CONTENTS

Introduction

It is our pleasure to introduce the second issue of the *NUFS Teacher Development Symposium Proceedings.* This issue is comprised of seven articles based on presentations from the second Teacher Development Symposium hosted by the Center for Language Education and Development (CLED) at the Nagoya University of Foreign Studies (NUFS) held on Saturday, January 22nd, 2022. The symposium provided an opportunity for teachers to share knowledge, experience and activities related to teaching English as a foreign language in Japan.

The first article in this issue is from Andrew Tweed, who explains learner autonomy from a theoretical perspective before explaining its value to teachers and providing practical ideas to help teachers develop greater independence among students. This is followed by an article from Nicholas Bradley who presents the results of his study into the educational philosophies of teachers and how these ideas compare with students' perspectives of the role of the teacher. In the third article, Kevin Ottoson describes Collaborative Online International Learning and provides examples of how this approach can be used in language classrooms; he also suggests ways for language teachers to become involved in this virtual collaboration. Jessica Zoni Upton and Mina Hirano provide the fourth article, exploring students' perceptions of two self-reflection tools and providing an insight into the benefits of these tools and whether students' perceptions were affected by their learning environment. In the fifth article, Christopher Lear examines students' beliefs about the use of regional news stories for self-study and discussion activities in content classes, as well as their value in improving reading and summarizing skills. The sixth article by Henry Troy explains the main features of the most widely used English tests for students in Japan, how teachers can help students prepare for these tests by adapting classroom activities and how students can benefit from self- and- peer assessment by taking on the role of examiner. The final contribution comes from Anton Vegel whose article discusses the development of game design in education, reviews the current research in the field and provides suggestions for applying these ideas in the language classroom.

The call for papers for the third NUFS Teacher Development Symposium, currently scheduled for January 2023, will be announced on this website shortly. The Teacher Development Symposium Committee would like to sincerely thank the contributors who submitted their manuscripts and worked through the double peer review process, and also the reviewers who took the time and effort to provide constructive and insightful feedback.

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Promoting Autonomy in and out of the Classroom

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Abstract

Providing learners with an increased amount of autonomy can lead to higher levels of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This reality, combined with the fact that learning a foreign language requires many hours of study, suggests that teachers need to help learners take control of their learning. This paper first provides a theoretical background to explain what learner autonomy is. Following that, the article discusses why it is important to promote learner autonomy to our learners. Finally, it introduces a number of practical ways for teachers to give more control to students over their learning. These methods range from giving students choices in the classroom, introducing websites or apps, and promoting self-access and other learning beyond the classroom. A list of relevant resources for teachers appears at the end of this article.

My first job teaching English began in 2000, as an *eikaiwa* teacher. Teaching at that school, I noticed that some students made significantly more progress than others; and those students had decided to do extra work outside of the classroom. For example, one student did a listening transcription every week, and another wrote a daily diary in English. Throughout my TESOL career, I would go on to notice that those students who took more responsibility for their learning seemed to make more rapid developments in their learning.

As a learner of foreign languages, too, I have had similar experiences. During those times when I was not simply following a teacher's direction, but made important decisions about my own learning (e.g., choosing the materials; setting my own goals; and determining the methods of learning), I noticed that I was able to learn more effectively, and I also felt more motivated. Ultimately, these realizations, from both a teacher's and a learner's perspective, led me to focus on autonomous learning as my primary professional interest.

But what does learner autonomy actually mean? Why is it important? And how can teachers foster it? This paper will seek to provide answers to these questions.

What is Learner Autonomy?

Based on past communication with teachers working in a number of different educational contexts, it seems many language teachers today are familiar with the notion of learner autonomy. When asked to explain what it is, teachers have used a wide variety of terms, such as self-study, self-regulated learning and self-access.

While all of these are indeed related to learner autonomy, they often refer to different aspects of the learning process. For instance, *self-study* often indicates the type of materials used (Benson, 2011); *self-regulated learning*, studied by educational psychologists, is concerned with cognition and motivation (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008); and *self-access* is most often discussed in relation to collections of materials and the physical spaces where autonomous learning is promoted (Cotterall & Reinders, 2001). In the field of TESOL, learner autonomy is perhaps the most commonly used term for those who are interested in these and other related practices. Being that it operates as a kind of umbrella term, however, learner autonomy is not easy to define.

One oft-quoted definition came from Henri Holec (1981, p. 3), who defined learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." Holec further explained that this means "to have and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e.: determining the learning objectives; defining the contents and progressions of learning; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition; and evaluating what has been acquired" (p. 3).

Benson (2013) pointed out that this early definition of learner autonomy described the decision making process involved in autonomous learning in technical terms, and it neglected to include cognitive capacities. Benson himself proposed this definition: "The capacity to take control of one's own learning (p. 61)." He went on to explain that there are three dimensions over which learners can have control: learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content. Benson also argues that a definition of learner autonomy should include its political character, as learners making decisions about the learning contents can, after all, pose a challenge to established classroom and institutional power relationships (p. 61).

Other scholars in the field have provided further clarifications of learner autonomy. Little (1990) explained that learner autonomy is not a teaching method; not a single easily described

behavior; nor a synonym for self-instruction. Whereas early manifestations of learner autonomy were represented by individual study carrels and audio headsets in the self-access centers of the 1970s and 1980s, more recent research and corresponding educational programs demonstrate its social dimensions. A collection of papers under the title *Social dimensions in learner Autonomy and language learning* (Murray, 2014) is a clear indication from the literature. Furthermore, many self-access centers have spaces or programs designed to promote social interaction. They also hold events and workshops, promote the formation of student groups, and self-access centers explicitly reach out to help learners through advising programs. In this way, autonomous learning is no longer simply viewed as independent learning.

Why is Learner Autonomy Important?

For most EFL students, learning a language requires a significant investment of time, as well as perseverance. Second language acquisition research shows us that a higher amount of time on task is generally beneficial for language development (see, e.g., Turnbull et al., 1998). By promoting autonomy, we can encourage more contact with the target language. Furthermore, as autonomous learning can include a good amount of variety in terms of learning activities and resources, it can be more intrinsically motivating than rigid, comparatively traditional forms of instruction. The more students enjoy the learning process, the more likely they are to study and use the language.

While students can learn autonomously in or outside of the classroom, learner autonomy is often associated with learning beyond the classroom. Anecdotally, students and teachers report that learning is more successful when it includes learning outside of the classroom (Nunan, 2014; Benson & Reinders, 2011). Richards (2015) lists a number of benefits associated with learning beyond the classroom, including developments in communicative and pragmatic competence, improved fluency and accuracy, extended contact with English, and enjoyment in learning (pp. 19-20). Language learning is a complex process. If students do more autonomous learning beyond the classroom, then they will have an increased number of opportunities to understand these complexities and develop more confidence using the language.

Educational psychologists also stress the importance of supporting students' autonomy. According to self-determination theory, a theory of motivation that has been rigorously applied in educational and other contexts, autonomy is an essential human need and it is a crucial component of the learning process. Ryan and Deci (2017) explain that "There are three *basic*

psychological needs, the satisfaction of which is essential to optimal development, integrity, and well-being. These are the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness" (p. 242). In modern classrooms, competence can be included through assessments, and relatedness can be addressed by social groupings. However, autonomy is sometimes neglected. At a recent conference in Tokyo, Ryan (2018) emphasized the link between autonomy and motivation and strongly advocated for autonomy supportive teaching. Fostering autonomy is vital for students' learning, motivation, and development.

How Can We Promote Learner Autonomy?

There are many ways that English language educators can promote learner autonomy to their students. Teachers can promote autonomous learning in and out of the classroom, and the scope of this support can range from using teacher language more carefully to offering courses which enable students to carry out self-directed learning. Below, a variety of methods will be described.

For teachers who want to begin by making small changes to support autonomous learning, one simple thing that they can do is to involve students in class decisions. For instance, they can ask the class if they would like to work in groups or individually. Teachers can also ask them how long they would like to complete an activity. Such involvement shows students that teachers value their opinion and input, and gives students a more active role in making decisions about their learning.

Another thing that teachers can do is to offer students choices. For instance, they can give them different topic options for a paper or a presentation. Students who are given more control over their assignments are more likely to be invested and motivated in them. Some activities like extensive reading or using language learning apps and websites inherently involve student choice as learners can select topics, genres, language skills and online platforms that appeal to them. Finally, surveying students about their preferences by conducting a needs analysis is a great way to find out more about what students would like to do in the class. By collecting your students' opinions, you could make simple decisions about the class that reflects their desires or make more significant changes leading to a negotiated syllabus.

When teachers support students' autonomous learning, they show their learners that they respect them as individuals. One simple way that they can do this is to be more mindful of the language that they use in the classroom. While it is important to carefully consider the level and complexity of the language that they use with our students, there are some small changes that

they can make that demonstrate their support for students as individuals. For instance, teachers might ask questions such as "What is your favorite sport?" The question assumes that the students do in fact enjoy sports. This can create cognitive dissonance for students who are not interested in sports. These kinds of questions can be changed to "Do you like sports? If so, which ones?," or "What do you think about sports?" These changes allow students with different opinions to respond honestly to the question. Another example would be to use classroom language that it is more polite and friendly. For instance, rather than using imperatives, such as "Stand up," a teacher could use a softer approach by asking, "Could everybody please stand up?" This kind of language shows more respect for the students. Of course, body language and facial expressions also play a role in communicating the tone of the discourse and delivering classroom language with a smile may help to dissolve a sense of hierarchy in the classroom.

