The week-by-week schedule of instruction for this class of students (composed of a 8:2 female to male ratio) was as follows: introduction to the notion of speech acts and connected speech (e.g., pauses, thought groups, prosody, elision, resyllabification), greetings, introductions, compliments, offers, requests, suggestions and commands, invitations, apologies, promises and leave-takings. The final weeks were reserved for PowerPoint presentations (explained in more detail below). Instruction for this group of students was less “regimented” than that for all other contexts introduced thus far due to the fact that an earlier version of the pragmatics materials and methodology was used for this group.

At the lesson-plan level, classes started with a description of the speech act, followed by awareness-raising activities (e.g., comparisons and contrasts between L1 & L2 speech act realization), and then example clips. This was done so as to prepare students for their homework assignments. Students did “movie logs” outside of class each week, whereby they would spend an hour or two in the audio-visual center in the university library watching self-selected movies or television programming in English.

The classwork prepared students to look for specific examples from the media, and students were assigned a basic transcription task. This was kept in the form of a hand-written log, and several times throughout the semester students would work in groups during class comparing transcripts they had taken from various sources. During these group-work sessions, transcription conventions are covered in plenary. At the end of the semester, students would conduct a research/presentation project, in which each would choose an assortment of their favorite speech act scenes and produce a short presentation highlighting features of the movie (e.g., genre, plot, main characters, and scene details).

*Context Three 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Class: Take-Away Teacher Comments*

As the curricular constraints imposed by the English department for courses within this stream are generally less rigid than for the other, more intensive stream, much of the pragmatic instruction functions as “supplemental” tasks that are blended in with more traditional speaking and listening course work designed into the year-long course. Much of the course assessment is weighted heavily towards student participation in group work. The result is that students come prepared and willingly engage in the classroom-based activities where the instructional pragmatic materials take center stage. Students have given nothing but positive feedback regarding the in-class speech act and out-of-class movie log work for the classes (and this has been over the past decade that this instructor has used these materials in various courses and at various institutions—both at the high school and university level). Students report that they feel this type of instruction gives them more exposure to the “real” English that they want to learn.

## Discussion

These teacher impressions of the pragmatic materials have given a range of shortcomings and benefits. It is immediately apparent that some of the largest shortcomings are the level-sensitive nature of the materials. For some students, the textbook and videos are too challenging—both textually and conceptually—especially for students at the lower levels. At the same time, for students at the more advanced levels, the materials are too simplistic (especially for those who have had experience residing abroad). For teachers, there is a definite learning curve in regards to the nature and role of pragmatic instruction in the L2 classroom as well as learning how best to use the terms and methods (both of which have an academic feel to them) for presenting the information given in the student materials and teachers notes. Teaching the course multiple times was the only remedy teachers felt there was for this issue. On the positive side, teachers valued the type and amount of listening presented in the materials. Teachers also commented on how much their students developed in regards to their ability to analyze not only the linguistic input but also the visual. This is reassuring, as it points to the potential that having the blended pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic instruction proved beneficial. Finally, the materials provided a type of immediacy to the learning, which, in turn, may prove an effective way of increasing student motivation in the classroom.

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# Tap into the future: A study of iPads and interactive eBooks in an e-learning project

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## **Abstract**

This article focuses on an ongoing e-learning project at one Japanese university. Following the introduction of a Wi-Fi environment, the institution provided iPads to all new students. Simultaneously, faculty began the switch from paper-based in-house books to the production of interactive eBooks for the delivery of English in a content-based curriculum. The paper considers the rationale for the adoption of the iPad, then looks at the history behind its introduction and discusses some of the challenges encountered in converting paper text to interactive e-books. Features that allow the creation of interactive activities are explained with examples. Problems encountered in the production of eBooks are discussed. The reactions of students to e-learning are considered through examination of responses from students in focus group discussions about the use of iPads and eBooks in the classroom. Finally, the paper provides advice for teachers or institutions considering the creation of e-books suitable for their students.

## **The rationale for the adoption of the iPad**

The use of iPads and eBooks is already happening, and at a growing pace. Similar to the introduction at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the tablet computer, notably the iPad, is an amazing technological breakthrough that is changing the face of education forever. The blackboard revolutionized education by enabling teachers to deliver the same content to a whole class of students at the same time. As a result more people could receive an education from a single teacher. The tablet computer is an equal, or even greater breakthrough than the blackboard was then.

A tablet computer, in particular an iPad, has the potential to revolutionize how education is delivered and experienced now and in the future. An iPad packs a huge number of useful features into one small package. It is an eBook library, a digital camera and video camera, a recorder, a computer, a language lab, a slide show, and an electronic flashcard. You can send email, or have live conversations via messaging applications, watch videos, listen to lectures and conversations, give presentations and access news stories all on a little tablet that measures 20X13.5 centimeters. Furthermore it is light, small enough to carry easily in a school bag and comes at a fraction of the cost of purchasing all of the heavy and bulky equipment that often clutters up the classrooms of many schools.

Bramley, Cornwell and Swenson (2014) consider that technology has, and will continue to change the face of education. This assertion is borne out by various research, (e.g. Angel, 2011; Bray & Khaddage, 2013; Ireland & Woolerton, 2010; Kimura, Obari & Goda, 2010; Kusano, Fredericksen, Jones, Kobayashi, Mukoyama, Yamagishi et al, 2013; Lockley, 2013; Miyahara & Susono, 2013; Renda, Robin, Otanez & Susono, 2013; Sekiguchi, S. 2011) which shows that tablet computers, in particular iPads, provide learning opportunities, particularly in language education, that make the tablet computer the preferred content delivery device for Japanese EFL learners. The important thing, they assert, is that it must be understood that it is not enough for students merely to have the device, but it is essential for the material they access to be directed toward specific curricular goals. This is done through the medium of interactive eBooks.

### **The history behind the introduction of the iPad**

One university in Japan has been developing their own content-based curriculum based on themes such as peace and conflict, human rights and environmental issues since 1998. At this time, the teaching faculty produced paper-based materials for the new curriculum. These comprised reading, writing and discussion materials. Also, accompanying audio and video materials were initially produced on cassette. The materials engage the students in inquiry-based education (learning by doing) through project-based learning. This involves students in research which may be teacher-directed or self-directed. Students make presentations and practice writing skills, employing appropriate rhetorical patterns for the type of project. The materials are revised annually.

In addition to the production of leading edge and up-to-date materials, the university has long been a leader in the utilization of modern technology. In addition to language laboratories, the school set up large computer rooms in 1991. In 2004, students at this university were the first students in Japan to receive iPods. The university made video materials accessible online in 2002, and now the school uses a learning management system, Moodle, which makes it possible for materials for all aspects of language learning to be online.

### ***Coming into the present***

The university once again became one of the leaders in the use of educational technology in 2012 when Wi-Fi was installed throughout the school, and all incoming first year students were presented with an iPad. In the beginning, because the decision to get iPads was made near to the beginning of spring term, there were no e-materials

available. At this time teachers utilized iPads alongside the printed in-house textbooks in a variety of ways. For example, iPads were widely used for project work. In some projects, students would use their iPads to find a series of pictures on the Internet which they would then use to make a short presentation about a topic in the textbook. In addition to connecting with the Internet to do research and get information for projects and writing assignments, students also quickly adapted to the use of the other features of the iPad, for example dictionary and YouTube apps. Furthermore, teachers quickly became used to presenting activities and information using an iPad with a classroom projector. Soon, faculty began exploring the potential of the iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) program to produce eBooks.

### ***eBooks at last!***

The university published its first eBook titled, “A Human Rights Reader” (Swenson, ed, 2012), in September 2012. It was based on paper materials already written. Using the features of the iBooks Author program, the book was made interactive. For the first time, the eBook format also allowed all materials to be unified; reading, listening and videos were all in one place. This, and subsequent eBooks are more than just reading texts. They contain other features which reflect changes in the understanding of language learning (Bramley, Cornwell & Swenson, 2014). For example, they focus on developing vocabulary through the use of Wordles, or word clouds, (c.f. Pennestri & Salvadin, 2011, MacNaught & Lam, 2010). The eBooks also have interactive vocabulary and comprehension questions. Students can access listening exercises in the eBooks by merely tapping an icon on the page. In the same way, students can access video materials and connect with the Internet.

After the publication of two readers, the writers produced interactive eBooks for the discussion component of the course.. These eBooks use the authoring features in the iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) program to create exercises which engage students with the materials and encourage them to interact in numerous ways: with each other, with the text, with embedded media such as audio, video and photographs, with the Internet and with the teacher.

The eBooks also empower the learner and act as a springboard to more autonomous learning. For example, the eBooks allow students to highlight text and to make notes and store them. Using this feature, students can make their own electronic flashcards for self-study to review words or facts they have learned. Teachers can check students' notes by having students send them by email from within the eBook. To date, nine eBooks have been produced and now even more sophisticated versions of these eBooks are being produced for the spring term of 2014.

### **The problems of converting paper text to interactive eBooks**

This section distinguishes between two types of eBook: *static* and *interactive*, and looks at some of the challenges faced in the production of interactive eBooks for both the reading and discussion components of the course. It explains how some of the features of the program iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) were used to address these challenges and discusses some problems that remain.

#### ***Interactive eBooks***

An *interactive* “eBook” combines both the features of the tablet computer and of an eBook creation program, in this case, the program called iBooks Author (Apple Inc.,

2011-2013), which is designed for Apple computers, to provide a learning experience which directs the learner to interact with the material via the content in the book and via the internet. An interactive eBook also directs students to interact with other students, and with the teacher. Furthermore the content and the activities of an in-house interactive eBook can be directed toward the specific curricular goals of the university where they are used.

### *Creating Interactive eBooks: Challenges*

The first challenge was how to convert paper text to interactive eBook activities. A modern discussion textbook has various activities designed to promote communication between learners such as discussion activities, information gap activities, dialogues, information exchange activities and conversation cards. In addition, teachers will supplement the text with their own handouts. Furthermore there is usually an audio, and sometimes a video component to the course. This section gives examples of how the writers converted activities from the paper format to the eBook format using the eBooks Author program. It also explains the creation of speaking activities which were not possible before the introduction of eBooks. The kind of page in Figure 1 below is often found as a photocopiable supplement to a paper-based text.

Figure 1 – Conversation cards activity

AMERICAN MOVIES	BUSINESS	CLUB ACTIVITIES	DANCE	EARTH-QUAKES
ART	BABIES	CANADA	DOGS	EATING
AFTER CLASS	BARBECUE	COMPUTERS	DINNER	EMPLOYMENT
AUSTRALIA	BLOOD TYPE	CINEMA	DRAMAS ON TV	EDUCATION
APRIL	BOOKS	COUNTRY-SIDE	DAVID BECKHAM	EXERCISE

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Traditionally, teachers photocopy the page, cut out the cards and perhaps laminate them. They then use the cards in activities such as conversation circles. The question was, how to incorporate this kind of activity in an eBook. The answer to this problem is to use a design feature of the iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) program called *widgets*. We use four of these widgets quite heavily in our eBooks.

### ***The Popover Widget***

This widget allows the author to make text or images appear when the user taps on an image in the eBook. The screenshot (See Figure 2) shows what this looks like in an eBook. In the activity “Tap & Talk”, each Pop Over shows a conversation topic when tapped. In other activities the same widget is used to make interactive discussion activities, vocabulary learning exercises and group activities.

Figure 2 – Tap and Talk: an interactive eBook activity

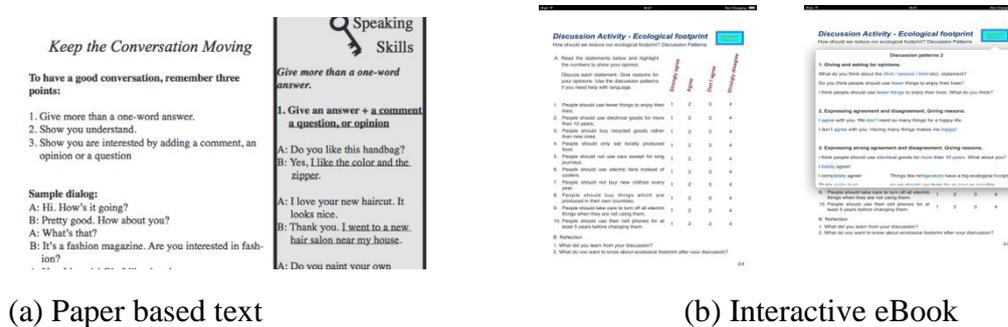


Bramley and Cornwell (2013)

The great advantage of the Pop Over widget is that it allows the author to conceal quite a lot of text and also pictures. This is important because the page area of an eBook in an iPad, particularly the iPad mini that our students have, is quite small. Writers can use the Pop Over widget to improve the layout of a page by making it look

less dense, while students can easily access the activities or the content simply by tapping on the screen. See Figure 3. Image (a) on the left shows how speaking practice is handled in a paper text. Image (b) on the right demonstrates how the Pop Over has improved this. Instead of devoting a whole page to explain discussion patterns, figure (b) shows how the Pop Over conceals the patterns until the Pop Over icon is tapped. It should also be noted that, when the Pop Over window is open part of the page is concealed. This means that the students cannot merely read the dialogues out. When they refer back to the questions, the Pop Over window closes. This means they have to make an effort to remember the patterns when practicing them.

Figure 3



(a) Paper based text

(b) Interactive eBook

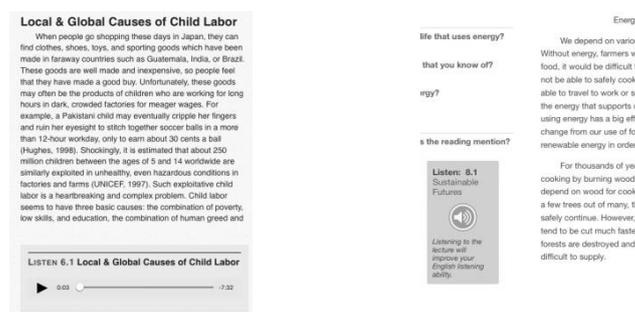
Bramley, ed, with Swenson, T. (2013)

### The Media Widget

The writers also faced the challenge of how to incorporate media, in particular audio and video into the format of an eBook. The “Media” widget allows audio or video to be embedded in the pages of an eBook. Clicking on the media widget in iBooks Author opens a blank media window. Audio or video files can be dragged into this window for inclusion in the eBook. Writers then use the inspector window to adjust the appearance

and functionality of the media files. For example, an audio file may just have a play/pause function or it may have a scrubber bar enabling the listener to stop and go forwards or backwards (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Media scrubber bar and media play/pause icon



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All of the readers and discussion books produced so far include audio files and some include video files. In the reading books these are sound files of the readings, inserted next to the reading passage. In the discussion materials, some interactive review quizzes also feature sound files, Dictations and listening comprehension activities also use embedded as sound files in discussion eBooks.

However there are some problems yet to overcome with the use of media in eBooks. The primary one is the size of the video files. These are quite large and can require a great deal of memory space. The students have a basic 16GB iPad. This would soon fill up if too many media heavy eBooks were on it. Furthermore, when eBooks are too media heavy, they take far too long for students to download. For this reason a decision has been made not to use many video files in our eBooks. One solution to the problem is to direct students to video files stored on institutional LMSs or in a private YouTube account. Authors can then insert a dedicated link in the eBook. However this may lead to another potential problem. If a class of students were to try

to access the same material at the same time, inevitably the Wi-Fi Internet connection would be overloaded with the result that perhaps none of the students could watch the video material.