In a practical article, Thornton (2010) describes how classroom teachers can promote self-directed learning. She advocates a four-stage process in which students make a *Plan*, *Implement* their plan, *Monitor* their learning, and *Evaluate* their learning progress (P. I. M. E.) Thornton includes a number of practical tips for teachers new to promoting self-directed learning and she includes example learning plan documents at the end of the article.

There are of course many ways that autonomous learning can be carried out beyond the classroom. Self-access centers are a popular way of supporting students' autonomous learning. These can range from designated rooms where students go to read books or converse in the target language, to purpose-built centers where administrative staff and advisors are hired on a full-time basis. Cotterall and Reinders (2001) offer this definition of self-access centers:

> A Self Access Centre consists of a number of resources (in the form of materials, activities and support) usually located in one place, and is designed to accommodate learners of different levels, styles, goals and interests. It aims to develop learner autonomy among its users (p. 1).

There are a number of groups and publications based in Japan that are dedicated to researching and sharing practices related to self-access centers, including the *Japan Association for Self-Access Learning*, *Research in Learner Autonomy Education* and *Studies in Self-Access Learning*. Links for these and other sites are listed in Appendix A.

Sometimes included in self-access centers, advising has become an increasingly popular pedagogical approach. Carson and Mynard (2012) define it as follows: "Advising in language learning involves the process and practice of helping students to direct their own paths so as to become more effective and more autonomous language learners" (p. 4). As Carson and Mynard explain, advisors draw on the discourse practices of language teaching and humanistic counseling. They go on to explain that advisors support learners and promote autonomy by "raising awareness of the language-learning process; helping learners identify goals and make learning plans; motivating, supporting, and encouraging learners; helping learners to self-evaluate and reflect on their learning," as well as other ways (p. 16).

Appendix B contains a list of ways to promote learner autonomy that was shared during the symposium. Most of these are discussed above.

Discussion: Promoting Autonomy at Japanese Universities

For teachers who would like to include more choices for their students, it may be best to start small. From the author's experience, most Japanese students are not accustomed to making key decisions about their own language learning, and many of them seemingly want to be told what to do and how to study. This may especially be true with first-year students, who have mostly experienced a rather teacher-centered approach to learning.

In terms of promoting learner autonomy outside of the classroom, one simple thing teachers can do is to encourage students to visit a self-access center or learning website (e.g., a YouTube channel). This gives them a focus on learning outside of the classroom. Extensive reading and extensive listening projects are another a effective way to begin. Teachers can offer advice in terms of what types of materials are suitable, but students can choose the books or listening resources that appeal to them. With the author's first year university students, we have an extensive listening project in spring semester, which is followed by an autonomous learning project in fall semester, where students set a goal, create a plan, and carry out their learning in a way that best suits their wants and needs. The autonomous learning project is broader in scope, and the spring semester helps prepare them for this by asking them to begin making decisions about their learning. By gradually introducing ways to promote autonomy, students are likely to feel more comfortable with these unfamiliar ways of learning.

Conclusion

This paper examined learner autonomy by answering three questions: what is learner autonomy?; why is learner autonomy important?; and how can we promote learner autonomy? Learner autonomy is not a simple concept. There are a number of reasons for teachers to support learners' autonomy, and many pedagogical approaches have been developed. These range from simple changes in teacher talk to the installation of sophisticated self-access centers. It is hoped that this paper will encourage teachers to experiment with these approaches in an attempt to promote learner autonomy.

BIO DATA

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APPENDIX A

Resources for Learning more about Learning Autonomy

Based in Japan

SiSAL Journal

https://sisaljournal.org/

RILAE

https://kuis.kandagaigo.ac.jp/rilae/

Relay Journal

https://kuis.kandagaigo.ac.jp/relayjournal/

JASAL

https://jasalorg.com/

JALT Learner Development SIG

http://ld-sig.org/

Based outside of Japan

IATEFL Learner Autonomy SIG

https://lasig.iatefl.org/

International Association for the Psychology of Language Learning

https://www.iapll.com/

International Association of Language Learning and Teaching

https://iallt.org/

APPENDIX B

Ways to promote learner autonomy

1. Having students make learning plans and carry out their own individual autonomous learning

2. Asking for student input on classroom decisions (groupings, topics, etc.)

3. Conducting a needs analysis; a negotiated syllabus

4. Project learning

5. Vocabulary notebooks

6. Extensive reading

7. Introducing English language learning websites to your classes

8. Language learning spaces such as self-access centers, conversation lounges

9. Organizing (virtual) language exchanges/tandem learning projects

10. Study abroad programs

11. Advising (in self-access centers; in the classroom; during office hours)

12. Language learning diaries or language learner histories

13. Consciously using teacher language that promotes autonomy

Educational Philosophies of Teachers

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Abstract

Every year the research produced in education is vast and has the positive effect of advancing the profession in ever more innovative, sophisticated, and humanitarian ways. However, although there is this vast array of work showcasing new approaches, activities and providing academic discussion, it can sometimes be beneficial to reflect on the more fundamental aspects of what we do and why we do it.

This paper presents the results of a small-scale examination of the educational philosophies of 18 teachers. The results reveal the elements of education that are seen as paramount by teachers along with those which are less common. From these, a clear image of how teachers view the profession, and their role can be seen. Additionally, the aspects identified as important within teachers' educational philosophies were presented to students. The elements given importance by students are also presented and contrasted with the previous results.

Introduction

What type of teacher are you? What would your students describe you as? What would your colleagues describe you as? Is there consistency among these views? There is likely to be a great deal of variance in the answers to these questions quite simply due to the ubiquitous nature of labels describing teachers. A simple search reveals a whole host of labels used to describe different types of teacher, such as activist teacher, modern teacher, buddy teacher, entertainer teacher and traditional teacher (Helplineph, 2022; Unicheck, 2017). Although many of these labels are fairly self-explanatory, the labels are often provided with explanations that attempt to offer detail. The "modern teacher", for example, is a teacher that is very open to the use of the latest technology in education and operates under the belief that technological development runs in parallel with pedagogical advancement (Helplinph, 2022). Other examples can be that of the

"activist teacher" who possesses a fervour for specific social issues and uses class time to present a certain social agenda, or the "buddy teacher" who aims to occupy a role akin to that of a big brother or big sister (Unicheck, 2017).

Such labelling may seem extremely reductionist and two dimensional, but it is consistent with much discourse outside of education where complex social realities are neatly divided up into easily digestible chunks. Yet, as a form of human interaction involving multiple people of various backgrounds and within a variety of settings, the reality is infinitely greyer and more complex. As such, it is likely that all these labels exist within each of us as teachers with certain ones coming to the forefront at different times and as a result of different conditions.

English Language Teachers

If we look specifically at the English language teaching literature, different authors offer different types of teacher (Harmer, 2015; Scrivener, 2011) and a great deal of overlap exists between the categories of teacher put forward. Scrivener (2011), for example, puts forward the three teacher labels of explainer, involver and enabler. The explainer teacher occupies the role of a giver of information in a classroom that is highly teacher centred. Classes often involve the teacher explaining the subject or lecturing with students occupying a largely passive role. Although students are not personally involved or challenged and practice is often through individual exercises, lessons can be entertaining when delivered with enthusiasm and energy by the teacher. The explainer role described by Scrivener would seem to closely correspond with what might be a commonly held view in much of society of what a teacher does and how a classroom is, perhaps as a result of people's own experiences in education. In this sense, the explainer teacher represents what might be considered the default or traditional view of teaching and the teacher.

The involver loosens control in the classroom due to a belief in a greater need to focus on students and to allow them more practice and experimentation. According to Scrivener, due to the enabler teacher's greater familiarity with teaching methodology, the teacher involves students more by using a variety of engaging activities while still maintaining control of the classroom.

The final label offered by Scrivener, the enabler, represents a confident teacher equipped with a variety of methodologies who is confident enough to share or even give full control of the classroom with students. In an enabler's class, decisions are often shared or negotiated, and the teacher takes direction from the students. It is under this label that we get educational metaphors

such as a teacher being a "guide", "counsellor" or "resource" (Scrivener, 2011, p.18). In addition to a strong knowledge of methodology, the enabler is also aware of the interpersonal dynamics of a classroom as well as the feelings and thinking of individuals within.

Scrivener makes the point that all teachers are explainers, involvers and enablers at different times and in different circumstances. However, my own observations of teachers over many years suggests that the teachers do not occupy the roles of explainer, involver or enabler for the same amount of time. Teachers have their own preferences, whether they are conscious of them or not. Some teachers, for example, will occupy the role of explainer almost exclusively, while others may more frequently adopt the role of engager, despite the circumstances being extremely similar. The difference in the likelihood of teachers occupying the different roles may well be due to their familiarity with different methodologies, as Scrivener suggests, and which sets his labels apart from the more personality-based labels presented at the start of this paper. Yet, teachers who hold similar teaching qualifications, experience and teach the same classes still do not occupy explainer, involver and enabler roles in the same amount nor teach in the same way. Something more would seem to be at play.