Another issue connected with the use of audio-visual media in eBooks is the quality of the sound component. It is very important to make the clearest possible recordings. Using a recording microphone in a quiet place rather than a built in microphone in a computer is much better for sound quality. Of course, a recording studio is ideal for making the best quality files. Finally it is important to know the required file type and file labeling conventions if submitting an eBook created with iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) to the iTunes Store. If authors do not follow these conventions, the iTunes store will reject their eBooks.

### ***The Review Widget***

Clicking on the Review widget in iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) inserts a blank review multiple choice quiz with four answers and also automatically opens up the Inspector window. This already has filler text. Using the Inspector window is essential for making review quizzes. The number of answer choices can be changed by clicking on the number four next to the question and then selecting how many answers are needed. It is possible to access different types of quiz by clicking on the plus button below the answers window. This causes a number of different quiz formats to appear. Some quiz formats include only pictures, some only text and others combine both pictures and text. Writers insert text by typing over the filler text or directly into the review quiz window. They can insert pictures by opening the media window and clicking the media icon on the top right of the toolbar to select pictures from files on

the computer.

Our eBooks use the Review widget in a number of ways. For example, for comprehension questions on reading passages or for multiple choice self-study or review quizzes and for vocabulary quizzes. It is also possible to use it in conjunction with media files so that students hear a question and can then choose the answer. Some exercises use it to check students' ability to respond to discussion language. One exercise uses it to test students' understanding of the steps of a process by using a "drag and drop" function. Finally discussion activities in which students discuss the possible answers to a set of ten questions also use the Review widget. Activities made using the Review widget have a number of uses including self-study exercises, comprehension and vocabulary checks, and classroom discussion activities. As such, they are a key component of interactive eBooks.

### ***The Gallery Widget***

The Gallery widget inserts a set a pictures in a slideshow format. Students can view this within the page or in full screen mode. Selecting the gallery widget makes an empty gallery appear, Writers insert images by using the Inspector window. The can control the look of the gallery by using the layout tab. Clicking on the plus sign makes it possible to insert photo images stored on the computer or on an external drive. This widget has a number of uses. One example, called Slide Talking, is in the discussion eBook, *Talking About a Sustainable Future* (Bramley ed. with Cline, Teaman and Johnston, 2013). (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. Slide Talking activity

**Slide Talking**

For Homework

1. Your teacher will assign you one or more photographs (A, B, C, D, E) from the gallery.
2. Look at your photograph(s) and write three sentences to explain what you see. Use the [link](#) for [LINKS ABOUT PHOTOS](#).

Issues in Population

A

In Class

1. Make groups with A, B, C and D. Explain your photograph to your group.
2. Look at the other photographs and listen to the other students in your group.
3. [Tip list](#). Choose more photographs and talk about them with your group. Explain why you chose each photograph.

14

(Bramley ed. with Cline, Teaman and Johnston, 2013)

In this activity, the teacher assigns each student a picture from the gallery and for homework the student has to write a number of sentences about the pictures that connect it to the topic of the chapter. A Pop Over window on the same page contains hints for how to talk about a picture. In class, students explain their pictures to other students and discuss the ideas they have about the topic. Students then connect with the Internet via a link on the same page to find and discuss more pictures relevant to the topic. Another example of the gallery is on page 101 of *Identity in a Changing World: Our Ethics & Values* (Cline, Fu, Johnston, Swenson & Tojo, eds. 2013). In this case 12 gallery images are used to build up a step-by-step picture of how countries are connected by their values (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. Gallery of World Values Survey



Cline, Fu, Swenson, & Tojo, K. (Eds.). (2013)

### *Problems encountered in the production and use of eBooks*

The program, iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013), with its widgets and other features, makes it possible to create Interactive eBooks. However there are a number of problems associated with the production of eBooks using this program. The first is the platform. If it is not possible to access an Apple computer running one of the latest operating systems, then it will be impossible to start. The next problem is the time taken. Producing an eBook is a very time consuming process. Even if all of the content already exists in Word document form, writers will have to cut and paste it into the eBook creation program, manipulate it with widgets and format it in the most graphically pleasing way possible on the page. Thus, to produce an eBook composed of eight chapters when the content is available may take up to 150 hours, depending on the skill of the editor (Swenson, et al 2014). If writers have to create content as well, then it will take considerably more time. When the finished eBook is transferred to an iPad for use, further problems are encountered. While, iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) allows tables to be inserted into eBooks, they cannot be used for activities

such as information gaps. Although notes can be made in eBooks, they cannot be made in tables. Therefore a workaround has to be used. In this case, colored boxes are used to make up the “cells” of a table. Yet there are further problems involved. It is not possible to make a note by tapping on an empty space. Therefore another workaround has to be used. In this case, “invisible” printing is used. In fact the printing is the same color as the background so it can’t be seen. As long as the student taps on the invisible writing, notes can be made.

There are also problems with the way that eBooks created by iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) work on the delivery vehicle, in this case, the iPad Mini. One problem arises from the size of the iPad Mini. Because it has a small screen, it is very important to make sure that the font of the eBook is no smaller than Size 20. If the font is any smaller than this, it will be too much of a strain for many people to read. Another problem is that, while you can usually reduce and increase the magnification of text on an iPad by pinching and spreading your fingers, this does not work when using eBooks made by iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013). For many people, reading from a computer screen is a big strain on the eyes, so when faced with these problems they may find it uncomfortable to focus on the text in an eBook for a long time. However, these problems are not insurmountable. With imagination and planning there are workarounds to address them. In addition, constant updates are made to the programs, so the eBook remains a very impressive tool.

### **Reactions of Students to iPads and eBooks**

The following is a summary of research, which will appear in greater detail in a later article. As a first step in the construction of a survey, a focus group of 20 students was

asked about their use of iPads and eBooks. Specifically, they were asked what they liked and disliked about the iPad, how often and where they used their iPads most and how they used their iPads. In regard to eBooks they were asked which eBook they had enjoyed using the most, what they thought about specific activities in the eBooks, what they thought about the features (Pop Over, Gallery, Media, Review) of the eBook and how much they used the eBook in class. The following is a summary of the results which were given in a recent presentation: Reactions to iPads and eBooks: Construction of a Survey by Swenson, Bramley, Teaman, Cornwell and Tojo (2014).

### *Student attitudes towards iPads*

Students generally like using iPads and find them convenient for learning. While eBook developers are concerned about the relatively small memory (16GB) of their iPads, students seem much less concerned and feel that the memory is enough. However this may be because they tend to delete eBooks when they have finished a term. Students' favorite features of the iPad are games, the ability to watch movies, especially on YouTube, music, pictures and the fact that they can carry a lot of textbooks easily.

On the other hand, students have some dislikes. One of the biggest problems cited was the short battery life. When the iPad is used heavily, especially for large multimedia files, the battery tends to drain very quickly, and students often run out of power during or before a class. Also students commented that the iPad takes a long time to recharge. As a result, they can be left out on a limb when their iPad is charging.

Another problem, reported especially by second year students, who received an iPad 2 rather than an iPad Mini is that the iPad is quite heavy. It is true that there is a

considerable weight difference between the two models. However even an iPad 2 is lighter than a set of textbooks. Some students commented that while the iPad Mini is lighter, it has the disadvantage of having a smaller screen. This makes it difficult to read some of the older editions of eBooks, which have not yet been changed to size 20 font because, as mentioned earlier, interactive eBooks have locked font size and cannot be magnified in the usual way.

As for how students use the iPad, they reported that their major use was for doing homework, because the iPad gives them access to a variety of dictionaries and other study aids. Students also reported that they used the iPad a lot for making presentations. Finally, students use the iPad for the listening practice exercises within the eBooks. Unfortunately, some students reported that they did not use the iPad or the eBooks.

***Student attitudes towards features of interactive eBooks.***

Students liked galleries. They enjoyed looking at the pictures. They found them easy to understand and were able to talk about the pictures a lot. Audio files were popular because students felt they were good for listening to correct pronunciation. They reported using the review quizzes a lot, especially in reading classes. Another feature of eBooks that students found very useful were the note taking and highlighting functions. They used notes to make vocabulary cards and highlighting in reading texts to clearly mark features such as topic sentences and transitions. In discussion a news reporting activity that used highlighting to guide students in summarizing a news article was also popular. The initial focus group responses have provided useful information that has informed the construction of a more detailed survey, which will be

the subject of a later article.

### *Advice for the creation of eBooks*

All kinds of content are suitable for the construction of an eBook. Our experience with eBooks shows that they are eminently suitable as a vehicle for a content-based syllabus. As explained above, interesting and interactive reading eBooks and discussion eBooks can be constructed using the available software. The medium will also be suitable for eBooks focusing on listening skills, because it is easy to insert audio media into books. Even for topics such as phonetics the audio-visual capabilities of the eBook will be useful.

One type of content to avoid is video files because they take use too much memory and make eBooks take too long to download. Another purpose for which eBooks are not yet suitable is longer pieces of writing. While shorter notes can be quite easily made in eBooks, it is very time consuming to use the iPad for typing longer pieces. In addition, the physical process of putting pencil to paper is such an important part of writing that the course would lose something if all writing were done on the iPad. For the time being, while a writing textbook can be made for iPad, it is best to keep paper as the writing medium.

### *Time and Training*

Learning to use iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013), and indeed iPads too, for the first time is a time consuming and sometimes frustrating process. To produce one main course eBook for which the content already exists can take up to 150 hours. It is a good idea to start by inviting an expert, someone who has produced an eBook, for a seminar

or workshop with a small team of materials developers to start by teaching them the basics of the program. In the end, practical experience is the most important thing. To sit down and produce a small eBook would be a great first step, and would lead to improvements as knowledge of the program increased. In consideration of the time taken and the experience needed, it would be a good idea to start writing an eBook course one year to six months before the course is due to start. Admittedly, with the pressures and deadlines for other aspects of school life, this advice may sound unrealistic. However, time is a very important factor to consider.

### *Equipment and Connectivity*

The eBooks described in this paper are all created on an Apple computer. Moreover the school has a Wi-Fi environment. The eBooks have been designed taking this into account. However, even if there is no connection with the Internet, it is still possible to produce interactive eBooks for use in class. Such eBooks will be able to make use of most of the available features of the iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) program. One problem might be in transferring the iBook from the computer to the iPad. Although the Internet is generally used, it is possible to attach the iPad directly to the computer to transfer the eBook. This will be time consuming. Also if there is no internet connection for the iPads, they will have to be updated by attaching them to an Internet enabled computer. It is essential that the software both on the iPad and the computer is continually updated to the latest version. Finally, as iBooks Author (Apple Inc., 2011-2013) is only available on the Apple computer platform, at least one Apple computer must be available in the institution for the purpose of creating these interactive eBooks.

## Conclusion

Essentially, content based interactive eBooks delivered on tablet computers, in particular iPads, deliver content and engage students with the content, with each other, the teacher and the outside world through the Internet. Also, on tablet computers, interactive eBooks go beyond paper textbooks by delivering content in an engaging way by using a wide array of multimedia features. Interactive eBooks are the beginning of a technological revolution which has already started to change the face of education, particularly language education. As such, it can be considered a valid priority to conduct ongoing research into, and development of, interactive eBooks and the use of tablet computers in EFL classrooms.

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## Can tasks help low-level students?

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### **Abstract**

This paper will briefly look at some of the different styles of English language teaching Japanese students encountered in secondary schooling such as Presentation, Practice and Production, and Grammar Translation. These forms will be contrasted with a style known as Task-Based Language Teaching. This will be looked at in detail, explaining what a task is and then describing a standard task-based lesson and how this style works well in the West but not so in a Japanese classroom due to cultural differences. I will then go on to describe my teaching circumstances and the problems tertiary teachers can have with implementing tasks in the classroom. Finally the advantages and disadvantages of using tasks with low-level students will be shown.

*Keywords:* task-based language teaching, presentation, practice and production, grammar translation, low-level students, focus-on-form, motivation, textbooks

**T**here are many ways to teach; every way has good and bad points. Some styles have come and gone, such as Audio-lingualism, Total Physical Response and Suggestopaedia. Some have been around for years and continue today, like Presentation, Practice and Production, (henceforth PPP) and Grammar Translation, (henceforth GT). Some are relatively new, such as Task-Based Language Teaching, (henceforth TBLT).

A basic difference between PPP and TBLT lies in their use of deductive and inductive approaches. A deductive approach implies the explanation of rules before practice whereas, an inductive approach requires students to infer rules from contextualised practice, referred to as “discovery learning” by Ellis (1992) and

“consciousness-raising” by Rutherford (1987) and others. TBLT uses this latter style, which in recent years has become more popular as it simulates how many people learn language outside the classroom through communicative use.

Research by Klapper (1997) suggests that if students want to become active users of a foreign language, being able to cope with different situations they encounter in that language, they need to realize that language learning is not just a cognitive process; it is also an experiential process. In my opinion this is where Japanese English language teaching has let the student down. Language is taught like mathematics or science. Throughout secondary schooling students memorize lists of vocabulary and grammar structures but seldom use them orally. Students are rarely given the chance to converse in English. Klapper goes on to tell us that “grammar develops in the long term as a function of extensive exposure to, imitation and adaptation of the richest possible variety of language forms” (1997, p. 24). TBLT incorporates all of these points and this is why I find students improve when using this form as opposed to PPP or GT. The communicative competence model of Canale and Swain (1980) clearly illustrates the significance of grammar for language users. Without grammar students are restricted in their communicative abilities. Therefore, I will show how I use TBLT in my classroom, which lets learners communicate but also introduces grammar.

This paper explains what a task is, shows what a TBLT lesson consists of, and then goes on to explain teaching circumstances and problems with implementing this method in some Japanese classrooms. The advantages and disadvantages of using TBLT with low-level Japanese students will be looked at.

### **Definition and description of a task**

According to Nunan, a task is,

a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form (1989, p. 10).

Skehan (1998a) defined four criteria for tasks:

1. Meaning is primary
2. There is a goal which needs to be worked towards
3. The activity is outcome-evaluated
4. There is a real-world relationship

Ellis (2003) added to these criteria:

5. A task is a work plan requiring learners' cognitive processes

The above definitions show similarities. A task is a communicative activity that involves a clear goal (Breen, 1987; Prabhu, 1987; Willis, 1996) and thus improves students' receptive and productive skills. A task is related to a real-world situation and thus motivates students (Swain, 1995). A task results in some clear outcome, other than simply the use of language. The outcome of a task can be judged in terms of content (Ellis, 2003). The idea of a definite outcome or what Crookes (1986) calls 'a specific objective' is an essential feature of a task. Meaning is more important than the form which is used to reach the goal (Nunan, 2004).

Tasks can be "unfocused" or "focused" (Ellis, 2003). Unfocused tasks use language in a general communicative way. Focused tasks use specific linguistic features (typically a grammatical structure). Tasks can be "input-providing", i.e., listening or reading, or "output-prompting", i.e., writing or speaking. Many tasks involve both.

Table 1 shows six different types of activities that have the potential to become

tasks, with each type involving different cognitive processes. Willis (1998) tells us that the cognitive complexity increases as you progress from 1 to 6.

Table 1: Types of activities that have the potential to become a task

1 Listing	Brainstorming and fact finding
2 Ordering, sorting, classifying	Sequencing, ranking, categorizing, classifying
3 Comparing and matching	Finding similarities and differences
4 Creative	Project work
5 Problem solving	Analyzing situations, reasoning and decision making
6 Sharing personal experiences	Explaining attitudes, opinions and reactions

Comparing and matching is a common type of task often referred to as an information gap task according to Pica (2005). These tasks work well with Japanese students. An example is where two students have similar pictures. Students exchange information to see how their partner's picture is different. Only one answer is considered correct and reaching it requires a verbal exchange of information. To reach the correct outcome students must make sure the information exchanged is accurate and understood. If one cannot understand the information, their partner must rephrase or expand their answer until understood. As the students engage in this negotiation they draw attention to the meaning of the information and the form in which it is encoded (Long, 1983; Varonis & Gass, 1985). My students enjoy these tasks and produce various language structures in completing them. Let us look at the steps in a TBLT lesson.

### **An introduction to Task-Based Language Teaching**

The starting point of TBLT is not the language, as is the case with PPP, but rather the learner and learning process (Long, 2000). TBLT is a communicative way of introducing new grammar structures to students. Canale and Swain (1980, p.2) describe

a communicative way as, “organized on the basis of communicative functions (e.g. apologizing, describing, inviting, promising) that a given learner or group of learners needs to know and emphasizes the ways in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately.” The method was popularised by Prabhu (1987) who speculated students were just as likely to learn language if thinking about a non-linguistic problem as when concentrating on particular language forms. Students are not given a language structure but a task to perform or a problem to solve. The focus of the lesson is the task, not the structures used. Willis and Willis (2009) say that this aim prioritises fluency rather than accuracy. Learners should be able to use the language with speed and confidence even if this means sacrificing grammatical accuracy. The task should be meaningful and related to real encounters outside the class (Alessi & Trollip, 2001; Breen, 1987; Keller & Suzuki, 2004). Students will then be more motivated to complete the task and produce authentic language.

### **A basic TBLT lesson designed for Western students**

A TBLT lesson can be broken into three sections according to Willis (1998), the pre-task stage, the task cycle and the language focus. In the pre-task stage the teacher introduces the topic, getting students to brainstorm about it. Difficult vocabulary may be explained and some useful words or phrases offered by the teacher. The teacher explains the instructions for the task so all the students know what they should be doing and what the goal is. Students may hear a recording of others doing a similar task, or read part of a text as a lead-in. In the task cycle, the students perform the task with the teacher monitoring. Students then plan how to report what they decided or discovered. Some groups present their reports to the class, or exchange written reports, and compare

results. In the language focus, students examine and then discuss specific features of the text or transcript of the recording. The teacher focuses the students on what language was used and conducts practice of new words, phrases, and patterns occurring in the data. This is a Focus-on-Form (henceforth FonF) activity. Skehan tells us there needs to be a FonF even though learners may be participating in interactions, with meaning as primary, there is still some concern for form (form-in-general, rather than specific forms) (2003). Benevides suggests FonF should occur in the post-task phase (2010). Willis proposes that the FonF can take place either between the planning and report part of the task cycle or in the language focus where language analysis activities provide a FonF through consciousness-raising processes. I suggest with Japanese students a brief FonF should also occur in the pre-task stage. I shall show my reasons in the next section.

### **My teaching circumstances**

I enjoy using TBLT and feel that PPP or GT do not work well. My students have studied English for six years through PPP and/or GT but in terms of proficiency can still be considered as basic to intermediate beginners. I work in a university where the students are not English majors. They cannot see English as a necessity for their future. As a result their motivation levels are very low. This is classed as amotivational orientation by Ryan and Deci (2000). If I use TBLT as Willis and others suggest without a FonF in the pre-task stage my students feel they cannot successfully complete the task and resort to copying stronger students or using L1. They are not accustomed to thinking for themselves; they have always been spoon-fed, i.e., using PPP or GT, and therefore lack confidence in making decisions. My classes are similar to those described by Robson

(2003), who reports that there does seem to be a large number of amotivational students in Japan.

Motivation changes over time as a result of external factors (Ellis, 1994); the teacher can be seen as one of those external factors. The teacher can motivate students by making the language class a fun, interesting place to be and by helping learners lose their anxiety. A study in Japan by Kimura et al. (2001) found that EFL learners have inhibitory factors operating against learning English, such as anxiety. By using TBLT in its suggested form, my students will feel more anxiety because they are not sure which language to use in completing the task. With this anxiety students become even less motivated.

GT remains the principal method of language instruction to this day by Japanese English teachers (Doyle, 1994; Hadley, 1997; Law, 1995; Nishino, 2008). When students enter my class, some of them expect GT and feel they are not learning anything new if it is not used. Willis (1996) agrees with this by telling us that Japanese students are familiar with deductive teaching but unfamiliar with communicative activities. To change this I use a form of TBLT which incorporates deductive teaching. Takigawa (2005) suggests that Japanese students feel comfortable with communicative activities if the target grammar is first introduced explicitly by the teacher. I briefly introduce the FonF in the pre task stage so students understand what structure is possible to complete the task. I don't allow students to write down the structure. When the students start doing the task I erase the grammar from the board so that they feel they can use other structures. After the task, a more thorough FonF is performed. Mochizuki & Ortega (2008) found that Japanese students taught this way produced significantly higher amounts of the required grammatical structure than groups that were not given

grammatical instruction. I have found that my students feel confident entering the task and unlike PPP they produce other structures rather than just reproduce the structure given in the pre task stage.

TBLT should not be used alone; it compliments other methods. Too much of something is never good and that is the same for teaching methods. Variety helps students stay interested in the lessons and introduces things that other methods might not focus on. TBLT used in combination with vocabulary, grammar, listening and writing exercises works best. I see grammar and vocabulary as the foundation of language. At the beginning of the term structural content is high. With a strong foundation my students use tasks to cement that foundation and build on it. If, however, only tasks are used, the foundation becomes too small and unstable to support the ever-increasing complexity of the tasks and the structure collapses, i.e., the task cannot be completed. To increase the complexity of tasks the foundation has to be expanded by introducing new grammatical structures and vocabulary.

This mixture works well, especially with lower-level English-speaking engineers according to Cowling (2007), who are similar to the students I teach. As the term progresses and students become more confident using tasks, I reduce the amount of structural content in my lesson. Yalden (as cited in Krahnke, 1987) also suggests that “structural content [should be] provided in increasingly smaller proportions relative to instruction based on increasingly larger units of discourse as overall language proficiency increases”. This gives students both grammatical and communicative content. I have found at the start of the term the students are hesitant to speak due to a lack of knowledge and experience doing tasks. However, their confidence grows significantly with every task successfully accomplished.

### **Problems with implementing TBLT in my teaching environment**

I will briefly discuss problems with using TBLT in my classroom which relate to the use of textbooks, size of class, number of students, compulsory tests and an environment in which TBLT is alien. My university insists on teachers using textbooks. My students will be tested at the end of the term on grammatical structures within the textbook so I need them to practice and study these structures. Japan has a test-orientated schooling system even at tertiary level. Teachers, including myself, are hesitant to try new methods which might affect their students' ability to pass examinations (Carless, 2002; Markee, 1997; Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010; Tinker Sachs, 2007); therefore, new communicative methods such as TBLT alone cannot in reality be adopted by most schools (Gorsuch, 1998; Nishino, 2008; Taguchi, 2005).

I teach thirteen ninety-minute classes a term to between forty and fifty students giving me barely enough time to get through the textbook; therefore I only manage to use tasks once every two or three lessons. Nishino's (2008) survey found that Japanese teachers, like me, feel they don't have enough time and their student numbers are too high to implement TBLT all the time. Due to these restraints I use a form of PPP which is the method used in most textbooks published for the Japanese market. Although some Japanese researchers and teachers, like myself, are interested in TBLT, the actual use in the classroom is not very widespread, the result of which is shown in a quote by Willis and Willis (2009, p. 3), who point out that Japanese teachers have informed them that "Our students know the grammar, but they can't use the language." Without a set textbook I feel I could use even more tasks in class and thereby increase my students' communicative ability more than at present.

Classroom environments vary from country to country (Hofstede, 1986). TBLT

is student orientated as opposed to teacher-fronted. Where the teacher doesn't tell the students what language to use; students decide themselves. In Japanese society Jones (1995) reports that autonomy is a Western value that is prized in the West but is not so in Japan. Willis (1996) recognizes that student independence represents a learning strategy that varies from Japan's pedagogical traditions and research by Burrows (2008) shows that Japanese students don't enjoy working independently from the teacher. For this reason Li (1998) maintains that teaching methodologies developed in the West, such as TBLT, are often difficult to introduce into EFL situations. A study conducted in three universities in Japan by Matsuura (2001) found a high number of students preferred traditional styles of teaching, including a teacher-centered approach (listening to lectures), learning isolated skills (pronunciation), and focusing on accuracy (Japanese translation). Kojima (2004) also tells us that Japanese students feel the need for a clearly-defined syllabus based on lists of grammatical or functional patterns, which is counter to TBLT. Through end-of-term questionnaires, I have discovered that my students agree with Matsuura and Kojima's findings. This is one of the main reasons I find a mixture of grammar, vocabulary and tasks works best with my students.

### **Advantages of TBLT**

Table 2: Four advantages of TBLT

- 1: Tasks are more motivating for students as they are related to authentic situations which the students might encounter in the future. (Alessi & Trollip, 2001; Keller & Suzuki, 2004; Littlewood, 2000; Long, 2007; Van Patten, 1996; Willis, 1998)
- 2: They are student-oriented giving the students more opportunities to build their linguistic skills, (Antón, 2002; Doughty & Pica, 1986; Long, 2007; Markee, 1997) and to learn from each other. (Willis, 1998)
- 3: Lexis and syntax are creatively used as opposed to just reproduced. (Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996)
- 4: Research from second language acquisition shows that this style works better than PPP. This comes from the belief that much first and second language learning is not intentional, but incidental and implicit. (Long, 1983; Skehan, 1996)

### *Advantage 1*

Tasks are a motivational way of language learning, argues Van Patten (1996), as they facilitate language use which is considered to be an enjoyable learning experience. Klippel (1984) points out that it is eminently motivating for learners to talk about something which affects them. Tasks which are specific for my students such as exchanging information to complete a technical drawing or report really benefit them. They will use this knowledge in the future and they can see how this relates to their life unlike some of the exercises in the textbooks. When my students graduate they will have to know technical English and how to use it. Incorporating specialized vocabulary and structures into tasks helps motivate my students to complete them successfully. As stated above my university students have to complete a questionnaire at the end of the term; some students reported that the tasks were interesting, fun and important for their future, thus showing they were motivated.

### *Advantage 2*

In a teacher-fronted class, each student has very little time to use the target language. Willis (1996) tells us that “output” is likely to stimulate “intake”; therefore, language acquisition will take place in a TBLT lesson where the students can participate in pair or group work. In a teacher-fronted class I usually use one target structure and illicit responses from students using that specific target language. In my class of fifty plus students, these lessons turn out to be lectures as opposed to communicative classes. When pairs or groups work they can decide which form to use thus making the conversation more diverse and introducing target structures to others in their group.

### *Advantage 3*

It has been argued that the most effective tasks are those in which learners have to work hard to express themselves and negotiate meaning with each other; therefore, problem solving tasks are preferable to simple information-gap activities (Foster, 1996); tasks which require students to agree on a single solution are preferable to those which allow different solutions because the students have to communicate clearly and effectively to come to a group consensus on the best solution. I disagree with this finding in respect to my classes. The strongest student in the group makes the decision and the weaker students just agree with them, as Japanese people tend to shy away from direct confrontation. Possibly with higher level students this will not be the case. As stated earlier I find information-gap activities work best with my students.

When using the textbook in my classes, students do not concentrate on what they are saying. If my students are given a task, however, they have the choice to use whichever form of language they want and feel empowered to control the language environment they are in. Langer and Rodin (1976) tell us that choice is “a crucial variable in enhancing an induced sense of control.” With this control students are more creative in their utterances, which then lead into a more realistic environment. I have noticed that tasks specific for my students last longer than exercises from the textbook. Also the pace of the students and speech volume is higher to the point where I have to tell students to quiet down during the task. This shows that students might be more interested in doing these exercises.

### *Advantage 4*

SLA research tells us that naturalistic exposure to and use of language are prerequisites

for development; naturalistic use has to come first and is necessary to drive forward interlanguage. Willis and Willis (2001) tell us that TBLT came about in part due to the evidence in second language acquisition that students who were taught through the PPP method didn't retain all the language skills that they had been taught. I agree with these findings as my students have received six years of PPP style lessons and still are only basic to intermediate beginners. Ellis (2003), Robinson (2001), Skehan (1998) and Willis (1996) all show contrasts between TBLT and PPP discrediting the outcomes from PPP teaching. I cannot fully agree with their findings, in relation to Japanese students, and feel that more than one method should be incorporated in teaching; all methods have good and bad points. Some of my students need the presentation part of a PPP lesson to help them realize how to complete a task; this presentation is the same as FonF. Therefore, I still see a need for a form of PPP used in conjunction with other methods. Long and Robinson (1998) explain that people of all ages learn languages best, inside or outside a classroom, not by treating the languages as an object of study, which is the case in PPP, but by experiencing them as a medium of communication. I have noticed through test results that my students do seem to retain the vocabulary and structures I have used in communicative tasks for longer than ones they have met in the textbook. I will now show some disadvantages of using TBLT and why these aren't as negative in my classes.

### **Disadvantages of TBLT**

Table 3: Three disadvantages of TBLT

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1: It is often impossible to predict what kinds of language use will result from the performance of a task, and thus it is not possible to ensure adequate coverage of the target language in a task-based course. (Breen, 1987; Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Seedhouse, 2005)
2: The interaction is often impoverished. (Seedhouse, 1999)
3: Can't use TBLT with beginners. (Cowling, 2007; Swain, 2005; Yamashita, 2006)

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*Disadvantage 1*

One of the major stumbling blocks for the introduction of TBLT into a course is that a set curriculum is hard to make. Teachers find TBLT can have very little structure due to not being able to predict what kind of language will be used in a task. Only after the task is performed can the teacher know what grammar structure needs to be worked on. Therefore the curriculum is written up only after the class is finished. In classes performing tasks Seedhouse (2005) saw that the predicted and actual language use were very different. Long & Crookes, (1992, 1993) imply that since natural language learning and language use defy the pre-planning of language, language syllabuses are no longer pertinent, but tasks as syllabus constructs are. Unfortunately, in my situation I have a strict syllabus to get through and which my students will be tested on and so, although I strongly agree with their opinion, it is impossible to implement in my classroom. Loschky & Bley-Vroman (1993) and Samuda (2001) say that it is possible to design communicative tasks where certain grammatical structures are unavoidable. Through my experience I have to disagree with their conclusions and I agree with Willis that learners are very adept at avoiding the chosen structure a teacher or task designer has built the task around. I have been informed that this is why my university doesn't allow teachers to use only tasks and insist on using textbooks. The university requires all first-year students to study the same grammar, which is impossible if tasks are used exclusively. However by introducing a FonF in the pre task stage the required grammar can be incorporated in the task-based lesson and by using a combination of TBLT and PPP satisfactory coverage can be achieved.

*Disadvantage 2*

It is claimed by Seedhouse (2005) that the performance of tasks is characterized by indexicalized and pidginized language as a result of the learners' over-reliance on context and the limitations of their linguistic resources. Introducing a brief FonF prior to the task helps my students to overcome these problems. They use sentences as opposed to just words. It has been found that there can be a tendency to minimize the volume of language used and to produce only that which is necessary to accomplish the task, but this also happens in real-life encounters. As one of the main criteria of a task is to have a real-world relationship, this cannot fully be accepted as a disadvantage. Skehan & Foster (as cited in Robinson (Ed.). (2001)) warn us that a redundancy of syntax in successful task-based communication can lead to fossilisation. Due to this I use a combination of grammar and vocabulary teaching with tasks. By introducing new structures and vocabulary and increasing the complexity of the task fossilisation can be prevented.