Educational Philosophy

A teacher's personality, familiarity with methodology, other education, age, experience, amongst other variables, are likely to influence how they teach. So too are their fundamental beliefs regarding education, what can be called their educational philosophy. It can be said that a person's educational philosophy represents a gestalt to which a teacher's education, age, personality, experience and other variables contribute.

All teachers have an educational philosophy whether they are conscious of it or not. For the purposes of this paper, focus will be on two areas of teachers' educational philosophies. The first are the epistemic aims of education; the question of what we are there to do and what knowledge we are there to give. Of course, at its most basic level, an English teacher is there to teach English, but many would suggest that education has a socio-political function in helping to cultivate moral citizens who have characteristics and attributes that align with the needs and expectations of the society in which the education takes place (Siegel, 2009). On the other hand, rather cultivating "acceptable" characteristics and belief sets, some highlight that rather than being a provider of knowledge, the purpose of education should focus on the ability of the individual to process information, this is, the development of their cognitive abilities. This view

is clearly evident in popular education quotes such as "Education is what remains once one has forgotten what one has learned in school" and "The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one" from Einstein and Malcolm Forbes respectively. For these commentators and many academics, education is much more than the provision of information as "educators have a responsibility to help individuals think for themselves" (Robertson, 2009, p.13).

Whatever someone holds as the epistemic aims of education, the second area or next question will likely be concerned with how to go about achieving them. In an educational philosophy, this is not yet a matter of methodology, but more fundamentally it is a question of how one should be as a teacher, what one's purpose and roles are in education. As means of illustration, an example can be seen in the work of Rogers and Frelberg (1994) who suggest three qualities as being of fundamental importance for teachers:

- Respect – Being positive and non-judgemental.
- Empathy – Seeing things through the eyes of the learner.
- Authenticity – Being yourself and not being afraid to be vulnerable.

Rogers and Frelberg (1994) suggest that all of these are vital to establish rapport between teacher and students. The importance of rapport in language education is suggestive of the belief that the development of knowledge is best achieved as a collective endeavour. Ultimately though, the work of Rogers and Frelberg (1994) shows that how a teacher should be focuses not on which particular methodology they choose, but more fundamentally on how they put themselves forward, interact with others and see their role in education.

Methods

What do teachers believe as being of fundamental importance in education and being a teacher? To attempt to answer these questions and examine teachers' educational philosophies in more detail, 19 language teachers wrote a paragraph under the simple title of "My educational philosophy". There was no set word limit and paragraphs differed greatly in length with the average being 108 words. Emergent thematic coding was used to analyse the paragraphs with the frequency of the emergent items also being recorded.

Following emergent thematic coding, emergent items were presented to students via a survey in Japanese and English. Students were asked to identify the two most important items

when considering the role of an English teacher, the two least important items for a teacher, and to rank each item individually in terms of importance via a Likert scale. A total of 257 responses were received.

Results

Although expressed in different terms across the paragraphs, common themes were emergent in teachers' paragraphs. For ease of presentation Table 1 below shows the emergent items expressed as things teachers should do or be.

Table 1

Emergent Items and Their Frequency

Frequency	A teacher should…
8	…motivate learners.
8	…act as a guide / mentor for students.
7	…encourage collaboration.
6	…create a comfortable atmosphere that allows students to be themselves and open up.
5	…be pedagogically flexible.
4	…develop critical thinking.
4	…develop intellectual curiosity.
3	…create a comfortable atmosphere for ideas.
2	…be a reflective practitioner and learner.

A total of nine items that constituted separate beliefs within an educational philosophy were found in the paragraphs. None of these were only found in a single teacher though some were much more common than others, as can be seen by the frequency column above. Here we can see that the teacher's role as an educational motivator and as a guide or mentor for students were common aspects of teachers' philosophies, whereas the importance of teachers reflecting on and learning from their practice was not. Additionally, some items, while separate, do share similar conceptual terrain. The need to develop critical thinking and the need to develop intellectual curiosity, for example, though focusing on different elements can coexist within a

category of cognitive development. The same can be true of creating a comfortable environment within in which different ideas can coexist, and a comfortable environment within which students can be themselves and open up.

        With some items sharing similar conceptual terrain, these items were merged, and a reduced seven items were presented to students via a survey. Though presented in Japanese and English, for the sake of space, only the English version is shown below in Table 2. The numbers following each item represents the frequency with which the concept appeared in teachers' philosophies. As can be seen, the first two on the list are an amalgamation of two different items.

Table 2

Survey Items Presented to Students

- A teacher should create a comfortable atmosphere for students that allows them to be themselves freely and share their true opinions. 9 (3+6)
- A teacher should encourage students to think critically and develop their intellectual curiosity. 8(4+4)
- A teacher should motivate students by being supportive, friendly and using interesting content in class. 8
- A teacher should be a guide / mentor and help students to become better and more autonomous learners. 8
- A teacher should encourage collaboration and create an atmosphere where all members of the class (including the teacher) are teaching and learning from each other. 7
- A teacher should be able to switch to different teaching methods depending on the context, subject or needs of the class. 5
- A teacher should always be learning and reflecting on how he/she teaches and why he/she teaches in that way. 2

        The results of the survey showed that creating a comfortable atmosphere and motivating students were overwhelmingly identified as the two most important aspects for an English teacher (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Most Important Aspects for an English Teacher

Most Important for an English Teacher

When looking at the least important aspects, we can see that the distribution is less clear cut. However, being a reflective teacher, being pedagogically flexible and encouraging critical thinking and intellectual curiosity were strongly identified as aspects that were of the least importance for an English teacher.

Table 3

Distribution of Responses for Different Items

	Not important at all			Extremely important	
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Create a comfortable atmosphere	0	3	18	84	150
Encourage critical thinking	7	29	75	91	52
Motivate students	0	9	31	67	147
Be a guide / mentor	1	15	54	115	70
Encourage collaboration	0	9	45	91	110

Pedagogical flexibility	2	27	68	105	53
Be reflective on his/her teaching	9	18	89	97	52

The individual items ranked on a Likert scale can be seen above in Table 3. The distribution of scores is consistent with previous results and can be divided into two types. The first is a distribution of scores similar to that shown in Figure 2 below. Here a large majority of responses being found in the "extremely important" column and then cascading down through the other columns with no responses in the final column. This distribution was found for creating a comfortable atmosphere in class, motivating students, and encouraging collaboration.

Figure 2

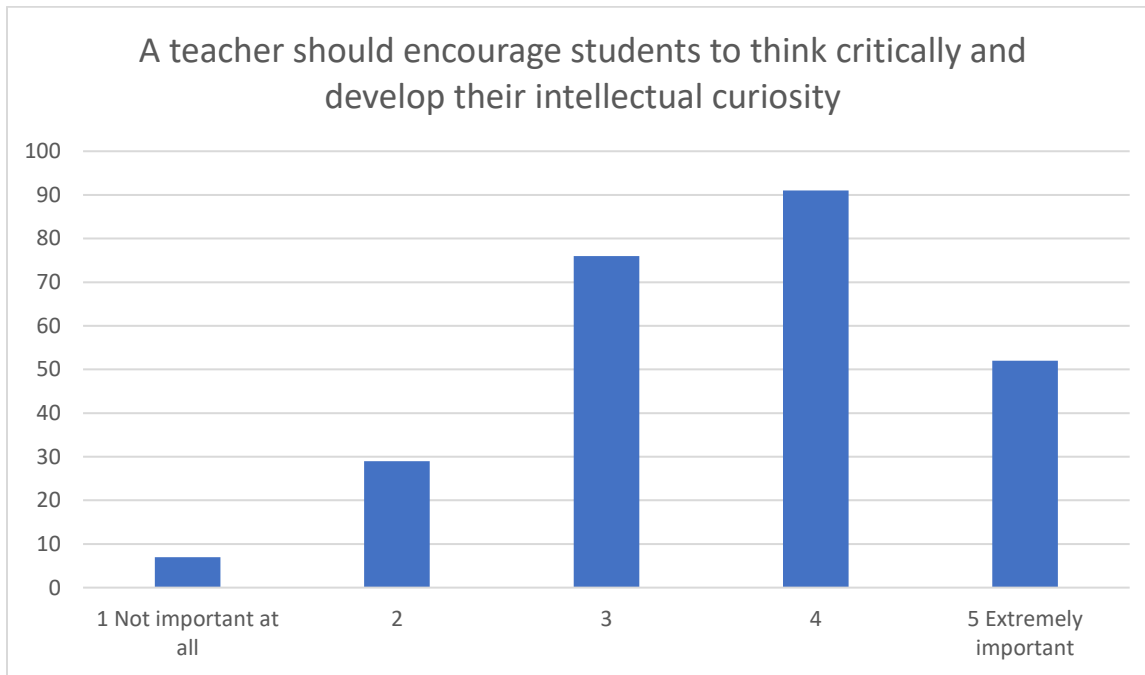*Student Endorsement of Teachers Creating a Comfortable Atmosphere*
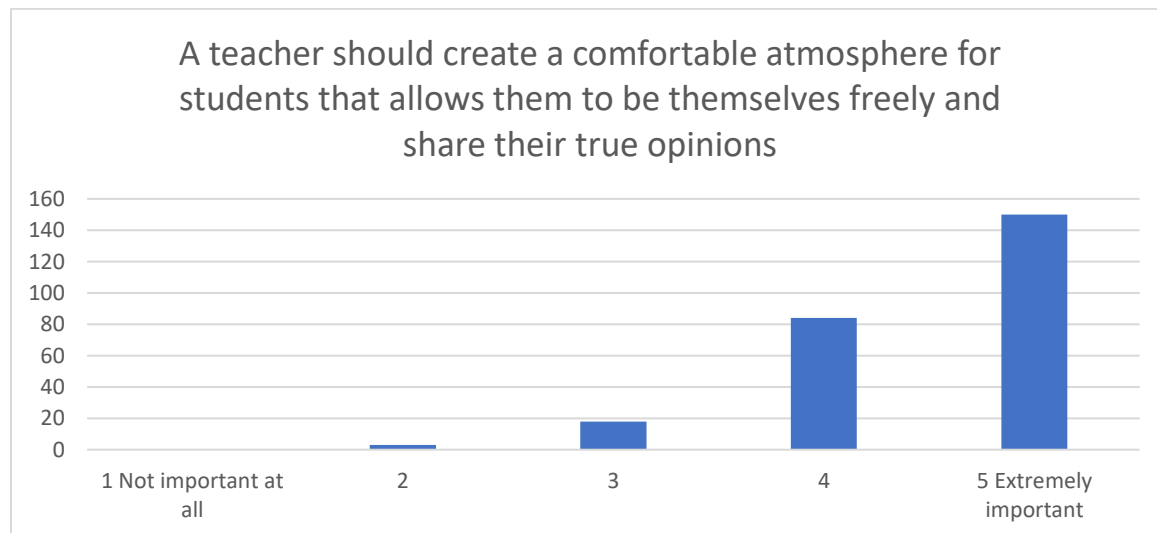
The distribution of other items is similar to that of developing critical thinking, shown in Table 6. While students overall see it as important, it is to a much lesser degree than those above. Additionally, the large number of students that selected the middle option suggest that many students are quite ambivalent to them. This distribution was typical for developing critical thinking, being a guide/mentor, being pedagogically flexible, and being a reflective teacher.