3: Linguistic regularities are acquired through "noticing" during communicative activity (Swain, 2005). Beginner students like mine cannot have communicative activities as they have little or no knowledge of the L2. Furthermore, he states that although TBLT may successfully develop learners' command of what is known, it is considerably less effective for the systematic teaching of new language, something that my students need. Cowling (2007) also states that for beginner students TBLT is too difficult; PPP is more suitable. I have stated above that doing a FonF first and then doing a task helps my beginner students to succeed. Willis (1996) tells us that tasks provide learners with the motivation to improve and build on whatever language they already have. However, beginner students don't have language to build on. I am

fortunate that my students are tertiary level and therefore have some knowledge albeit very basic to use in tasks. In combination with grammar and vocabulary instruction tasks can be used successfully with basic to intermediate beginners. Giving beginners tasks to accomplish gives them a goal to reach for and thus motivates them to use their knowledge as best they can, so even with basic beginners I still see a place for TBLT in conjunction with other methods.

### **Conclusion**

I try to use TBLT in my classes as I feel that PPP and GT do not help students to retain the language they have learnt. My students have studied PPP and GT for six years but are still basic to intermediate beginners; this finding alone tells us that neither of these forms work with lower level students. I feel the advantages of TBLT, such as more communicative interaction and the motivation it gives, outweigh the disadvantages of not being able to predict the grammar used. Using TBLT in its strictest form does not work well in my classes and I have explained that a brief FonF in the pre task stage helps my students to lose anxiety, be more motivated doing the task and be able to complete the task successfully. It is my belief that tasks help the students to communicate and to retain the language they use in the task.

One of the biggest problems I and other teachers in Japan face is the strict use of textbooks in the tertiary classroom. My students see the textbook as an extension of what they have used for the last six years and therefore motivation is at a low to begin with. It is my responsibility to balance the use of textbooks and tasks so that students understand how they can use these structures in their lives outside the classroom. If policy makers would trust the teacher to come up with materials that would enhance

their students' communicative ability, such as tasks, I feel textbooks could become an option as opposed to a necessity, thus giving us more time to use tasks in the classroom.

As I have stated TBLT does not work alone. It has to be used in conjunction with grammar and vocabulary instruction. So, although I have said that PPP and GT do not work, to a certain degree a combination of all three will help the student to improve. I think the main point to be made is that one cannot be too strict with the methods used. TBLT works best with a FonF given in the pre task stage with Japanese students, PPP can be beneficial by just using the presentation stage and GT can also help students with pronunciation. The use of one or the other has been found not to work. With research and through our own experiences in the classroom we can see which parts work well so that we can combine all to make the class as productive for our students as possible.

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## Comparative efficacy research in EFL

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### **Abstract**

Instructors are under pressure to produce results that cover the gamut from increasing fluency, improving accuracy, and developing complexity (Skehan, 1998). There are several teaching methods out there with strong proponents, among which the presentation, practice, production model (PPP) and task-based learning and teaching (TBLT) are prominent and often in opposition. Sato (2010) offered well-argued support for the incorporation of a modified form of PPP in the communicative language classroom, bringing the methodologies together. These arguments provoked a strong response from the TBLT community (eg. Sybing, 2011; Urick, 2011). The argument, as a whole, has been off the target. In this paper comparative effectiveness research is used to make a case for the appropriate placement of these two competing methodologies, as well as others in terms of the Japanese classroom. While Ur (1997, p. 2) argues that methodology is the ‘least important’ aspect of teaching, evidence demonstrates that methodology is important, and that different methodologies have different places in the classroom.

**I**n the Japanese EFL classroom there is an increasing movement towards what is called a communicative classroom (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science, and Technology (MEXT), 2008,2009; Stapleton, 2013). The communicative classroom is a classroom focused on meaningful social discourse. This approach has largely focused on task-based learning and teaching (TBLT) (Nunan, 1989). This approach discounts the grammar-translation model as well as the presentation, practice, production (PPP) model. These models are both sound, and have a place in the classroom, a place which Sato, (2010) pointed out. Sato utilized a small-scale experiment involving twenty-one of his students, based on a task suggested by

Takashima (2005). The experiment focused on whether the target language was being produced in a task. And, as Ellis (2003) could have predicted the students were often able to accomplish the task while circumventing the target language. In fact, more than 70% of the students circumvented the target language. This makes issues of both assessment and scaffolded development problematic.

The reason that this is problematic is that Japanese students need to be able to have declarative knowledge for tests as well as the ability to communicate (Yashima, 2000). Furthermore, most students see declarative knowledge as more important to their personal goals of getting into university (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). While it is important that teachers push students towards appropriate goals, such as the use of language for communication, it is important to realize that the goals most important to students are the ones that they make for themselves. In this context, the use of a methodology that does not address the students' goals could be counterproductive (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Willis, & Willis, 2007; Willis, 1996). If students are focused on entrance examination it is essential to incorporate this goal into the lesson plan. This is not about teaching to the test, but teaching to the student. If the students do not see the value of the lessons towards meeting their (the students') goals, the lesson will be demotivating.

Language is a complex construct. There are many manners in which it can be broken down. One way in which language can be broken down is into fluency, complexity, and accuracy (Skehan 1998). Each of these aspects is important and must be addressed in a curriculum. As such, the need to weave a pedagogical web to cover these disparate aspects of language is apparent. The communicative classroom will not be communicative if teachers fail to arm students with the vocabulary, grammar, and

language skills necessary to develop their fluency.

PPP, despite its surface level similarities to TBLT, is functionally quite different. PPP targets specific structures within language and is a very effective tool for addressing these areas. It may not be fashionable to support PPP, but that does not make it any less effective, unless the goal is to get a grant, in which case there are non-pedagogical issues with PPP. However, it is important to note that PPP takes abstract language concepts and directs the students as to how to use them before allowing the students a chance to play with their new skills, play being a useful medium for language learning (eg., Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Sullivan, 2000). It is very effective for working on the development of more complex language from students. In order to support students breaking away from the three to five word sentence mold, it should be incorporated into certain aspects of the classroom, especially due to its ease in fitting into the communicative classroom atmosphere while also teaching necessary skills.

PPP fits well into the skill acquisition theory of SLA (e.g., Anderson, 1993, 1995; Sato, 2010). In this theory, language goes through discrete stages of knowledge: declarative, procedural, and automatized (Anderson, 1995). PPP is a method that works within this framework. The student is presented with the target declaratively, practices it to proceduralize its use, and then produces it in a manner designed to automatize it as a part of the learner's linguistic knowledge base (e.g., Byrne, 1986; DeKeyser, 1998). This methodology appears to be well suited to the traditional Japanese classroom (e.g., DeKeyser, 2001; Sato, 2010; Sato, 2011; Yamaoka, 2005; Yamaoka, 2006), and functions well in terms of producing declarative knowledge which aids students in test performance.

Skill acquisition theory, however, fails to address language learning as a whole.

TBLT still has a place in the classroom (e.g., Sybing, 2011; Urick, 2011), particularly in addressing fluency (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 117). The foundational principle of TBLT is communication. Willis (1996) breaks down this foundation into three essential aspects: exposure, usage, and motivation. These three conditions can also be supplemented with instruction (Willis, 1996). Despite the open nature of tasks, there is an underlying structure: pre-task, task, presentation, and language focus (Skehan, 1996). This structure has also been proposed as a manner in which to address grammar specifically (Ellis & Gaies 1998; Fotos, 1993). The awareness-raising activity structure suggests that through the raising of awareness of grammatical structures there will be a delayed acquisition of grammatical knowledge (Ellis & Gaies, 1998). TBLT has emerged as the cornerstone of the communicative classroom.

Aside from responsibilities as educators, there are also professional responsibilities. In Japan these responsibilities include developing the ability to communicate (MEXT, 2008), and to work towards an ability to express individual ideas and opinions (MEXT, 2009). These goals do not state which methodology to use, but the need to use effective methodology to meet the goals defined by professional roles and roles as educators cannot be overstated.

### **Comparative Efficiency Research in Pedagogy**

In the field of medical research there is a growing trend towards comparative efficacy research (CER) to determine the value of a treatment in comparison to other treatments rather than to a placebo; by comparing in a vacuum rather than in the context of competitive drugs or treatments, it becomes easier to enter the market, but harder to make an informed choice (Eaglstien & Kirsner, 2013). CER is uniquely capable of

comparing the benefits and risks of two treatments in equipoise (Conway & Clancy, 2009). As such, CER became a significant aspect of healthcare reform in the United States.

While CER is a tool for health and medicinal research, the concept of comparing two pedagogical methods in equipoise is one that could powerfully transform English education. It is important to understand not only whether a method works, but if it works better than another method in a specific circumstance. As such, in this paper I am proposing a framework for CER in pedagogy through a pilot experiment. The purpose is to promote understanding of how different methods work in specific situations. As such, it is important to choose two methodologies which are used in practice for similar purposes. For the purpose of the study the classes should receive the same period of study in both methods, and the variation should be minimized. The use of a pre-test, post-test methodology with random tests will establish a baseline and demonstrate progress measured through the use of statistics.

### **Research questions**

PPP and TBLT were selected as methodologies for this study as both of these methods have prominent advocates, and are in active use. In addition, these methods are also very similar at the component level, thus making a comparison of the two fairly straightforward. Whereas, there may be objections to the use of TBLT for grammar, its use for grammar education has been advocated (eg. Ellis & Gaies 1998; Fotos, 1993). As such this provides as fair of a test as is possible between these two methods in terms of grammar instruction.

This paper will attempt to address whether or not PPP and TBLT are

functionally equivalent as tools of grammar instruction. Furthermore, it will address the issues of whether there is a delayed learning response wherein students do not immediately understand an aspect of language, but understand it upon reflection, this would be evidence towards support of the validity of awareness-raising activities (Ellis & Gaies 1998; Fotos, 1993).

Research Question 1: Is either PPP or TBLT superior in the acquisition of a specific grammatical structure, second conditionals?

Research Question 2: Can delayed acquisition be demonstrated for TBLT?

## **Methodology**

### *Setting and Participants*

The participant pool was selected from university students in the Kansai region of Japan that fell into the intermediate TOEIC group as defined as having scores between 300 and 550 (Waikato Institute of Education, 2012). Eight classes from two universities were used. Two classes from each university were selected for PPP, while the other two were selected for TBLT. The choice of method for each class was determined randomly within these limitations. Data was collected from 75 students in the PPP group, 9 failed to take the final test, thus eliminating them and leaving 66 students. Data was collected from 88 students in the TBLT group, 5 failed to take the final test, thus eliminating them and leaving 83 students.

In order to address the issue as to whether TBLT and PPP were functionally equivalent in terms of targeting specific grammatical structures PPP and TBLT activities utilizing the same target, and similar teacher methodology was utilized. PowerPoint (Office, 2010) presentations were designed for each activity. The

similarities were in presentation style and content. Similar terminology was used in order to prevent any possible interference. The methodology was, therefore, only differentiated by the structure of the lesson in terms of PPP and TBLT, using classic structures for each. The structures described herein and utilized are supported by the literature defining the two lesson formats. While TBLT tends to push for a less rigid set of time guidelines this was not possible in this instance to ensure equal time on task for both groups.

### ***PPP Lesson Structure***

The PPP lesson began with a five minute presentation introducing the function and structure of second conditionals. Students were divided into groups. Two examples for the sample sentence structure were given, ‘What would you do if you ate a whole pizza?’ using second conditional structure: ‘If I ate a whole pizza I would not be hungry.’ ‘If I ate a whole pizza I would gain weight.’ Ten minutes of practice followed, asking students to form five situational responses utilizing the second conditional structure. The substantive aspect of the response was open. Finally students were given fifteen minutes to discuss five situations, they were monitored, but use of the target structure was not enforced.

### ***TBLT Lesson Structure***

The TBLT lesson is based on the model proposed by Skehan (1996). Two minutes were spent on the pre-task, students were asked to form groups and told that they would be addressing five situations. Two examples for the sample sentence, ‘What would you do if you ate a whole pizza?’ using second conditional structure: ‘If I ate a whole pizza I

would not be hungry.’ ‘If I ate a whole pizza I would gain weight.’ were given.

The students were then given fourteen minutes to discuss questions structured, ‘What would you do if . . . ?’ students were monitored, but adherence to the target structure was not enforced. The students were given two minutes worth of planning time to choose their best sentence. The following three minutes were spent with each group reporting their best sentences. The following four minutes were spent with the teacher explaining the structure of second conditionals. Finally, the students were given five minutes to practice, asking students to form five situational responses utilizing the second conditional structure offered. The substantive aspect of the response was open.

### *Assessing Student Performance*

To assess student knowledge second conditionals were used as they are less likely to be well known by students, offering students a short test one hour prior to the activity, immediately after the activity, and one week following the activity. There were three different tests, each test utilizing an identical set of test specs (Davidson & Lynch, 2002). The tests were randomized, so the order was different for each student and any deviation caused by test or item difficulty could be compensated for.

### **Results**

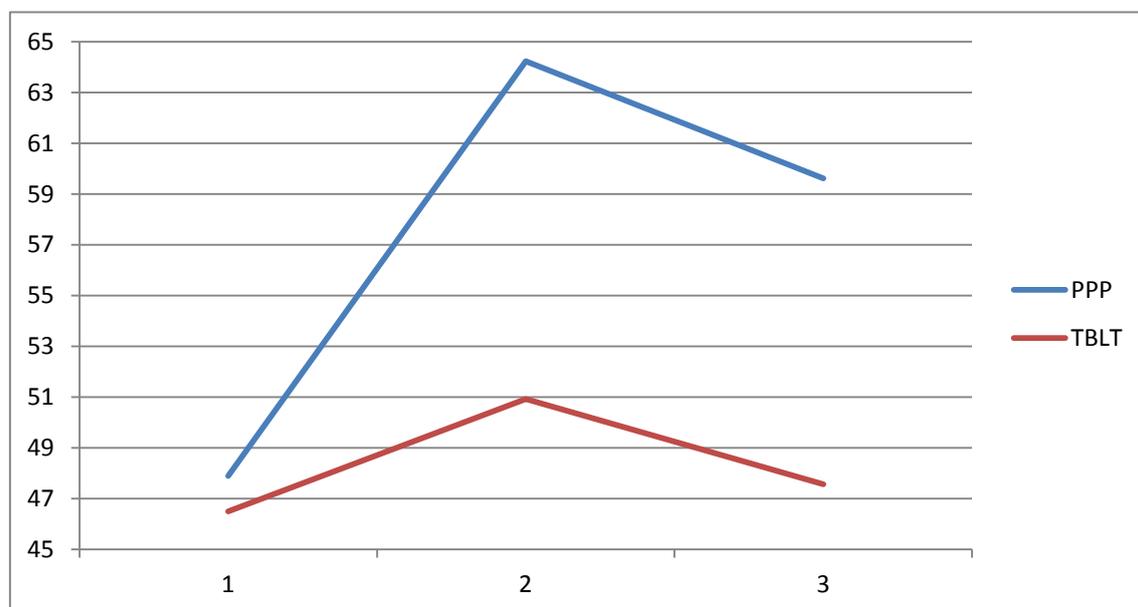
An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether there was a significant difference in methodology performance in terms of grammar learning. The results were significant for the post-test  $t(145)=3.17$ , with a two-tailed *p* value of 0.00. This test also showed moderate effect strength as the eta square showed 6% of the score was determined by group. Similarly, the follow-up test showed significance,

$t(145)=2.95$ , with a two-tailed  $p$  value of 0.00. The effect size was also moderate, accounting for about 6% of the total effect based on eta square value. The 95% confidence interval demonstrated a mean difference of 1.07 and 0.96 points on an eight point scale. Figure 1 shows the difference in mean scores expressed as percentages.

Table 1: results of independent-samples  $t$  test analysis

t-test for Equality of Means	T	df	2-tailed p Significance	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		$\eta^2$
						Lower	Upper	
Pre-test	0.36	145	0.72	0.11	0.31	-0.50	0.72	0.00
Post-test	3.17	145	0.00	1.07	0.34	0.40	1.73	0.06
Follow-up	2.95	145	0.00	0.96	0.33	0.32	1.61	0.06

Figure 1: Comparison of test score means, demonstrated as percentage scores



### **Analysis**

Based on the results, there is a significant difference between the two methods in terms of grammar acquisition. There is an immediate difference seen following the tasks, with PPP demonstrating a clear advantage. Furthermore, the delayed test demonstrates that students in the PPP group have longer retention than those in the TBLT group. This moderate effect can be significant in the long run as students in a classroom that attempts to utilize only TBLT will be at a disadvantage with the development of grammar.

The data does not demonstrate the aspect of delayed acquisition which ought to be present if there was a reflective aspect present in TBLT not present in PPP (Ellis & Gaies 1998). This does not, necessarily, disprove the theory of delayed acquisition upon reflection, however it does bring this theory into doubt. The theory of delayed acquisition, as discussed earlier, is the strongest argument for the utilizing of TBLT as a tool of grammar education. This argument, however, has little support. In this experiment the trend was for greater long-term acquisition in the PPP group, which is in contradiction to the delayed acquisition theory.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that this does not demonstrate pedagogical superiority, but it does demonstrate superiority in terms of one goal of the classroom. In addressing the teaching of specific grammatical structures in the classroom based on equating models with equal time on task in the classroom, there is evidence that PPP is the better choice. This does not discount the use of TBLT in fluency development or other aspects of language acquisition. This is simply a demonstration of how a CER approach can be

useful in formulating a data-driven approach to curriculum development and pedagogy.

This experiment addressed the acquisition of a low-frequency grammatical structure through two methods. The methods were limited to provide the best comparison between the two. This may have decreased the efficiency of one or both methodologies. The students were from the Japanese educational system. This may have increased their exposure to grammar and translation or PPP methodologies. However, the students had experienced task-based instruction with their instructor prior to this lesson. Their experience in learning style may have primed them for one methodology.

### **Conclusion: Time, Place, and Occasion**

The assertion that PPP is more effective at targeting accuracy is supported by the results of this study. This lends it to addressing student concerns about test performance (Yashima, 2000). On the other hand, TBLT is still an important part of the communicative classroom. TBLT activities, however, need to be used in the appropriate place.

While this paper addressed specifically two types of pedagogy, TBLT and PPP, these two are not sufficient for a complete language classroom. Time constriction drills, such as the 4/3/2 drill (eg. De Jong & Perfetti, 2011), offer a great tool for the development of fluency. Restricting time and encouraging repetition allows students to develop the physical and cognitive tools necessary for fluency. Interestingly, they also develop conditions associated with flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). The connection between flow and fluency allows educators to ask for more from students as the experience will be self-motivating.

Learning to re-incorporate aspects of the grammar-translation model into the

classroom is also useful. Rote learning works extremely well for the expansion of vocabulary. It also presents a formative tendency towards accuracy. While it may be popular to move towards a monolingual classroom it is neither realistic, as it is difficult to have complete control of what is going on in students' heads, nor is it optimal, as code-switching can aid in classroom management as well as improving student accuracy (Hosoda, 2000). There is a definite need to move towards an approach to EFL which is data-driven.

It is important to approach methodology in terms of normal science, and avoid arguments based on paradigms (Kuhn, 1970), falling back on the argument of what is currently accepted fails to meet the need to address the real questions of what works and what does not. Normal science is data-driven. It focuses on what can be known via the available evidence. Paradigms are idea-driven. They focus on what fits within an idea. In approaching the classroom, the need to focus on what is and can be known is essential to providing students with the best information possible. This requires that there be a comparison between different methods in specific circumstances. When a method works and does not work is a relative question. It is not so much a question of what the best methodology is, but what the best methodology is now. Every good method has a time and a place, every good teacher uses the right method at the right time and in the right place.

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## Maybe it's time TEFL professionals started personal branding: A quick guide

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*Keywords:* Personal branding, Networking, Japanese universities, Professional media

**F**inding and keeping good employment in Japan's TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) industry is increasingly difficult. At the tertiary level of education, for example, the number of university students here peaked in 1993 and has been declining steadily (Glick, 2002a). Now there are fewer students, and therefore fewer jobs. However, the number of Japanese universities have increased from 649 in 2000 to 783 in 2012 ("学校数 universities & junior colleges," 2013). National universities have increasingly become privatized and self-governing, resulting in closures, mergers, and downsizing (Glick). Critical literature offers little data on the changing environment for English teacher employment in Japan, especially at the university level. However, in 2007 Roger Goodman, a Japan expert from Oxford University expert, updated Glick's findings, predicting an implosion due to oversupply at the tertiary level here (cited in Hollingworth, 2008) Goddman calculated as many as 40% of universities will go bankrupt (Hollingsworth). Newspaper stories covered the plight of Japanese conversation school employment, and the collapse of Nova in 2007 (Currie, 2014). In

these conditions, native speaking teachers vying for university teaching jobs have relentless competition, says a long-time university professor (Guest, 2013). To mitigate the devolution to this situation, this paper will investigate personal branding as a way to enrich professional visibility, and thus employment chances.

Job search methods have remained the same as long as I can remember in twenty-three years working in Japan. TEFL job searches at the tertiary level often start at Japanese universities. Universities openly advertise some of their positions, as cited as early as 2002 (Glick, 2002a). TEFL employment chances can be found online also. Sites like The Language Teacher in English, and Japan Research Information Network in Japanese, are two of the places that dependably do not post only low wage, entry-level conversation school offerings.

However, as employment in Japan is a culture of personal references, often jobs can only be gotten through personal connections (Glick 2002a). Job-seeking teachers will likely refer to their network of foreign and Japanese full-time professors, pass on their resumes, mention how many years' experience they have had at certain known schools, and let their networks and luck complete the job quest.

That job-hunting method was all that was necessary during the 1980s through the 1990s, when demand for native English speaking teachers was high. That has all changed, and will continue to change, if Education Ministry (MEXT) has correctly calculated. About 45 percent of private universities will not reach their student number quotas; 18 of them could not fill half of their quota (Clark, 2012). Moreover, the number of our 18-year-olds is said to rapidly decline to where the portion of 15- to 24-year-olds will make up just 11% of the population in 2050, down from 16% in 1990 (Shepherd, 2012). Therefore adjunct teaching professionals are vulnerable to loss of

job openings. In a further effort to save money some public universities have begun hiring low wage outsourced native English speaking teachers from conversation schools. Moreover, from personal experience there has been an increase of young teachers, already owning TEFL diplomas arriving on these shores looking for university jobs, further increasing competition. Moreover, it is still a world where adjunct university teachers are seen as little more than hired guns (McCarty, 1993; Currie, 2014). In this environment, reputation and perceived employability become more important. One wonders if there is another way of not only ad hoc job-hunting, but improving one's professional reputation and employability. A teacher might do well to personally brand himself. Those working in the TEFL field may be averse to the impression of a person as a product. The inconvenient truth is, whether you know it or not you are already a personal brand (Rosso, 2013). In addition, TEFL professionals should create the best image possible, because some universities make hiring decisions without interviews (Glick, 2002b).

The objective of this paper is to look at personal branding options for the purposes of the tertiary level TEFL professional. This paper hopes to create a brief taxonomy of personal branding options. Additionally this paper will attempt to exhibit how those branding options can be maximized.

There are various tools for branding one's professional persona. Most of those tools are online. They include among others, actively participating in professional associations, professional and social networking sites, personal web pages and blogs, academic or news article curation.

The scope of this paper is how university professionals may use personal branding as a way of increasing their networks, and thus their professional visibility

with a view to increasing their network and employability. Though the scope is restricted to tertiary level, it is thought that other professionals in Japan's TEFL industry may also be interested.

It is important to note that personal branding is a networking style that has been around since 1997 (Schawbel, 2009). It is an enhanced form of networking, whereby the various networking dimensions available compliment one another. Personal branding may give the TEFL teacher more targeted professional exposure and visibility; helping the teacher to make public his particular talents, philosophy and interests to express his distinct value potential, in a clear, consistent and constant way (Sterlacci, 2011).

This paper will start with taxonomy of personal branding options, as a way to strengthen professional networks. It will continue with an examination on synthesizing those options to maximize potential. After that there will be a discussion of appropriate usage delimitations, and a summary.

### **A brief taxonomy of personal branding and networking dimensions**

#### ***One's own school***

The most logical place to begin making one's mark and creating positive professional visibility is at one's own school. Miyazaki University associate professor, Mike Guest recommends finding an extant program at your school, then writing and officially tying the writing to that program (2013). Guest also suggests collaborating on research (Guest). This activity would be enhanced if it is linked to a program or full-time professor (Guest). Many universities also publish their own discipline-specific

journals. Publishing to one of these journals one can get a wide, local professional audience.

### ***JALT, and industry-specific associations***

The next best way to add to one's academic credibility is by joining and actively participating in a professional association (Guest, 2013). *JALT* [[www.jalt.org](http://www.jalt.org)] is an internationally recognized foreign language teacher association. With almost 3,000 teachers, it is the largest in Japan. JALT contains a wide array of special interest groups (SIGs) in which to become involved. Because of its reputation, size and breadth of scope, JALT is an obvious choice in selecting a professional association.

There are also TEFL-centric associations other than JALT. JASEC [[http://www.waseda.jp/assoc-JASEC/about\\_en.htm](http://www.waseda.jp/assoc-JASEC/about_en.htm)], JACET [[www.jacet.org](http://www.jacet.org)], and LET [[http://www.let-kansai.org/htdocs/index.php?action=pages\\_view\\_main&page\\_id=53](http://www.let-kansai.org/htdocs/index.php?action=pages_view_main&page_id=53)] are organized and run by Japanese university faculty, and they are willing to accept and accommodate foreign native instructors, allowing them to present and publish in their respective journals and conferences. If you work at or are affiliated with one of these universities, investigate how to publish in their language teaching-specific journal, and begin to network among that pool of interested colleagues.

In Japan connections open professional doors. Membership in an association is an opportune way to meet people of kindred professional interests. Moreover, unlike JALT, the other associations and university journal groups cited give the foreign TEFL professional a friendly, like-minded forum to share with Japanese professionals. Association and university journal group memberships are also conduits to influential people interested in collaboration, or in need of a proofreader or a teacher.

Presenting at a professional conference is the most personal and direct way to emboss your personal brand onto a group of people. Presentations can take the form of a full presentation in an area of your expertise and experience, or alternatively, a poster presentation.

Writing an academic paper is another way to make your personal mark. Write about the topics and personal experiences that best reflect your expertise, skills and knowledge. That said, do not limit yourself to issues in which you have been successful. Your professional and teaching experiences also encompass failures. Do not ignore them. Use failure and problems as occasions to cultivate your personal brand. You can do this by problematizing. Problematizing is actively looking for and embracing problems, as the primary source of learning (Silk, 2009). By problematizing and then reporting the results in a presentation or academic study, your brand becomes that of a more serious, involved, and mature professional.

There is another type of presentation available and open to anyone in Japan. *Pecha Kucha*, is a succinct, fast-paced style of presentation, challenging the speaker's organizational, presentation, and personal skills. In the Kansai area, Konan University's Hirao School of Management also hosts a "Pecha Kucha Night" about once a month. For more information, contact Professor Brent Jones [bjones\_jp@yahoo.com]. Include "Pecha Kucha" in the email subject line.

### ***Professional Networking***

*LinkedIn* is in a professional networking site. It is the largest of its kind, having five times more users than its next professional networking competitor, Viadeo (Russell, 2013). Unlike Viadeo, LinkedIn can be controlled and set to display in both

English and Japanese. This is important because Japanese university faculty and administrators will naturally be more inclined to read and recall something in their native language (Glick, 2002b). There are over 1 million LinkedIn users in Japan (Warsia, 2014; Oliver, 2014). A cursory search for "Japanese universities" on LinkedIn's site netted 15 results. Another search for "Japanese university" on LinkedIn netted 41,830 results. More specifically, there are over 848 alumni using LinkedIn, and 865 followers of Kinki University. Japanese interest in foreign (read English language) social media companies—see Facebook below—there is reason to believe the presence of Japanese universities and professors on LinkedIn will increase. Therefore starting a LinkedIn profile will get a teacher exposure in the Japanese education industry. Moreover, use of LinkedIn may place the teacher in a good light, as a technological sophisticate.

To start using LinkedIn, remember it is appropriate to use a solid, direct headline. A good example would be, *Kinki University Foreign Language & Internet English Instructor*. The LinkedIn 'summary', or brief bio, is the first, most immediate branding article (Sterlacci, 2011). Manage it by making it brief enough to scan, but powerful and relevant to exactly what you want to communicate. Use a professional photograph; no baseball caps or T-shirts. Write a summary of your professional experiences, using active verbs. After that, write and ask for recommendations. Join LinkedIn groups and associations, like *JALT*, *Educators In Japan*, and the alumni group of the university where you obtained your industry M.A. You can also follow the other colleges and universities. LinkedIn allows the user to endorse colleagues. In addition to the expertise you prove on the job, the knowledge you exhibit on professional topics you discuss with colleagues may later translate into endorsements of you on those very

topics. In doing so, your brand is promoted. Always use a professional, dignified tone in these communications. Avoid using flippant comments like, *Stunning! You look incredibly well preserved!* LinkedIn also has a Twitter-like professional function for updating and sharing your professional activities. LinkedIn also has a host of other professional options.

Despite whether the teacher is actually active on LinkedIn or not, he should use LinkedIn if for no other reason than to have his complete resume readily accessible online. One management consultant, Tom Armour sees LinkedIn changing the hiring process, and says employers are finding it more useful than, and eventually replacing the paperbound resume (cited in Mielach, 2013).

Here is an extensive guide to create and maintain a living resume on LinkedIn [<http://www.makeuseof.com/pages/learn-linkedin-how-to-build-your-living-resume>].

### **Facebook**

*Facebook* has matured in Japan, and has helped Japan grow in to the international social media world. Mixi was once the Japanese social network of choice (Solomon, 2013). That has changed. The Japanese social network giant has been losing users, while Facebook has been making gains (Japan's social network, 2012). Kansai University professor Yuki Yasuda, a specialist in social network analysis, thinks it is time to reconsider immoderate personal information protection (Lundy, 2012) that Facebook represented to Japanese social media users. An increasing number seem to agree: 15% of Japanese Internet users are now on Facebook says Guido Ghedin, an Internet marketing researcher and digital scenario analyst (2013). This evidence bodes well for Facebook as a personal branding tool in Japan. In fact, the Osaka chapter of

JALT already has a presence on Facebook, on the 'Osaka JALT' wall [[www.facebook.com/groups/osakajalt](http://www.facebook.com/groups/osakajalt)].

### ***Blogging, sustaining a homepage***

Starting and keeping a blog or a homepage is a great way to showcase your writing skills and projects. Moreover, a blog or a homepage allows the teacher to expand upon and more deeply investigate the topics he is interested in, topics reflecting personal knowledge and prowess, topics he talks about with colleagues in the part-time teachers' lounge. Blogs and homepages are also platforms to problematize an issue experienced in the classroom, or in a professional environment. Finally use a blog or a homepage as an artifact of your professional interests and accomplishments. One of the most popular blogging platforms is Wordpress [[www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)]. Another is Blogger, used by one of my former university TESOL classmates. His award-winning blog —Mondo's ESL/EFL World—can be found at [<http://mondosworld.blogspot.jp/>]. If you have little time or technical expertise, but still want to try blogging, I recommend Weebly [[www.weebly.com](http://www.weebly.com)].