These items are also the only ones that registered a notable number of responses in the "not important" column, including some in the "not important at all" column.

Figure 3

Student Endorsement of Teachers Encouraging Critical Thinking Development

A teacher should encourage students to think critically and develop their intellectual curiosity

(Bar chart: values approximately — 1 Not important at all: 7; 2: 29; 3: 76; 4: 91; 5 Extremely important: 52. Y-axis ranges from 0 to 100 in increments of 10.)

Discussion

When examining the analysis of teachers' educational philosophies, we can see that the emergent items are overwhelmingly focused on their role as a teacher. Of the nine emergent items only two featured what might be considered the epistemic aims of education: developing critical thinking and encouraging intellectual curiosity. This suggests that teachers attach greater importance to their role in the classroom than to the nature of the knowledge they are there to develop. The educational philosophies of teachers would most closely align with the enabler view of a teacher. Teachers highlighting the vital nature of motivating students, creating a comfortable atmosphere, encouraging collaboration, being pedagogically flexible, reflecting on their own practice, and being a "guide", "mentor" or "facilitator", shows a focus on teacher performance rather than musings on the nature of the subject or the cognitive development of

students. Despite this, however, it may be the case that consideration of the nature of the subject is implied in the highlighting of these classroom-based performative items. Identifying with the enabler type of teacher is suggestive of a belief in the nature of the subject in that English is a skill that requires practice, variety, making mistakes and so on, and that a teacher needs to adopt a role that is conducive to creating an environment that allows these to occur so that learning and cognitive development can take place. Of course, whether teachers make these connections is not evident from a simple examination of their paragraphs, it can just be said that in their paragraphs teachers are more cognizant of and place more importance on philosophical questions of them as a teacher, their role and how they should be in the classroom, rather than epistemic concerns and aims.

When looking at the results of the student survey, it is perhaps no surprise that they give greatest endorsement to educational philosophy items that have a clear connection to them as students, such as motivating them, creating a positive atmosphere, and encouraging collaboration. The results of the individual scores of items reinforce this point and shows that students expect to be active in the classroom and desire a teacher that helps them to be so. As with the teachers' ideal which is suggested through their paragraphs, so too do students see the enabler type of teacher as being most desirable. Ultimately, there is a great deal of agreement between teachers and students as elements of teaching philosophies that involve greater interaction between classroom members and elements that focus on developing the conditions that allow these are given greatest weight.

Not all is in agreement between teachers and students, though. The idea that education involves some form of cognitive development beyond the simple acquisition of subject knowledge was a recurrent theme in teachers' educational philosophies, albeit one that was much less frequent than themes relating to performative concerns. Although the development of students' critical thinking and intellectual curiosity have long been considered by many to be a part of what education *is*, it has only much more recently been seen by many in the profession to be an important goal of language education. This is especially evident in the common use of the term "critical thinking" on many EFL textbooks used today. Two examples of global textbooks using the term, In Focus (Browne et al., 2021) and Pathways (Fetig & Najafi, 2018) are shown on the following page.
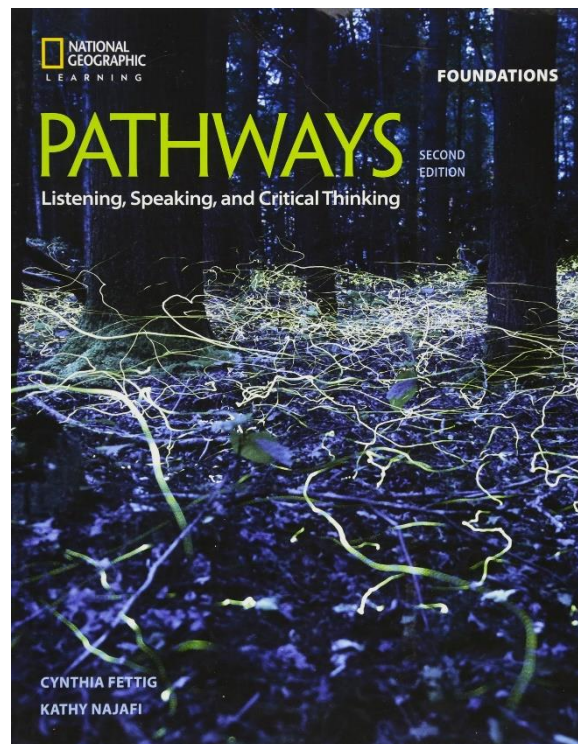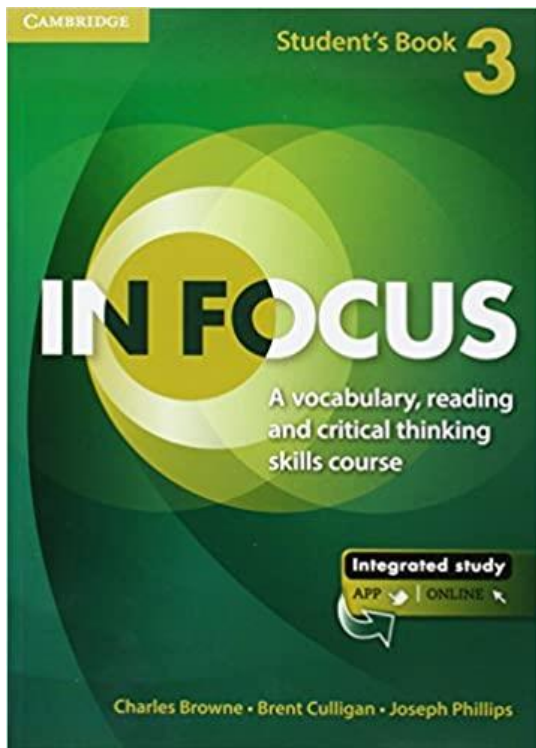
Though the inclusion of critical thinking development would seem to be prudent, especially given that such textbooks follow a largely content-based approach, the value of critical thinking as part of the language teaching profession is a debate separate to that of this paper. It is raised here simply because the results of the study point to a gulf between teachers' and students' thinking regarding it. The critical thinking labels that adorn many textbooks would seem to be there to attract the teacher rather than the student; a reflection of the reality that teachers are the ones overwhelmingly in charge of textbook selection for courses. Of course, one may argue that students not giving a strong endorsement of critical thinking development is precisely a reason for its inclusion and that, ultimately, the teacher knows best. However, as the results would seem to suggest that critical thinking development is not viewed by students as something of great relevance to language education, mention of it in class, on the cover of textbooks or on course syllabi is likely to have very little impact on students' desire to take a course.

Directions for future research

This small-scale study began as a means of satisfying my own curiosity about the fundamental beliefs that teachers have about language education. The results proved to be illuminating and offered future avenues for research to paint a much deeper and more complete picture of

teachers' educational philosophies. The following questions arose which may be best answered through follow up interviews and other qualitative means:

How have these teachers arrived at these philosophies?