A personal homepage allows for total control of content. There is no advertising, or capitulating to someone else's design or theme. Anything is possible if you have the talent to put it there. An industry-specific homepage is another way of branding yourself. Here are two, from a colleague of mine: [<http://tony-silva.com/pro.html>] and [<http://tony-silva.com/proserv.html>]. Remember that building a homepage on your computer requires operating system-specific (i.e. Apple or Windows) applications. Dreamweaver, RapidWeaver, Sandvox, and Freeway Express are some of the titles, which range in price and learning curve steepness. That said,

Weebly, or Wix [www.wix.com] are both online and cross-platform, both free, and both easy to use.

### *Google+, Twitter, email*

Like the Osaka JALT Facebook wall, using Google+ is another means by which the TEFL professional can brand himself. There are 14 TEFL, TOEFL, EFL, or ESL communities with membership of over 100. This is positive evidence that Google+ communities have potential gravitas in the larger TEFL community, and in personal branding. The main difference between Facebook and Google+ is that in Google+ the user does not have to ask permission to follow or be followed by another user. Also with Google+ users can search for and join industry-specific communities, and create professionally relevant circles, or groups of distinct people matched to distinct topics. What these two statements mean is the ability to separate personal from professional content. Like Facebook, Google+ offers for separate pages for events. Here is a Google+ starter guide, including a summary of its advantages [<http://www.fabulousblogging.com/2013/03/learn-how-to-use-google-plus-a-beginners-guide/>]. Here is an in-depth guide to Google+ [<http://www.martinshervington.com/what-is-google-plus/>].

Twitter is a microblogging social media platform. It too has gained popularity in Japan at the expense of Mixi. Japan was the third country to join Twitter, and now boasts 30 million accounts (Martin, 2012). By creating multiple Twitter accounts the user can employ one for targeted, professional usage. There is a host of TEFL professional worldwide using Twitter to disseminate industry-specific information, and to follow like-minded professionals. If you do not have the time to write long articles, or simply want to share or find topic-specific information, Twitter is a primary

solution. Here are two Twitter references, to employ it for brand exposure [<http://www.wikihow.com/Use-Twitter>] and [<http://blog.bufferapp.com/5-tips-to-increase-your-twitter-exposure>].

Do not forget email. Not everyone is on social or professional media, nor do all appreciate it, nor do all know how to use it. With email, the user can personally target specific people, whether they be individuals or small groups. By emailing curated articles or your own writing to respected individuals in the industry, you are engaging them and branding yourself on their professional consciousness. By citing respected individuals in the industry, and your respected colleagues, in your online comments, blog articles, Google+ communities, or academic writing, you are branding yourself on the consciousness of the greater professional community.

### ***Business cards and stationery***

In some quarters, there are those who feel business cards are dead; that once they are exchanged no one looks at them again (Pozin, 2013). In Japan, where face-to-face meetings and hierarchy are important, they are still commonly used in business transactions. Business cards create a good first impression: they are by nature a direct marketing tool, are cheap, and can promote personal branding (Rose, 2013). If personal branding means leveraging a consistent message across platforms (Schawbel, 2009), then the business card should be consistent in design: the user should try to use the same photo, similar design, and color scheme as that of the stationery. Insist on using a LinkedIn badge. If possible modify the badge to include a tinyurl (a service for shortening a URL, [[www.tinyurl.com](http://www.tinyurl.com)]), of your LinkedIn profile. With a Japanese administrators and professors, experience trumps education. For that reason, include

the Japanese name of your current post and other relevant positions you have held. Include basic relevant education in abbreviated form, bilingually. By adhering to these points, your card will become more than a business card: it will become a concise extension of your resume and LinkedIn profile, further conveying your brand.

As with business cards, people still use business letters, or other paperbound communication. Include your stationery style in your overall personal branding scheme (Sterlacci, 2011). By using one of the word processing or desktop publishing computer applications, like Apple's Pages or Microsoft Word, it is possible to create a stationery template closely approximating that of your business card. Like your business card, it holds all pertinent information, including the personally modified LinkedIn badge. Consider incorporating the badges of JALT or other associations of which you are a member.

Combining elements of two or more branding dimensions is a way to cross network, or compound the exposure of your personal mark. Other than the examples above, there are more ways to cross network.

### **Cross-networking and the greater framework**

By hybridizing the tools available, one can build a comprehensive framework within which to display oneself. Social and professional media, as well as in-person encounters are points in a greater framework. By cross networking the personal branding options reviewed so far, a framework is constructed. That framework supports the TEFL professional's reputation and persona. The framework is the overall application of cross-networking dimensions.

Cross-networking possibilities include coordinating, LinkedIn and Facebook. The LinkedIn user can share personal updates across social media by linking them directly to Facebook. On the Osaka JALT wall the Facebook user can keep abreast of the TEFL industry in the Kansai region of Japan and beyond. Moreover the wall may be used to post industry-specific topical articles—the same ones mentioned in the email section above—either for general information or to start discussions. It is an ideal place in the social media world to gain professional exposure. Unfortunately, at this time it is impossible to target specific Facebook groups or walls, as the TEFL professional might hope to on the Osaka JALT wall. The LinkedIn profile page's URL can be converted into a convenient, quickly readable tinyurl, and then be included on a business card along with a LinkedIn badge. While it is not practical to carry around a resume, a small number of business cards can be easily kept in a wallet or purse.

When trading business cards at professional conferences, call attention to the LinkedIn badge, or that of another relevant association on the card. The more exposure your network gets, the larger it will grow. Upon publishing a paper for the journal of a professional conference or your school, disseminate that information by including it in your blog, homepage, or sending a PDF copy to interested colleagues. This is especially true if one's own colleague is cited in the paper.

Homepages and blogs can be schematized to at least include the same information as your business card or stationery, if not closely match them in design. Whether it is a blog or a homepage, it is worth repeating that the Wix platform can be tweaked to closely resemble any homepage style or design the user can conjure.

If one starts and maintains a Google+ presence, there are robust ways one can cross network. Starting with the 'about' section of the user's profile page, the header

next to the profile photo can briefly reflect relevant information. Below that are various sections that can be populated with references to current work, skills, past employment, relevant tags, a personal introduction, and bragging rights. In addition, there is an area for education history and a 'links' section from which you can link to your other online presences. As another Google+ cross-network advantage, if one keeps a blog, Blogger is a Google product, making them easy to work with one another.

Twitter can also be cross-networked. The user can link Twitter to his personal Facebook wall. Theoretically it can be linked to Google+ with the third party application too, though that third party application has not received good reviews. What is more, one can Twit one's school events, hashtagging the school's name [#kinkiuniversity], or the colleague involved in the event [#kimkanel].

## **Discussion**

There is a lot of interest in personal branding. The interest is well founded as argued above. However, a cursory search for "too much personal branding" finds cautionary, even hyperbolic article titles: "Can Too Much Personal Branding Be Bad For You?", "Why I Hate Personal Branding", and "The Death Of Personal Branding"; all are evidence to err on the side of caution when considering personal branding.

Personal branding may be unsavory to some. It may appear like a trap, where one must consistently present himself as something he really is not, says freelance writer, Tolly Moseley (2013). David Lindskoog, a Career Services Advisor for Simon Fraser University agrees, saying people should consider the impression they make on others, but not to the extent that they become inauthentic (2013). Some may be driven

to not stand out from others (Clark, D., 2012). How do you manage yourself but not be too careful at the same time? (Clark, D.). One key is to focus on the value—what one is interested in, capable of doing, and willing to share—one can bring, and not one's ambitions.

To others personal branding of oneself in the TEFL industry might sound like a good new angle. For those, temperance and understanding the true goal of personal branding is important. Though there are many ways to promote oneself, the amount, portion and timing must be judicious. Lida Citroen, whose career advice and reputation strategies have been featured in the Harvard Business Review says, personal branding is understanding that networking goes both ways; not focusing on oneself is important (undated; Wallace, 2012). To that extent, manners, sensitivity and politeness are still important (Citroen). Validate others' feelings by showing appreciation and gratitude when it is time to do so (Citroen). Also show a consistent face in social media is critical (Citroen). Therefore using the filters available on Facebook and Google+ is prudent, as well as having separate personal and a professional accounts on Twitter. The founder of Suddenly Marketing, Jamie Wallace, suggests to be oneself and focus on the task of helping the school or your colleague, without intruding too much of yourself (2012). In the end, the middle way between anonymity and fetishizing one's resume is the goal.

### **Summary**

The professional reputation and persona supported by an appropriate personal branded framework becomes the polished, consistent image the TEFL professional transmits to his colleagues, superiors, administrators, potential employers, and the

greater TEFL world. A reliable, good reputation casts the teacher as a competent, suitable professional.

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## **Engaging all: Instructional strategies that foster student success**

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**N**o matter how advanced some of our 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching tools and resources have become, educators still face the difficult task of achieving authentic learner engagement in order to maximize the full learning potential of their students. It is not uncommon that educators are met with glossy eyes and confused looks from learners who may retain, but not comprehend, the material. For too long, retention has been synonymous with comprehension. As educators, we need to be reminded that teaching with the aim of student success involves more than disseminating information to learners and expecting comprehension. So the question raised is how do we authentically engage each learner to foster comprehension and success?

On June 28, 2013, the authors hosted a two-hour Osaka JALT sponsored workshop in Osaka, Japan, in which 30 participants were presented with three key concepts and strategies (three modules) for actively engaging learners. These modules highlighted the importance of not only engaging students' minds, but also their hearts and bodies to create fully engaged students. Participants experienced a three-step process suggested by Gibbs and Ushijima (2008) essential for establishing the

conditions necessary for promoting student success: Module one: creating community in the classroom; Module two: establishing the foundations for engagement; and Module three: instructional strategies for learning. The material-packed two-hour workshop introduced the application and effectiveness of various practical instructional strategies designed to facilitate students' engagement in learning activities that teachers could implement immediately in the classroom.

### **Module One: Creating Community in the Classroom**

Group cohesiveness, according to Dörnyei (1997), is one of the most important features of a successful communicative language class, as it promotes interaction and encourages students to help each other because they care for one another and want each other to succeed. Research has shown that cooperative activities lead to “higher achievement and greater productivity; more caring, supportive, and committed relationships; and greater psychological health, social competence, and self-esteem” (Kagan, 2013, p.6). Thus, the process of engaging a student with learning activities must first start with building the foundations of a safe and welcoming community classroom, a community where a student feels able to ask a question, give an answer, or to participate in a group discussion without the fear of being ridiculed and to understand that their participation is an important contribution to the class. Without the proper foundation of a classroom community, even the best instructional strategies can fail to achieve authentic learning engagements.

Building authentic collegial learning communities and the sense of group inclusion is not an easy task to achieve. However, participants at the June 28<sup>th</sup> seminar were introduced to several effective community building activities such as *fold the line*

and *I don't know* (outlined in the appendix) designed to help foster a student's sense of value and influence. In addition to creating a safe learning environment, these activities engaged the learners' bodies and minds while creating and maintaining the energy level of the class.

### **Module Two: Establishing the Foundations for Engagement**

After exploring methods for developing and promoting a sense of community between students in module one, workshop participants looked at several energizing strategies designed to stimulate the energy, concentration, and motivation in students to help pull, rather than push, them into learning. Participants examined how educators need to stimulate the energy in a classroom based on current environmental conditions. Whether it be through energizers for an early Monday morning, a Friday afternoon class, or simply a class with less energy, participants reviewed the importance of advocating and facilitating the education of the whole child- mind, body, and heart. Participants enthusiastically participated in various energizing activities, including *bumpity-bump-bump* and *clap-slap* (appendix). These activities not only help create positive energy in the class, but they continue the development of team-building, which Dörnyei (1997) asserts is essential in order for groups to get to know one another and develop the skills and mutual trust to work together.

### **Module Three: Instructional Strategies for Learning**

Having set the foundation for engaging all students in modules one and two by creating the sense of a safe and energetic classroom environment, workshop participants were introduced to several instructional strategies designed not only for the dissemination of

educational material, but more importantly, the retention and comprehension of the material. Since social cohesion motivates individual group members to learn, help and encourage other group mates, and consequently enhance learning (Kagan, 2013; Slavin, 2011), the authors introduced several instructional strategies, such as *jigsaw* and *place mat*, in which learners are grouped into small learning communities to study the material and concepts in fun, interactive ways. More importantly, these strategies help learners become facilitators of their own learning, allowing the instructor to transition to the role of a guide and encouraging the gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the learners. Having experienced the activities themselves, workshop participants recognized how these instructional strategies can lead to student-centered active learning; active learning that taps into the aforementioned mind, body, and heart of a student, where authentic learning takes place.

### **Conclusion**

In this workshop, the authors presented a pedagogical transformation of language education by examining some of the most promising strategies teachers can use for sustained, substantive school improvement leading to student success. The workshop provided participants with the opportunity to recognize how a classroom environment condition affects the human brain's learning potential. While student engagement takes more effort and time in preparation and delivery, all members in attendance can attest that it is a more active and interactive method for learning.

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## Appendix

### *Community Building Activities*

#### *Fold the line*

This is a fun and effective activity for putting students into random pairs. Get the students to form a line at the front of the room in birthday order (no year). Note: This is a good cooperative activity so give them as much time as needed to negotiate this task in English. Pair students for the discussion activity by folding the line backwards or forwards, pairing the students from the middle of the line all the way to the students at each end. Possible variations: Have the students form a line alphabetically, by their height, number of syllables in their name, size of the animal they choose, colors of the rainbow, etc.

#### *I don't know...*

This is a great icebreaker to build community by helping students get to know one another (better). Divide students into pairs. For one minute, partner A tells partner B all of the things that he or she does not know about him or her. Next, partner B is given one minute to respond to partner A's statements, sharing only the information that he or she wants to. Have A and B switch roles and play again. Finally, get all of the students to form a circle and introduce their partners to the rest of the class using the new information that they have learned.

### *Energizing Activities*

#### *Bumpity-Bump Bump*

This activity is designed to increase listening skills, social comfort, memorization, and to learn everyone's name. The group forms a circle with Player 1 in the center. Player 1 walks up to a player in the circle and says one of four things: "Left," "Right," "Self," or "Center," followed immediately by the phrase, "Bumpity-Bump, Bump, Bump." Player 2 must make the correct response before Player 1 finishes saying "Bumpity-Bump, Bump, Bump." The correct response for the command "left" is the name of the person on to the left of Player 2; for "right," it's the name of the person on his or her right; for "self," it's his or her own name; and for "center," it's the name of Player 1 (in the center). If Player 2 responds correctly and in time, Player 1 repeats the process with another player. If Player 2 responds incorrectly or too late, s/he takes the center position.

#### *Clap-Slap*

This is a great activity designed to help lighten the atmosphere and foster energy in the students, while helping them practice their listening and speaking skills. Although designed with four moves - clap, slap, stomp, touch, this activity can be altered in any way to help promote curriculum for a particular course. In our exercise, we modeled the activity's actions for a tourism language course (eat, phone, walk, drive). Start with organizing the students into a large circle so everyone can see each other. Introduce the four actions and accompanying words to the group (eat, phone, walk, drive). Ask the students to choose one of the four actions for when it is their turn. Instruct the students that you, the instructor, will start by performing your action then the person to your left will go next, performing their action and then your action. Inform the students that they will have to perform their chosen action followed by all of the actions of the students to their right in sequence. If it is a small group or you wish to expand the activity to make it more difficult, you can go around the circle twice or three times so that each person has multiple actions and thus more actions to remember!

### *Instructional Strategies*

#### *Jigsaw*

This is a strategy in which small groups of students become experts in one aspect of the larger topic being studied. They then teach this information to another group. Divide the class into groups of three to five students. Each group becomes experts on one aspect of a larger topic by working with information provided by the teacher or finding additional information. Members of the expert group engage in tasks designed to help them become familiar with the information. Each expert then returns to a mixed group with members of each of the other expert groups. Students in this group teach one another the information learned in the expert group. The jigsaw requires the participation and cooperation of all students. It encourages interaction since the goal is to put the pieces of the lesson together and create a whole picture of the topic being studied.

#### *Placemat*

The placemat activity strategy provides an opportunity for each student in a group to record individual responses and ideas regarding an issue, topic or question for consideration. Organize participants into groups of four or five. Give each student a piece of the placemat with a question written on it. Ask each student to fill out their portion of the placemat with their own personal answers. Have students put their pieces of their placemat together and hand out the missing center circle to each group. Have students take turns sharing their answers and write any common responses on the center circle. Each group can then present their common answers to the rest of the class.

## Organising student work

**Kim Bradford-Watts**

Kyoto Women's University, Kyoto University

In the past, like most teachers, I collected student work, graded it, and returned the papers to the students. Changing requirements within the university have necessitated new systems in order to save and be able to access student work quickly and efficiently for several years. I struggled with this because I had previously kept work grouped together in “class lots” which was fine for grading and returning papers, but falls far short if you need to store and access all the papers generated by a single student in a semester or year. Although systems such as this probably seem intuitive to some people, others need to be shown how to organize, so it is for you that I am sharing this system.

### Equipment

	File holders	I use one for each day
	A4 Hanging files	1 per 10 students per class, plus one as a day marker for each teaching day
	A4 Clear files	1 per student
	Square white label stickers	1 per student
	Colour circle stickers	1 per student

For me the total cost was 18000 yen for 410 students (approx 44 yen/student). The only ongoing expense is for new stickers each year. If you are on a budget, you can set this system up in boxes and get students to provide their own clear file.

### Setting up the system

1. Label one hanging file for each teaching day with the name of the day. E.g.

“Monday”, “Wednesday”, “Friday.” These are your day marker files. You can keep class lists, documents to photocopy, etc. in the day marker file so you just need to pick up the contents and go on the day of the class. Remember to return class lists to this file at the end of the day.

2. Place these in the file holders.
3. Label one hanging file for each 10 students in a class with the day and time. E.g. If your 1<sup>st</sup> period class on Monday has 36 students, label 4 hanging files “Monday 1.”
4. On the first hanging file in, for example, the “Monday 1” group, write “Files 1-10”, on the second write “Files 11-20”, etc. Do this for each class.
5. Place these in order behind the day marker file.
6. When you get the student class lists, create student file numbers, e.g. the first student on the list is “File 1”, the second is “File 2”, etc.
7. Put blank white stickers on the top right hand side of each plastic file.
8. On the coloured stickers, write the day and time of the class. E.g. “Mon 1”. You need to make one per student file. Make sure the ink of the pen that you use for this does not smudge. Slap them on the front of the file somewhere near the white sticker

### **Using the system**

1. In the first class, give each student a clear file to write name and student number on. Tell students their file number. Get them to write it on. It is best that you model on the blackboard how you want them to write it. Collect the files.
2. Instruct students to write their file number, in addition to their names and student numbers, on EVERYTHING they hand in. It is a good idea to have them record their file number in their schedule books now. If you don't have the name list yet,

put the files into alphabetical or student number order for now. Put student work into the same order at the end of each class. File papers every day. Assign file numbers as soon as they become available.

3. When you collect work from students, check that all papers have a file number written.
4. Put student work into file number order. If you take attendance by work, do that before filing. Grade tests and performances immediately, record scores, and file. It is important to file student work at the end of each day as part of your end-of-day routine. If you don't, your papers will pile up and you will never file them. Do it daily. It will only take a few minutes.
5. After you have finished grading, put all the work for the class (in file number order, stapled) into an expandable envelope and file away. Make sure you label the envelope for year, semester, day, and class time, as well as the title of the class. If any students challenge their scores, you can put your fingers on the file in no time.
6. Remove the student names and numbers from the front of the files, ready for the next semester or year, and it is all ready to use again!

## **Conclusion**

Implementing this system has made the world of difference in dealing with the mountains of student papers that had taken over my home. Now they are sorted, filed, and accessible on the day that they have been collected. They are also easy to transport to the office for storage at the end of the semester. If you are drowning in papers, give this system a try, but remember that you need to process incoming papers each day.

## Optimize your university for global rankings

### (We could be heroes)

**Steve McCarty**

Osaka Jogakuin College and University

**A**nalyzing the criteria of global ranking organizations (McCarty, 2013b) that include Japanese universities (McCarty, 2013a, 2013c) and Google Scholar guidelines (<http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/inclusion.html>), optimization strategies can be discerned that align university output with the online media and algorithms by which academic achievements are increasingly measured. Individuals can raise the global rankings of their university along with their own academic recognition by promoting effective Web practices and online publication formats, especially to maximize citations. This brief paper will thus focus on conclusions from the author's research and practical recommendations that university stakeholders can apply.

For Tech Day Plus, McCarty (2013c) compared the domestic reputation of leading private universities in Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe, known as KanKanDoRits and SanKinKoRyu, with their average performance in four global rankings. One of the ostensible second tier, Kinki University (Kindai), outperformed the rest, showing conversely that the first tier universities had much room to optimize their academic achievements. For JALT 2013, McCarty (2013a) furthermore compared Kindai with Ritsumeikan University on specific criteria that the author characterized as 1) internationalization, and 2) publications (and citations thereof). While Ritsumeikan was shown to be far more internationalized, Kindai outperformed on publication

criteria, which are evidently weighted heavily. The author thus concluded that what counts is not the sheer amount of academic output so much as the recognition it receives.

Online campus research repositories are one approach to recommend, justifiably reprinting academic works by faculty members or affiliated scholars on the open Web for the first time. Libraries may or may not receive permission, but the works they do offer accrue to the size of the university's measured output, while attracting links and citations. Open source repository software, such as DSpace, is interoperable with Google Scholar and other databases such as CiNii in Japan, which in turn are utilized by ranking organizations. Such repositories increase exposure, backlinks to the campus domain (a measure of the university's impact), and citations, which tend to be more numerous to open access publications. If unavailable on campus, or for independent scholars, there are do-it-yourself repositories such as <http://www.academia.edu>.

Another recommendation is to have scholars affiliated with the university, at least all who publish, maintain a Google Scholar Profile. At <http://scholar.google.com> or <http://scholar.google.co.jp> in Japanese, log into your Google account and apply to set up a Profile using your university e-mail address. Upload your photo and fill in your specializations and homepage URL, which become links. Co-authors who have Profiles can mutually link. Check your publications that Google Scholar lists automatically, through Google's speeding and selected databases of publications. It is vital to customize, by clicking on links or choosing among "Actions" from the drop-down menu. "Delete" any items that are not your publications. Algorithms make mistakes, such as with common names. "Merge" any separate items that are actually

the same publication. “Add” and click again on “Add article manually” to add your publications that Google Scholar did not find among its limited sources. Publications are sorted by the number of citations, or in reverse chronological order if you click on “Year.” Your Profile is indexed with a high weight in Google search results, and it can serve as an online list of publications, updated automatically and manually throughout your career.

The education ministry MEXT urges an increase in original research and citations thereof (“Daigaku sekai ranku iri shien,” 2013). Ranking organizations and Google Scholar also suggest offering as much content as possible on university Websites (particularly in PDF format and rich files, at their .ac.jp homepage site, not in other domains). English or multilingual versions of publications and information would bring more recognition. Universities should also realize that they cannot ignore these criteria, since their reputation and attractiveness to foreign students are affected by international ranking organizations. Effective Web practices also suggest having all campus Web pages interlinked. Links from other domains would be increased by providing faculty homepages and useful community services. Rather than controlled scarcity and exclusiveness, the measured output and rankings of the university can be enhanced by showing abundance and openness.

Individual stakeholders could be heroes by helping to optimize the academic achievements of their university for due international recognition. The criteria of ranking organizations increasingly favor universities that treat all of their stakeholders well. By the same token, universities hurt their rankings by high teacher turnover and casual hiring. Ranking organizations advise that all staff are needed to contribute to the measured output, which is becoming synonymous with the university’s presence on the

open Web (not in password-protected or subsidiary sites). Therefore, universities should encourage part-time and retired teachers to use the campus domain as well, and to use the university's name in their publications, because it is all counted. A mutual commitment between the university and its stakeholders would prove most beneficial.

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## Note-taking in language-learning classrooms

**Barrie Matte**

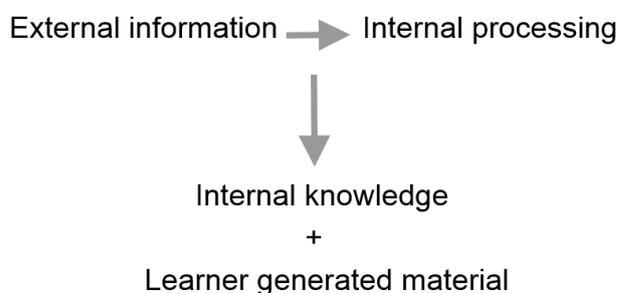
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**T**his paper serves as a report on our presentation at Tech Day Plus 2013. The purpose of the presentation was to discuss why note-taking is of importance, and different methods to make paper-based and digital note-taking more effective in the classroom.

Boch and Piolat (2005) suggest that there are two main functions of taking notes: to record information, and to aid in reflection on what has been learnt. The first function, to record information, is explained below in Diagram a.



*Diagram a.*

Recording and compiling an external memory of what is being taught (the learning objectives) in a form that can be retrieved at a later date is useful in language learning, where the time between lessons may be a week or longer. Learners can use this internal knowledge together with daily routines, homework, and in-class tasks to further comprehend the meanings and uses of the material being studied.

The second function of note taking is reflection. Learners take notes to store key information gathered during class, which will be later utilised during tasks, tests,

or other assessments. As such, the very action of note-taking contributes to the memorisation process. It is therefore important to train our learners as to which information they should be copying, through regular practise and prioritising which information to put on the whiteboard or blackboard. Furthermore, note-taking is also an information processing activity, which involves many active thought processes such as making judgments, resolving issues, making decisions and reflecting on what learners have written. In this respect, notes are similar to a rough draft in that they allow information to be coded in a meaningful way for later reference, and to assist in problem-solving.

Another point to consider in note-taking is that of individual differences (IDs), which can contribute to the depth of understanding of what is learnt. Some learners may repeat what they have written to themselves, some may re-read the notes in class, and others may re-read the notes outside of class. These are just some of the various IDs that are common enough to make note-taking worthwhile in most language classrooms.

While taking notes in classrooms using the traditional pen-and-paper method may be the most common approach, many classes are shifting to computer-assisted language learning (CALL) classrooms. In such environments, the information that needs to be recorded in notes can be monitored with greater ease, using such tools as Google Drive. Teachers can create and assign documents to the learners, where they can collaborate on note-taking, or work individually. Whilst learning to take notes effectively does arguably present some challenges for learners, we believe that its numerous advantages make it a valuable skill that is certainly worth utilising in the classroom.

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## **Business simulation game for learner collaboration**

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**I**n foreign language higher education, tasks and projects have become popular to provide meaningful opportunities for language use toward actual outcomes. Since “Business English” often defaults to language for greetings and meetings, this can overlook the core, functional areas of business. This poster presentation made at JALT 2013 in Kobe looked at an online resource where undergraduates in a content-based, business course applied subject knowledge and communication skills in marketing strategy decisions. While competing in a computer-based, business simulation game, student teams collaborated to (a) develop strategies, (b) position their firm and its products in the simulated market, and (c) conduct weekly analyses of data for pricing, promotion, and operating decisions.

### **Rationale**

Whether the voyage for university graduates includes being hired by a corporation, working in the family business, taking a government position, volunteering for an NGO, or starting a family, business principles will be relevant. Business program graduates will be expected to develop and demonstrate the skills and abilities to deal with business information to make decisions. Furthermore, the components for proficiency in language for specific purposes (LSP) include not only language knowledge but also background knowledge and strategic competence such as goal

setting and planning (Douglas, 2000). These factors present a challenge when designing a foreign language business course in a “content-based” program (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989) with elements of “experiential learning” (Silberman, 2007).

### **Approach**

Student teams initially studied background market details, in English, from a fictitious music player industry (Music2GO - [www.smartsims.com](http://www.smartsims.com)). Class lectures introduced the fundamental business knowledge needed for the simulation and as lifelong learning for future careers. In addition to analyzing data, learners were required to discuss and collaborate on weekly decisions to execute their business strategy by filling in the visual fields for pricing, promotions, staffing, and operations. Along with team performance in the simulation, individual learner reflections were collected using a KWL log. Students recorded what they already knew about a business concept (K), what they wanted to learn (W), and what they had learned through the process (L). Anecdotally, extracts highlighted the merits of the simulation to support LSP development and build content knowledge through “visible learning” (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

Simulations, especially in business, can provide a practical, project-based, collaborative environment for learners to negotiate with language and business information data. By incorporating subject-knowledge in a rich meaningful experience, with a competitive angle, clear evidence of the impact of their decisions and learning can be identified.

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## Fun and effective vocabulary card activities

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Research shows that there is a strong correlation between a second language learner's vocabulary size and overall L2 competence (Laufer, 1989; Nation, 2001). However, as Nation and Laufer note, attaining a native speaker-like vocabulary size of 20,000-25,000 words is beyond the reach of most L2 learners, particularly with limited time in the classroom.

Nation (2001) found that knowledge of approximately 8,000 to 9,000 word families (a headword and its inflected and closely derived forms) is required for 98% comprehension of written text, while a vocabulary of 6,000 to 7,000 word families is necessary for 98% comprehension of spoken text. Of these words, the first 2,368 most frequent word families found on Browne, Culligan, and Phillips' (2013) *New General Service List* (NGSL) – a revised version of Michael West's (1953) *General Service List* (GSL) – cover about 90% of the running words in general written texts (see Table 1). This small group of high frequency words is so important that Nation states it deserves significant teacher and learner time and devotion.

Table 1

Vocabulary List	Number of Word Families	Number of Lemmas	Coverage in CEC Corpus
GSL	1964	3623	84.24%
NGSL	2368	2818	90.34%

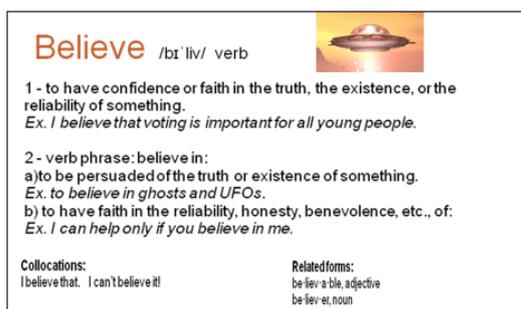
*Browne, Culligan and Phillips (2013)*

Knowing *what* vocabulary items to study is only half of the equation; Teachers and learners also need to know *how* to study them. This paper, presented at various JALT and ELT events in Japan (Nagoya, 2010; Osaka, 2011; Kobe, 2011 & 2103; Kyoto, 2011; Fukuoka, 2011), focuses on one particularly effective approach that targets high frequency vocabulary learning: vocabulary cards and the in-class cooperative learning strategies that accompany them.

### Making Vocabulary Cards

Vocabulary cards are learner-made cards that contain key elements about a word family (see *Figure 1*). Nation (2001, 2013) advocates five guidelines for making effective word cards: use L1 translations, promote retrieval by putting the word and/or phrase on one side of the card and the meaning on the reversed side, use pictures where possible, keep the cards simple, and suit the number of the words in the pack to the difficulty of the words. Nation (2005) additionally states that providing collocates may help understand different ways in which the words are used, and including its part of speech and pronunciation will help to understand its meaning. To avoid interference, learners are advised to make 10 to 15 vocabulary cards at a time, selecting words that are not related in meaning and that start with different letters of the alphabet (Nation, 2001).