What influenced them? When? Where? How?

Is their educational philosophy consistent across their teaching of different subjects?

To what degree is their philosophy mitigated by contextual features?

Is it possible to 'view' their philosophy in their teaching?

Do national educational needs / preferences / differences influence the educational philosophies that are espoused?

BIO DATA

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Collaborative Online International Learning in the Language Classroom

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Abstract

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is an approach that connects teachers and students to collaborate and learn as part of their course. COIL is one type of virtual exchange that promotes more inclusive international collaboration that has been gaining popularity in recent years (O'Dowd, 2019; Rubin, 2017). In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, foreign language educators have seen COIL as a vehicle to promote international collaboration and language learning. Furthermore, as participation in study abroad programs for university students in Japan and worldwide has been lessened and is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic participation levels in the near future, COIL offers opportunities for higher education institutions to work towards their internationalization goals. For students in foreign language university courses in Japan, COIL can provide unique opportunities to interact and collaborate with L1 or L2 speakers in another country. In addition to language development, COIL offers opportunities for development, including intercultural competence. For stakeholders interested in incorporating virtual exchange in their language classrooms, this paper aims to provide an overview of COIL, and some examples of language-learning-focused COIL. Finally, some suggestions about how to get involved in COIL will be provided.

Introduction

The Japanese government's push for fostering global *jinzai* (global human resources) and internationalization in Japan's institutions of higher education has caused universities to look for methods to work towards these objectives. Many private universities have seen study abroad as a vehicle to foster global jinzai and internationalize the curriculum (Yonezawa, et al., 2009). Unfortunately, not all students have the means or time to participate in international exchanges. This realization is evident with the growing popularity of the concept of internationalization at home (IaH) among educational institutions. Beelen and Jones (2015) describe IaH as the "purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal curriculum

for all students within domestic learning environments" (p. 69). Beelen and Jones (2015) argue that the term IaH suggests international mobility efforts have reached relatively few. Teekens' (2013) description of IaH puts emphasis on expanding opportunities to more students. For Teekens (2013), IaH is concerned with what do with the vast majority of students who are not involved or exposed to international or intercultural experiences.

The combination of the push for more equity in international or intercultural exchanges in the midst of lockdowns and cancellations of mobility programs due to a global pandemic has made virtual exchanges appear to be an attractive solution to a lack of access to mobility programs like study abroad. Reiffenrath, et al. (2020) laud the possibilities of virtual exchanges to help bridge more access and opportunities of cross-cultural collaboration, even across disciplines. Virtual exchanges (*or telecollaboration*) are not entirely new. Over the past 20 years, virtual exchange has seen dramatic growth in popularity in foreign language education (Hauck & MacKinnon 2016; O'Dowd, 2013; O'Dowd & O'Rourke, 2019). Virtual exchange is simply a method that brings people together for learning and exchange through the use of technology (see Stevens Initiative [2021] for an overview of the various types of virtual exchange). Among the different types of virtual exchange, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is a teaching methodology that enables both students and instructors in different countries to collaborate on projects and discussions as a component of their coursework (SUNY COIL Center, n.d.) COIL is not simply students in different countries sharing an online classroom, rather COIL creates equitable team-taught learning environments where faculty in two different countries or cultures work together to create a shared syllabus that emphasizes experiential and collaborative learning (COIL Consulting, n.d.) COIL is a type of virtual exchange that is closely tied to a pre-existing course in a university where students collaborate with classmates from a different university outside of their country.

COIL exchanges can take many different forms. Students in different cultures may work on a research project, media product, business plan, or action plan. COIL exchanges can be completely online or in a blended format See (Ikeda, 2021a) for examples of a variety COIL projects that Kansai University students have worked on with students around the world. A COIL exchange typically follows three steps: an icebreaker, comparison and analysis, and collaboration. In the beginning of a COIL exchange, the icebreaker provides a crucial function of building rapport, engaging the students, and team building. In the next step of comparison and

analysis, learners become accustomed to the tools that they will use to communicate. Often, the software might be something they are normally accustomed to using. Malinowski and Kramsch (2014) and Kern (2014) draw attention to the way the technological or online medium can impact intercultural learning and influence how communication takes place. These impacts can be positive as well as negative. If the platform for communication presents too many challenges to use, students' motivation to interact may be negatively affected. Students also get accustomed to the style of communication among their group members. Group members might have preferred times and ways to communicate with their classmates. When dealing with time differences, this might mean that some students have to engage earlier in the morning or later in the evening. In this step, students discover new ways to interact with each other. For example, their classmates might prefer communicating in real time over video. In contrast, some classmates might upload a video and await a response. While others might prefer to communicate through chatting or phone calls rather than video chat. Kern (2014) stresses the importance of drawing attention to how the online medium impacts their interactions. In the third step, students engage project-based learning. The COIL projects can be incorporated into fully online, face-to-face, or hybrid (partly online, partly face-to-face). The COIL projects can be incorporated into complementary content or similar content.

Ikeda (2021) describes how some COIL projects can be interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, crossdisciplinary, or interdisciplinary. For example, in an intradisciplinary course, Student A in an English literature course at University X works with Student B in an English literature course at University Y, researching Shakespeare's use of conflict. While in a multidisciplinary COIL project, Student A in mass media communication works with Student B in computer science, producing a short digital promotional video clip. In an interdisciplinary course, Student A in marketing works with Student B in English education, researching how educational product companies promote their products to educational organizations worldwide and suggesting a better approach.

While many programs may fit under a general COIL design umbrella, a language-learning focus may be more appropriate for foreign language instructors. Ikeda (2021b) points out how language-learning COIL design differs from a general COIL design. First in terms of student learning outcome, language-learning COIL aims to give students plenty of opportunities to practice using the target language, while general COIL design is developed based on the goals

for the matched courses. Next, in terms of task design, language learning COIL will likely have tasks that enhance fluency in the target language for both groups of students. While a general COIL design will have a task that engages the students in collaborative learning. A project or team-based task design is likely the goal. Then, in terms of the language used, the instruction language might differ from the practiced language in language-learning COIL. For example, students in a Japanese language class in America might be taught in English, but the practiced language will be Japanese with the group of students they are working within a different country, like China. In a general COIL design, the most common option is English for the lingua franca. Finally, regarding the collaboration mode, it is strongly recommended that language learning COIL designs have a good amount of synchronous communication. Direct synchronous communication, in the form of live text or video chats can create stronger connections and bonds between groups (Institute for Innovative Global Education, 2022). While general COIL designs have synchronous or asynchronous collaboration for their mode of communication.

Examples of Language Learning COIL Designs

This section will provide two examples of designs the researcher at two different universities in Japan has used with a partner at a university in northeastern China. To begin, the researcher (Instructor A) was introduced to his partner (Instructor B) in China through a COIL program coordinator at a university he was working at in 2020-2021. Table 1 provides a background of these two universities.

Table 1

Language Learning COIL Project 1 Background information

	University A (Japan)	University B (China)
Location	Central Japan	Northeastern China
Institution	Private	Public
Size	9,000	32,000
Major	Humanities/ British & American Studies	Education
Class(es)	Communication Skills/ Oral Communication	English Communication Skills
Students	39	44

English proficiency level	Humanities majors-Intermediate British & American Studies majors-Upper intermediate and advanced	Upper intermediate and advanced

Language Learning COIL Project 1

Initially, both instructors exchanged a series of emails explaining the nature of the courses they taught, their teaching philosophies, and their initial goals and objectives for conducting a COIL project. Gradually, the teachers developed a list of specific objectives for students at both universities. Both instructors hoped that the university students in China and Japan would be able to talk about various everyday topics (summer, food, holidays, careers, interpersonal relationships) in English. The overall objectives for this COIL project were as follows:

- Give students opportunities to learn from each other
- Improve English language skills
- Improve intercultural skills
- Improve virtual learning skills

After developing shared objectives, both instructors decided on the activities and the final project for their students to collaborate on. Table 2 provides an overview of the Basic COIL Project 1. The topics for the weekly discussions (e.g., summer vacation, interpersonal relationships, careers) were chosen as they were topics the students were assigned to read and discuss in the classes in their courses. Both Instructor A and Instructor B wanted to give the students a chance to discuss these topics with students from a different culture. Additionally, the final project was created as an opportunity for the students in China and Japan to develop a deeper understanding of the topic through research, analysis, discussions, and a presentation. The 83 students were divided up into groups of four or five. Each group had at least two students from Japan and two students from China. During Weeks 1-6, the students would chat synchronously and asynchronously through WeChat about the assigned topics. Finally, in Week 7, each group gave their presentation to a live zoom meeting. Each week, the students filled out a reflection on Google Forms. They answered the following questions in order: (1) What was interesting about your interactions this week? (2) What did you learn from your interactions? (3) What would you like to know more about?