*Figure 1. Sample student-made vocabulary card*



### Using Vocabulary Cards in the Classroom

In order to acquire and retain new vocabulary, Goerss, Beck, and McKeown (1999) assert that students need to be involved in active learning that allows them to make connections between their experiences and word learning, as well as provide ample opportunities to practice and discuss word knowledge. In this presentation, participants experienced several cooperative-learning strategies with vocabulary cards that (1) promote active learning, (2) provide the repetition that is essential for language learning (Fountain, 1979), and (3) help students form deeper connections between the words and their personal experiences.

Vocabulary review can be an excellent way to start a class. In *Word Card Tennis*, pairs of students compete against the clock (and/or each other) to retrieve and reproduce words from their vocabulary cards. Similarly, in *Slap Down*, small groups of learners compete to tap the correct translation of a word from ten vocabulary cards laid out on a table. These activities encourage learners to quickly recall words from their card stacks, help focus on the written form of the words, and most importantly, the nature of the intragroup competition stimulates students of all levels, including those less inclined to participate openly (Dörnyei, 2001), to review and recycle high frequency vocabulary.

When learners participate in pair and group vocabulary card activities that encourage them to interact with concepts at a deeper level they are able to make connections between their experiences and the words they are studying (Taylor, Mraz, Nichols, Rickelman, & Wood, 2009). Small groups of learners use hand drawn pictures and storytelling in *Connections+* and *(Re)telling a Story* to pay attention to the formal and semantic aspects of words and create richer associations with existing knowledge,

and in doing so, increase the chance of retaining the new information (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). In addition, this social cohesion experienced by working in small groups motivates individual group members to learn, help and encourage other group members and consequently enhances learning (Slavin, 2011; Kagan, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Vocabulary learning is an important part of a balanced language curriculum. The vocabulary cards and cooperative learning strategies advocated here are likely to be a much more interesting approach to vocabulary learning and keep students actively engaged in the learning process.

*A complete description of these vocabulary card activities can be found at:*

<http://funwithwordcards.wordpress.com/>

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## Braining up vocabulary study with word cards

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**S**ome argue that deliberate study of vocabulary (i.e. rote memorization) is ‘shallow’ (Cohen and Aphek in Schmitt, 1997, p. 201) and ‘mechanical’ (Schmitt, 1997, p. 215) and advocate for deeper learning strategies such as those suggested by Craik and Lockhart (1975). However, recent research confirms rote memorization contributes to the implicit knowledge that facilitates everyday conversation (Nation, 2008; Elgort, 2011). One deliberate study method, word cards, maximizes the effectiveness of rote learning by exercising important areas of the brain.

### **Via the hippocampus**

The hippocampus is the site where knowledge is transferred from short to long-term memory and thus ‘learned’. Repetition (practice) is key (Sousa, 2006; Medina, 2008). Word cards encourage multiple meetings with new vocabulary (Nation, 2008) and may contribute to three different types of encoding via various practice techniques: semantic encoding (L2→ L1 verbalization), phonemic encoding (L1→L2 verbalization) and structural encoding (written repetition of L2 form) (Medina, 2008).

### **Via the prefrontal cortex**

The prefrontal cortex is the site of executive function, which is the portion of the brain involved in decision-making, planning, reflection and attention. The mobility of the cards enables a user to choose which words to study and when. Exercising

metaknowledge of optimal study tactics may contribute to a sense of control and lead to confidence, both of which contribute to learning (Schmitt, 1997). Shuffling the deck keeps the brain attentive and attends to the brain's affinity for novelty (Sousa, 2006; Medina, 2008),

### **Sabotage of the amygdala**

Finally, word cards are an effective tool for game-based learning. Students can study in groups using cards to play various memory games including *Karuta*, Bingo, or Pictionary. Fun collaborative classroom games keep the amygdala, or 'fear center' of the brain, inactive, which allows for learning to take place (Caine, R., Caine, G., McClintoc & Klimek 2009; Zull, 2002).

### **Conclusion**

Word cards may be the most effective of the various methods for deliberate vocabulary learning for the many ways they stimulate the brain. For this reason, they deserve a place in one's vocabulary study strategy repertoire.

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## Teaching TOEFL iBT through Moodle

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**S**tudents studying for the TOEFL Internet-based test (iBT) for the first time can find themselves daunted not only by what is expected of them in the test, but also by how to navigate the online environment itself. Using the software package Moodle (Dougiamas, 2002) as the basis for a preparatory TOEFL iBT course, this report looks at some simple but effective ways of how to overcome these difficulties.

### **Problems**

One of the main problems for TOEFL iBT students is a lack of experience with which to form realistic expectations of the test (Bussinger, 2013). Many students are unfamiliar with the different needs of the independent tasks (where students provide their own evidence for a position) and the integrated tasks (where students critically evaluate sources of information). Another problem is insufficient background knowledge of L2 academic discourse (Silva, 1993). This can manifest at a skills level, such as not knowing how to correctly structure an argument or synthesize different sources of information, or at a linguistic level, such as not knowing how to distinguish levels of register or how to correctly use markers and conjunctions. A final reason is that the learning context itself might be problematic (Toyoda, 2001). In addition to the task of students having to navigate an online system, there is also the challenge of encouraging student-centred independent learning—particularly outside the classroom—

if success in the test is to be achieved. Motivational problems may impose further load on students (Ushida, 2005).

### **Solutions**

A general solution for the problems mentioned above is to provide a logical framework with which to build a foundation of academic skills in conjunction with appropriately tailored features of Moodle (Campbell & Silver, 2011). This can be achieved through a structured syllabus based on alternating cycles of independent and integrated tasks for both the speaking and writing sections of the test. This enables students to familiarize themselves with not only the test format itself, but also the tasks contained therein. In order to address the discourse issues, a thorough debriefing of tasks followed by exemplification and critiquing both by teacher and peers is one recommendation. Repeating this process also enables students to build confidence within an online learning environment, particularly with extending such skills beyond the scope of the classroom. In order to improve this further, the notion of structure is also important in terms of assessment. Weekly homework tasks based on class discussions and tasks supplemented by independent research are helpful in facilitating student-centred learning, as well as increasing motivation. One way to enhance this further is by helping the students assume responsibility for their work by collating their weekly assignments into portfolios to be submitted twice a semester.

### **Advantages of Moodle**

Although some of the suggested solutions above may also be achieved within a traditional classroom context, the benefits of using Moodle for the TOEFL iBT are

manifold. A significant justification is that since the iBT is an online testing system it seems reasonable to run a preparatory course in a similar way. Thus, Moodle provides an ideal platform with which to do this. Specifically, the front page can be programmed in such a way as to alternate between cycles of independent and integrated tasks. Integrated tasks also have the advantage of using authentic materials in the form of relevant online resources such as videos and articles. Homework can be easily assessed and peer-reviewed using the Forum option. It is also possible to create simulated iBT tests using the Quiz option. The sound recording plug-in is particularly useful for simulating the speaking component of the test. Furthermore, repeated practice of tasks over the course of a semester often yields marked improvement. This can be observed directly by both the teacher and peers through comparing pieces of work at different points in time with the convenience of a paperless domain. Observing such improvement also serves to enhance motivation.

### **Conclusion**

In spite of the problems that many students potentially face with the prospect of studying for the TOEFL iBT, the execution of a logical, structured approach through the medium of Moodle can allow most difficulties to be overcome and thereby lead to a rewarding learning experience for both student and teacher alike.

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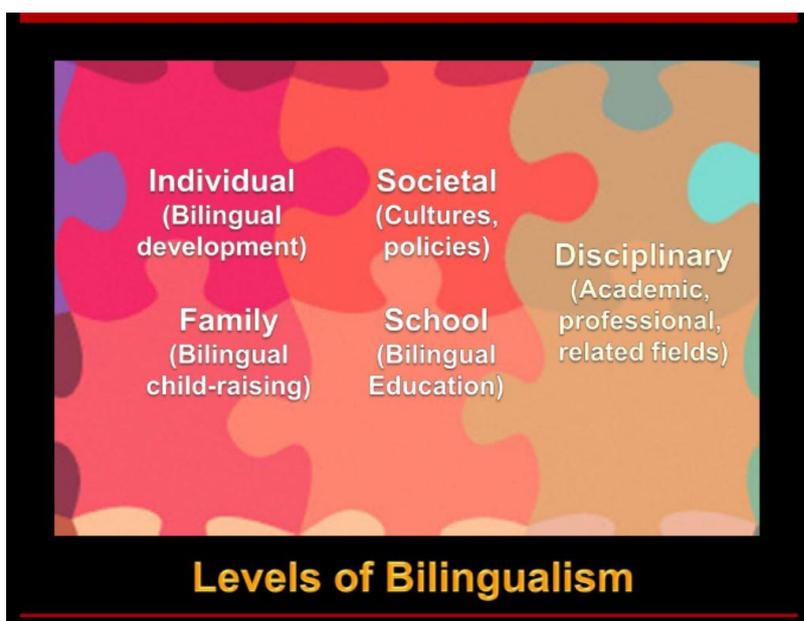
## Bilingualism for language teachers

**Steve McCarty**

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For the past two decades the author has been developing a taxonomy of bilingualism for language teaching, parenting, and research in Japan (e.g., McCarty, 1995). Bilingual phenomena are most recently divided into levels as follows:

Chart 1: Levels of Bilingualism



The levels are symbolized by a puzzle in that the pieces fit together, yet there is some overlap, illustrated in Chart 1 by not writing within straight lines. As examples of overlap, the individual level owes much to the family, and the societal level influences the options available at schools.

The four levels on the left represent bilingual phenomena as they naturally occur in daily life worldwide, whereas they are studied formally at the disciplinary

level, represented as a fifth level in Chart 1. That is, bilingual phenomena are what occurs when different languages come into contact at various levels in or between people, whereas the field of bilingualism is the study of languages in contact at all levels and in all their variations. Because bilingualism works at the interface between languages, its scope includes multilingualism or plurilingualism.

A taxonomy or classification of bilingual phenomena according to the four naturally occurring levels is presented in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Taxonomy of Bilingualism

<b>Taxonomy of Bilingualism for Language Teaching in Japan</b>	
<b>Individual Level</b>	<b>Societal Level</b>
Childhood (simultaneous) bilingual development Adult (consecutive) bilingual development Language maintenance / attrition / loss / pathology Language processing (code-switching , mixing, etc.) Degree of 'Bilinguality' / cognitive benefits, etc. Degree of 'Biculturality' / Cultural Identity issues Types of Bilinguals (active or receptive, etc.) Types of Language Acquisition: 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , Bilingual 1 <sup>st</sup> Japanese & English / other language combinations Trilingual / Multilingual development	Monoculturalism / Biculturalism / Multiculturalism Government language policies (stated or inferred) Linguistic Human Rights Profile of each native language group in a society Majority & Minority Languages Immigrants / Language Minority Students Returnees International / regional / bridge / valued languages Recognized standard language proficiency tests Occupations needing certain bilingual skills
<b>Family Level</b>	<b>School Level (Bilingual Education)</b>
Bilingual child-raising approaches International / intercultural families Bilinguality (minority language reading) (Generational) Language Shift (also at Societal Level)	Types of Bilingual Education Medium of instruction Content-Based Language Teaching International / Ethnic / Bilingual Schools

Here again there is some overlap, as for instance multiculturalism can be operative at different levels. Bilingualism includes multilingual and multicultural phenomena, but the sense of two languages interacting at a time is often apt, such as when parents in an international marriage each use mostly their own native language to raise their children. Then children can have two native languages to some extent. Cultural issues could be considered another level of bilingualism, but different aspects of culture are subsumed under the societal level or operative at the other levels. The

scope is specified as “for language teaching in Japan,” but the chart might serve as a taxonomy of bilingualism in general if not for the few items specific to the Japanese context and the greater variety of bilingual phenomena in the world. Each item in the taxonomy was introduced in the presentation upon which this article is based (McCarty, 2013), and the recording of the presentation is available at the “Bilingualism and Japanology Intersection” Website along with many related publications (<http://www.waoe.org/steve/epublist.html>).

The disciplinary level of bilingualism, as it fits in applied linguistics, in a mutually informative relationship with surrounding disciplines, is illustrated in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Bilingualism at the Disciplinary Level



Chart 3 is also explained in the recording of the presentation noted above, and

will be detailed in a forthcoming article.

At the Back to School 2013 presentation and also at JALT 2012, participants who were starting an international family asked about bilingual child-raising in Japan. For those who are interested, many educational alternatives are described in another article available on the Web (McCarty, 2010).

Moreover, participants at both above-mentioned conferences asked about the possibly different perspective on language teaching when teachers themselves are bilingual. The presenter answered along the following lines. A monolingual foreign language teacher, by his or her example, tells the students to 'go where I have not gone,' whereas a bilingual teacher says, in effect, 'come to where I am,' by modeling the goal of language learning.

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## **Navigating the world of academic publishing with the JALT**

### **Peer Support Group (PSG)**

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**I**n Japan, one expectation many higher education employers have is for language teachers to conduct and publish research. The implication for language teachers, whose background and training are often not research based, is that hiring committees expect evidence of academic research and publications, when hiring for language teaching positions (McCrostie, 2010). In a competitive employment marketplace, more prestigious publication histories may facilitate job applicants to reach final rounds of screening and job interviews. For full-time faculty, publications are also a major criterion for promotion (MEXT, 2006). As experienced teachers and writers, we consider writing for academic publication an integral and necessary part of professional development. However, we understand that for many, the idea of publishing to be successful in the job market is intimidating. Thus we, and others, volunteer with the JALT PSG to offer help by assisting other writers to prepare their manuscripts for (hopeful) publication. Research based on European scholars has shown

that access to support networks is important to success in academic publication (Lillis & Curry, 2010), both in terms of offering support in drafting and revising submissions for publication and in terms of facilitating access (Curry & Lillis, 2010). A complication that many language teachers in Japan face is that the stage at which scholars tend to learn to publish is during their PhD studies (see, for example, Aitchison, Kamler, & Lee, 2010), and at the MA level teachers may not be taught about writing for publication. In the PSG, our peer-readers work with authors to develop overall writing skills and provide feedback about organizing papers, developing themes, and more efficiently reviewing previous research. Grammar and style are usually not checked, however, writers are encouraged to submit multiple drafts, and as papers progress, more sentence-level issues are addressed. The PSG is associated with JALT, but is available to help writers looking to publish with any publication.

If you are a writer looking for support, contact the PSG via <http://jalt-publications.org/psg>. PSG peer-readers can help you streamline the writing process and point out changes that help to streamline your writing process. Once the coordinator receives your paper, she alerts the group and places it in a file online. Peer-readers can then look at the paper and decide if they are interested in the topic and able to provide feedback. With a growing number of peer-readers involved in the PSG, multiple areas of expertise make it easier to match authors and readers.

It usually takes about a month for the readers to read the paper and write their reviews. When both reviews are finished, the Coordinator contacts the author again and grants them access to the online file. In that way, the author can ask direct questions to the peer-readers and vice versa.

The PSG is also looking for new peer-readers. If you are interested in learning

more about this volunteer opportunity, contact Loran Edwards via <http://jalt-publications.org/psg>. Do not worry about not having enough experience; we use a collaborative review system that allows less experienced readers to work with more experienced readers. You will also have access to our archives where you can see finished reviews and gain ideas about what to focus on when reviewing.

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