Table 2

Basic COIL Project 1 Overview

Phase	Week	Activities
Prep	0	Preparation-Install and check required software/ assign students into groups on WeChat (WeChat)
1	1	**Icebreaker**-students get to know each other, learn about each other's local environment, students learn about Japan/ China (WeChat) Reflection (Google Forms)
2	2	**Discuss**-Summer vacation (WeChat) Reflection (Google Forms)
	3	**Discuss**-Food (WeChat) Reflection (Google Forms)
	4	**Discuss**-Holidays and Traditions (WeChat) Reflection (Google Forms)
2	5	**Discuss**-Interpersonal relationships/Careers (WeChat) Reflection (Google Forms)
3	6-7	**Project report-** Conduct a survey on one of the four topics/ Create Power Point presentation Students give joint presentations on their research during a Zoom meeting during class for the university students in China. (PowerPoint, WeChat & Zoom)
4	8	**Reflection** (Google Forms)

Finally, a reflection and survey were administered to better understand the students' learning and experiences with the COIL project. The post-test survey, adapted from Ceo-DiFrancesco and Bender-Slack (2016) was translated into Japanese and was administered in Week 8 through Google Forms. Table 3 (on the following page) shows a list of the 12 five-time Likert-type scale statements in the post-test survey. Additionally, the students answered three open-ended questions (1) What did you learn from this project? (2) Why is that important? (3) How will that help you in the future? The questionnaire was used to help both teachers gain a better understanding of the students' experiences and to assess the degree to which the objectives were met.

Table 3

Basic COIL Project 1 Post-test Survey

Statements
1. I have been more motivated to learn the language through participating in this course.
2. Due to this COIL experience, I am more motivated to further my English competency for use in my future work or career.
3. I feel that my language skills have improved.
4. I feel that I can speak with more fluency now than prior to my participation in this program.
5. My comprehension of spoken English has improved due to this program.
6. I feel confident speaking English after participating in this program.
7. I feel more comfortable speaking in class now that I did before I participated in this program.
8. I feel more comfortable speaking with a native speaker now that I did before I participated in this program.
9. I feel confident that I can conduct virtual meetings in English in a work environment.
10. This program has made me more aware of the needs, interests, and abilities of others
11. This program has changed the way that I interact with others of cultural background different from my own.
12. Due to this experience, I would like to study abroad.

Language Learning COIL Project 2

The following year both instructors collaborated on another language learning COIL project.
Table 4 provides an overview of another COIL project that both instructors collaborated on in
2021. This time, Instructor A used a class of students at a different university (University C) in
Central Japan. The students in University C were early childhood education majors in their third
year at university. While the students at University B in northeastern China were Japanese
majors in their first year. For students at University C, many were studying to become teachers in
nursery schools, kindergartens, or elementary schools. The students at University B in
northeastern China were studying Japanese, even though they were participating in an EFL class.
The 70 students were divided into 12 groups, with around three students from Japan and three
students from China in each group.

Table 4

Language Learning COIL Project 2 Background information

	University C (Japan)	University B (China)
Location	Central Japan	Northeastern China
Institution	Private	Public
Size	1,900	32,000
Major	Early Childhood Education	Japanese
Class(es)	Foreign Language (English) Exercise	English Communication Skills
Students	36	44
English level	Lower intermediate	Upper intermediate and advanced

The objectives for this COIL project were the same as the previous year. However, the plan and tasks were different. Table 5 provides an overview of the Language Learning COIL Project 2. In this project, students collaborated on weekly tasks to learn and discuss the culture of cities in China and Japan. The students were assigned a city in China and Japan to research, discuss, compare and contrast. Each week the students were asked to find a time to discuss their findings and create a short PowerPoint presentation. The students uploaded their group PowerPoint presentations to Lark, a collaboration software that allows to students to chat by text, video, and share files. Finally, the students created a final presentation that compared the life and culture of both cities. The students recorded the presentation through Lark and uploaded it for their classmates to watch.

Table 5

Language Learning COIL Project 2

Phase	Week	Activity
Prep	0	Download Lark and create an account, join their Lark group
1	1	**Icebreaker**/ self-introduction-Upload a self-introduction video for 90 seconds; 2 truths, 1 lie
2	2	**Research and discuss** general information about their assigned cities; create PowerPoint slides

	3	**Research and discuss** the history and relics of the cities; create PowerPoint slides
	4	**Research and discuss** the culture around food of the cities; create PowerPoint slides
	5	**Research and discuss** Customs and lifestyles in the cities; create PowerPoint slides
3	6	**Group study report**; Put slides together; Record group presentation
4	7	**Reflection**; fill out survey and questionnaire.

To assess the students' learning and gain a better understanding of the students' experience, a pretest and post-test survey was administered to the students in Japan through Google Forms. The pretest and post-test survey, adapted from Ceo-DiFrancesco and Bender-Slack (2016) was administered in Week 0 and Week 8 through Google Forms. See Appendix for the sample of the adapted survey. Additionally, in Week 8, the students answered three open-ended questions 1) What did you learn from this project? 2) Why is that important? 3) How will that help you in the future. As previously mentioned, the surveys and questionnaires were used to help both teachers to better understand the students' experiences and to assess the degree to which the objectives for this project were met.

Results

Analysis and discussion of the data collected from Language Learning COIL Project 1 are available in Ottoson (2022). Themes developed through the post-test questionnaires highlight the change in attitudes toward other cultures and English communication. Reflections from the participants focused primarily on the increased openness, curiosity, and respect for other cultures, followed by the importance and enjoyment of using English to communicate across cultures. Furthermore, participants described development in virtual learning, research, and leadership skills. Results from Language Learning COIL Project 2 will be detailed in a forthcoming paper. Similar themes were noticed. However, students from University C focused a great deal of attention on their initial fears and worries about collaborating with students in China. These initial fears lessened as students participated in icebreaking activities and informal video chats. While the more proficient English users from University A focused more on seeing the usefulness of English as a tool for communication, the lower-proficient English users from

University C largely mentioned a reduction in anxiety and fear in using English to communicate
with people who are not from Japan.

Discussion

Regardless of the students involved in collaboration, considerable attention and time are
necessary for setting up a COIL project. Establishing shared goals and objectives will help guide
the direction of a COIL project. Communicating the goals and objectives to the students can buy
into the project. Particularly, students with lower proficiency in the target language may need
more time and consideration in beginning a COIL project. Icebreaking activities should allow the
students to use and get comfortable with the software and each other. Creating a friendly and
positive atmosphere at the beginning can help to ensure all students will collaborate more
actively and positively toward the final objective.

Finally, students need time to reflect on their development and learning. Prior to setting
up a COIL project, it is important to ask, "What are our goals? and "How we will know when we
have reached them?" Setting up these goals at the classroom level is important, but ultimately, it
is necessary to consider how these goals work toward an institution's overall mission and
objectives. Relying on one method of assessment is not enough. Vande Berg (et al. (2012)
encourage a healthy skepticism of self-reports from intercultural experiences. These glowing
self-reports can fall victim to social desirability bias because students may exaggerate their
learning as they feel that is what the teachers or coordinators will want to hear. It is important to
consider how to confirm these self-reports of learning and development. The two projects
described in this paper rely on students' self-reports of developments. While these positive self-
reports are promising, more careful confirmation of these reports is necessary. Triangulation
through multiple data sources can confirm students' self-reports and develop a more
comprehensive understanding of what's happening in these COIL projects. Ultimately, these
results need to be shared not only with the administration and our colleagues but the students
themselves. Data collected from internationalization efforts need to be analyzed, shared, and
communicated to a variety of stakeholders, including the students. Providing feedback to the
students provides a way for them to improve their learning (Deardorff, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, COIL is a type of virtual exchange that enables teachers and all their students to connect, collaborate, and learn as a part of their course. Within COIL, language-learning COIL projects aim to offer opportunities for students to develop their fluency in a foreign language through numerous opportunities to interact and collaborate synchronously with students from different cultures and countries. While there are many challenges when setting up and carrying out a language-learning COIL project (e.g., finding a partner, learning a new collaboration software, collaborating across cultures, navigating time zone differences), the opportunities for intercultural competence development in a time when study abroad programs and overseas exchanges have been cancelled or postponed far outweigh the difficulties teachers and students may incur. Finally, all COIL programs and their participants differ. Thus, more understanding of the experiences and development is needed. Further investigations of a diverse array of COIL programs can bolster this understanding. For those interested in participating in a COIL or different type of virtual exchange, a growing number of universities have joined COIL networks (e.g., SUNY COIL Global Network, IIGE Global Network, JPN-COIL Association) that help connect their instructors to possible collaborators abroad. If an educational institution is not affiliated with a COIL network, a quick online search can provide more information about joining a network or finding a collaborator for a COIL project.

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APPENDIX

Language Learning COIL Project 2 Questionnaire

	Please rate your current understanding of each of the following aspect of Chinese culture. (1 = lowest rating, 10 = highest rating)									
Cultural knowledge	Religion									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Pop culture									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Family									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	History									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Civilization									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Politics									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Poverty									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Education									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Language Proficiency	Please rate your current level of English proficiency in the following areas: (1 = lowest rating, 10 = highest rating)									
	Listening									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Speaking									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Grammar									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Vocabulary									

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Collaborative Online International Learning										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Socio-economic/ educational responsibility	Please rate your current level of engagement in the following areas: (1 = lowest rating, 10 = highest rating)										
	Evaluate your interest in social progress abroad (e.g., malnutrition, water sanitation, literacy)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Global competence. Evaluate your interesting in interest in international perspectives and issues.										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Global Community Involvement. Please rate your current desire to volunteer or engage in international service.										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Evaluate your current understanding of the impact of the school philosophy toward education (kindness).										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Intercultural Communi-cation	Please read the following statements and fill in the numbers that apply. (1 = lowest rating, 5 = highest rating)										
	It is fun to interact with people from different cultures										
	1		2		3		4		5		
	I tend to think a little before I form an opinion about people who are culturally different, rather than making up my mind right away.										
	1		2		3		4		5		
	I am not prejudiced against people from other cultures.										
	1		2		3		4		5		
	I am comfortable dealing with people who are culturally different.										
	1		2		3		4		5		
	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures										

	1	2	3	4	5	
	I am very careful when interacting with people from other cultures.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	When I interact with people from other cultures, I try to get as much information as possible.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I am sensitive to the subtle implications of interacting with people who are culturally different.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I am fairly confident in my ability to interact with people from other cultures.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I always know what to say when I interact with people from other cultures.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I am interested in participating in a study abroad program.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I don't like to be around people from other cultures.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I cannot tolerate the values of people from different cultures.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I cannot tolerate the behavior of people from different cultures.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I do not accept the opinions of people from other cultures.					
	1	2	3	4	5	
	I think that my culture is better than other cultures.					
	1	2	3	4	5	

The Benefits of Self-reflection Tools for Foreign Language Learners

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Abstract

Self-reflection, defined as "a conscious mental process relying on thinking, reasoning, and examining one's own thoughts, feelings, and ideas" (Gläser-Zikuda, 2012), has over the years been assimilated in education through tools such as diaries, logs, and journals (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Bailey, 1991; Gardner, 2000; Moon, 2003; Absalom & De Saint Léger, 2011; Litzler, 2014a) as a way to record, reflect, or assess learning. This mixed-method study conducted at university level from April 2020 to January 2022, explores the effects of two tools, the Self-Learning Log and the Independent Study, on over 100 English majors. Results show that participants perceived numerous benefits through self-reflection, such as improved motivation and skills. Moreover, the findings reveal (online and HyFlex) did not impact students' perceptions as much as the tools' designs did, suggesting that the self-reflection tools can be adapted to various educational settings.

Introduction

With the sudden wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has brought a fundamental change in how education is being delivered, more pressure has been placed on learners in higher education to regulate their own learning. As educators, we believe that it is our responsibility to provide tools to support learners who were suddenly set on a voyage as independent learners. Something that helps them to be successful learners is self-reflection, a metacognitive process through which learners are able to be "aware of their own learning processes, their weaknesses and strengths" (Ertmer and Newby, 1996, as cited in Moon, 2004, p.7). This mixed-method study focused on the learners' perceived benefits of two self-reflection tools which were employed at

university level during two academic years, from 2020 to 2022, under different learning settings from complete online classes to HyFlex due to the challenging situation of the pandemic.

Literature Review

Self-Reflection and Self-Regulated Learning

It has been considered that self-reflection, or simply reflection, plays a crucial role in learning in general. Moon (2004) describes reflection not only as "part of learning" but as a mental process or "secondary learning" that brings learning as a result (p.3). Reflection is activated in a learner's trial of making (new) sense of one's previous knowledge or new material which can often bring new ideas and understandings. In addition, Rogers (1969) points out that learners can develop "a sense of ownership of the material of learning" (as cited in Moon, 2004, p.9). There are various possible outcomes of reflection, such as critical thinking, personal and professional development, theory building, decision making, problem solving, empowerment, emotional development and other beneficial results (Based on Moon 1999, as cited in Moon, 2004).

Reflection is strongly involved in the theory of Self-Regulated Learning. Self-Regulated Learning, or SRL, has its roots in research of metacognition and social cognition of individual learners in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Zimmerman, 2002). Researchers found that individual differences in learning were associated with a lack of metacognitive or self-awareness of one's own limitations and incapability of dealing with such weaknesses. Such findings encouraged educators to promote learners' self-awareness, goal setting, and self-monitoring. Zimmerman (2002) defines self-regulation as "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are oriented to attaining goals" and describes self-regulated learners as "proactive in their efforts to learn because they are aware of their strengths and limitations and because they are guided by personally set goals and task-related strategies" (pp.65-66).

There are three cyclical phases in SRL - Forethought Phase, Performance Phase, and Self-Reflection Phase (See Figure 1, next page). The third cyclical phase, 'self-reflection', has two major components: self-judgment or self-evaluation, and self-reaction. The first component shows that learners evaluate their own process or performance in learning by using some kind of standard or their own (or others') previous performance. This evaluation is also possible by self-belief of the causes of success or failure (for instance, by simply looking at the score) that is called causal attribution (Zimmerman, 2002). One type of self-reaction, the second component of

the self-reflection phase, is feelings of self-satisfaction about one's own performance and its effects. The increase of self-satisfaction will enhance learners' motivation while the decrease in self-satisfaction will slow down the effort towards learning. The other types are 'adaptive reaction', when learners try to protect themselves by withdrawing or avoiding learning, and 'defensive reactions', which refers to learners trying to adjust ineffective learning styles for improvement. Thus, the self-reflection process in learning is essential for learners and enables them to step forward for further learning goals with increased motivation, leading them to a better performance by effective self-control.

Figure 1

Phases and Subprocesses of Self-Regulation. From Zimmerman, 2002, p.67
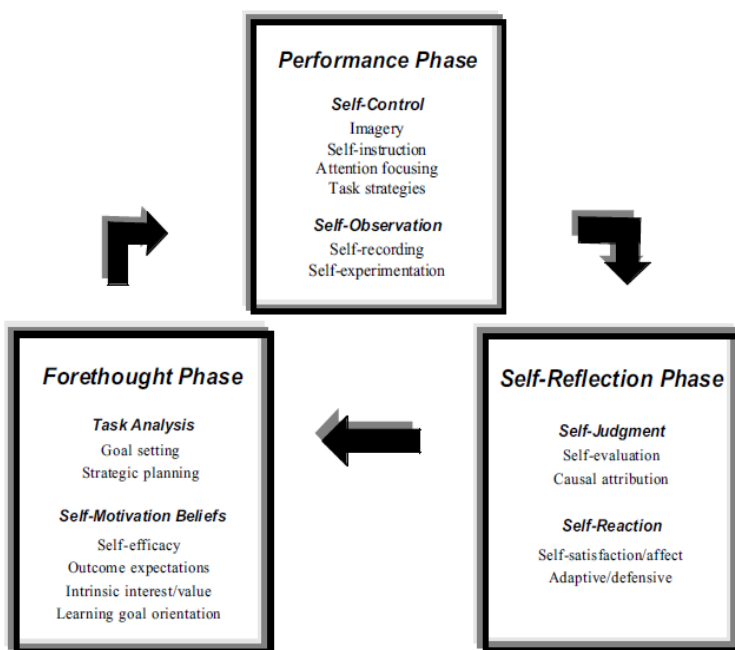
Self-reflection in Second or Foreign Language Acquisition

In recent years, studies on reflections or reflective learning have been looked at with growing interest among researchers in education. Glaser-Zikuda (2012), who defined self-reflection as "self-observation and report of one's thoughts, desires, and feelings", designates such attention as due to "the paradigm shift from teaching to learning" and the role of educational institutions is

no longer for "knowledge transfer" but rather as "a well-prepared learning environment to support individual learning processes" (pp.100-101). In this sense, there has been an increased demand for learners to develop SRL processes including self-reflection. Furthermore, a number of studies (Halbach, 2000; Platt and Brooks, 2002; Lai, Zhu and Gong, 2015; Litzer and Bakieva, 2017) have reported that self-reflection is effective in the field of Second or Foreign Language Acquisition (SLA/FLA) from various benefits such as developing learner confidence and motivation, effective performance, and enjoyment of learning. To summarize, self-reflection has been a key element in learning, especially in terms of SRL and its effectiveness has been applied in the area of SLA/FLA. Nevertheless, as Moon (2004) points out, we can never make a learner reflect; rather, it is important to create situations or environments where reflection is able to occur. Learning reflection tools such as learning journals, reflective diaries, and logs contribute to setting up such conditions for learners' "meaningful and good-quality learning" (Moon, 2004, p.9)

Self-reflection Tools

Over the years, self-reflection tools have been applied to the field of educational science and SLA/FLA (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Bailey, 1991; Gardner, 2000; Moon, 2003; Absalom & De Saint Léger, 2011; Litzler, 2014a) as a way to record, reflect, or assess learning. Moon (2003) explains slightly different purposes for each of the major tools of self-reflection: learning journals as "making explicit and recording the learning that occurs", reflective diaries as "demonstrating reflection on an experience", and logs as a "record of events that have happened" (p.2). Although the naming and the styles of tools that have been used for such studies are different, it is included in the bigger frame of Diary Studies (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Bailey 1990; Curtis and Bailey 2009). The content of learning diaries can focus either or both on reflections of in-class learning (Ruso, 2007; Christensen, Lindom, Orten, Rigbolt & Vera-Batista, 1990; Dam & Thomson, 1990) or outside of class learning (Halbach, 2000; Hyland, 2004; Lai, Zhu & Gong, 2015). The periods for such studies vary from whole semesters to a week (i.e. Hyland, 2004) and often are part of the courses in higher education (Huang, 2005; Absalom & De Saint Léger, 2011; Debreli, 2011). Studies using self-reflection tools in SLA/FLA have been actively done in various areas and countries such as Spain (Halbach, 2000; Litzler and Bakieva, 2017a and 2017b),), Hong Kong (Hyland, 2004), China (Huang 2005; Lai,

Zhu & Gong, 2015), Australia (Absalom & De Saint Léger, 2011), Indonesia (Maharsi, 2018), Sweden (Ringmar, 2021), and Japan (Hirano and Zoni Upton, 2022).

Research Questions

Two different types of self-learning logs, which will be further described in the method section, were created and used for this research. In this study, two research questions were explored:

RQ1. How did participants perceive the two self-reflection tools used in this study?

RQ2. Did the learning environment affect students' perceptions of the self-reflection tools?

Method

Participants

Participants were 117 second-year university students majoring in British and American Studies and English Communication at a private foreign language university in central Japan. All participants were taking an EFL communicative and content-based English class called "CORE English 3-4" twice a week from seven EFL lecturers from the Department of British and American Studies. Participant's biographical data was not collected because it is not relevant to this research.

Tools

In this study, the following two self-reflection tools were used:

Self-Learning Log (SLL). The first self-reflection log called Self-Learning Log (SLL) was created as a Google document, during the academic year between April 2020 and January 2021 which was online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were three main purposes to this tool: to give students a chance to reflect on learning both inside and outside of the classroom, to give students a chance to be self-regulated or autonomous, and to encourage students to stay motivated during the online academic year. In the log, there were three categories to fill in (Appendix A): week number, reflection of in-class learning of the target class previously mentioned, and reflection of out-of-class learning or how they practiced English outside of class. In order to encourage participants' reflective process, samples were created and explained at the beginning of the semester (Appendix A). Participants updated the log every week and submitted

through Google Classroom once a month at the end of every unit of the textbook. Participants did not receive any credit or letter grade for writing this log since this was an ungraded assignment. An example of participants' use of the tool is shown in Appendix B.

Independent Study (IS). The second self-reflection tool called Independent Study (IS) was created in a Google document format, during the HyFlex academic year from April 2021 till January 2022. After the online academic year of 2020, the university introduced a student-alternation system where, in turns, only half of the students of each class would join the face-to-face class while the other half did self-study at home. There were three main purposes for the second tool: to assign students some learning activity for self-study weeks, to see how self-reflection tools could be adapted to an online environment versus a HyFlex one or student-alternation environment, and to compare the perceived impacts of two different styles of reflection tools. There are three sections in the IS: the home study week number, a reflection on how they used English during home study weeks (except homework), and a learning goal for the following home study week (Appendix C). The second and third categories were followed by the questions *How did you use English during your home study week except homework*? and *do you want to do or learn during your next home study week?* Each of us authors created both good and bad samples to help participants have a clearer understanding of how to fill in their reflection (Appendix C). Unlike the first self-reflection tool, the second tool was a graded assignment with points out of 100 during the first semester. Then, from the second semester of academic year 2021, it was changed to an ungraded, optional assignment due to the change from student-alternation system to face-to-face with the exception of a few students who chose HyFlex participation. During the first semester, participants wrote reflections every other week during their home studying week. Then, reflections were submitted through Google Classroom once a month at the end of every unit of the textbook. An example of participants' use of the tool is shown in Appendix D.

Since the IS was a graded assignment during the first semester, a rubric was created and carefully explained at the beginning of the semester (Appendix E). There were four evaluation items in the rubric, each with a weighting of 25 points. Each evaluation item was described by a simple question: (1) *Are all sections complete?* (2) *Does the reflection answer the question?* (3) *Does it answer the question in detail? (4) Is the goal for the following home study week updated and realistic*? As Moon (2004b) points out, it is crucial to decide whether focus of the criteria is

"the content of the reflection learning" or "the reflective process itself" (p.13). Although both are important parts of the reflection, the rubric used in this study weighs slightly more toward the latter. By making sure to answer the two questions with details on the IS ("*How did you use English during your home study week except homework?*" and "*What do you want to do or learn during your next home study week?*") participants are able to go through a reflection process. The third question on the rubric connects the Forethought Phase of the SRL mentioned in the Literature Review section. By setting a realistic and updated goal for the following home study week, participants are encouraged to better perform in self-study.

It was an important part of learning that in both cases the reflection was written in English as Little (2007) claims that when reflections are kept in the target language, the reflections, journals, diaries, or logs will "move to the very centre of the learning process" and those will become "the story of the individual's language learning…illustrating the gradual expansion of identity that comes with developing proficiency in a second or foreign language" (p. 26). In addition, every time participants submitted the reflection, most teachers returned with comments and suggestions by using the Commenting function of Google document. Litzler and Bakieva (2017a) indicate the importance of teacher guidance for learners in starting to keep reflective tasks especially if learners are from "an education system that encourages dependence on the instructor" (p. 68) which clearly applies in the case of traditional education systems in junior or high schools in Japan. Therefore, careful explanations with samples and feedback were given throughout this study to support the participants.

Research Design

As the purpose of this study was to uncover students' perceptions of the two self-reflection tools as well as checking whether any perceived similarities or differences were influenced by their respective learning environments, we decided to adopt a Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach with a sequential explanatory design and nested sampling (Collins, et al., 2007). MMR is commonly defined as "collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study" (Creswell, 2008, as cited in Ivankova & Creswell, 2009, p.137) or "in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). While multi-methods research also allows for the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, the main difference lies in whether the different data sets are being mixed or integrated together. According to Sandelowski

(2003), one of the goals of MMR is, in fact, to combine two or more data sets of quantitative and qualitative nature in order to gain a thorough understanding of what is being analyzed. The mixing of the two different types of data can enrich the interpretive validity of the overall data set. Moreover, as Dörnyei (2007) points out, MMR has the potential to reach a multitude of audiences, quantitative and qualitative researchers, hence our choice to use MMR for this study.

Data Collection

Data were collected entirely through questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires for the SLL and for the IS respectively (Appendices F & G) were administered online as Google Forms and shared with students on the Google Classroom platform. Both questionnaires were first piloted with a small group of EFL teachers, then adjusted based on their feedback. Moreover, the IS questionnaire was further revised after analyzing the shortcomings of the SLL questionnaire. For the part of the study that took place during the online academic year, the questionnaire was administered to four classes, two classes for each of us authors. On the other hand, the questionnaire for the IS was administered to 14 classes, two for each of the seven teachers, including us, who used the tool during the HyFlex academic year. Both questionnaires were written in English and Japanese because the target audience were Japanese learners of English, and contained an explanation of the research, a consent form (those who did not wish to proceed could close the page without submitting), closed questions on a Likert Scale, and open-ended questions for clarification (Dörnyei, 2007, pp.105-107). The questions aimed to measure students' experience and opinions on the self-reflection tool being used at the time of each survey. For each questionnaire, a question was included to ask for volunteers for follow-up interviews and draw a smaller sample for the following data collection. Whilst conducting interviews during the online year was not possible due to time constraints, interviews during the HyFlex academic year were arranged shortly following the second questionnaire data collection. One-on-one interviews were conducted with students who had volunteered. In order to avoid overlap between survey and interview answers but still allow for a follow-up on interesting ideas and suggestions, we decided to choose the format of semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007; Saunders, et al., 2009). Each volunteer was emailed the interview questions (Appendix H) and an explanation of the interview format ahead of the interview day. Volunteers could then choose whether to have the interview on Zoom or in person, and whether to use English or Japanese. Furthermore, we chose interview participants who had never used a self-reflection tool before

and had been taught by different teachers, in order to minimize selection bias.

Data Analysis

As mentioned above, the different data from questionnaires and interviews were administered and analyzed at different times before being mixed in the final stage of the data analysis. The sequential timing of the data collection and the integrating nature of the mixing of the data sets, defines this study as mixed methods research with explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The ordinal data from the Likert-Scale questions in the two questionnaires were analyzed first and organized in graphical summaries (bar charts) that would help provide descriptive validity to the qualitative data. Qualitative data from questionnaires were then analyzed using inductive coding (Given, 2008; Saldana, 2009). In other words, all codes derived from finding common keywords and patterns from students' written comments. Once the first phase of data analysis was concluded, the student sample for semi-structured interviews was chosen from the list of volunteers. Once all interviews had taken place, the interview recordings were manually transcribed. As the purpose of the transcriptions was exclusively to analyze the interviewees' discourse for additional codes, we did not deem it necessary to conduct a phonetic transcription. All codes and qualitative data were then shown to a fellow researcher in-person to confirm the validity of the codes we had discovered.

Finally, questionnaire and interview data were integrated and analyzed together in order to answer the research questions.

Results and Discussion

In order to better answer the research questions, results have been organized according to three focal points: 1) Were the self-reflection tools perceived as beneficial by the participants to improve as learners? 2) If so, in what ways were the two tools perceived as beneficial by the participants? 3) Would participants voluntarily continue using these tools independently in the future? Why/why not?
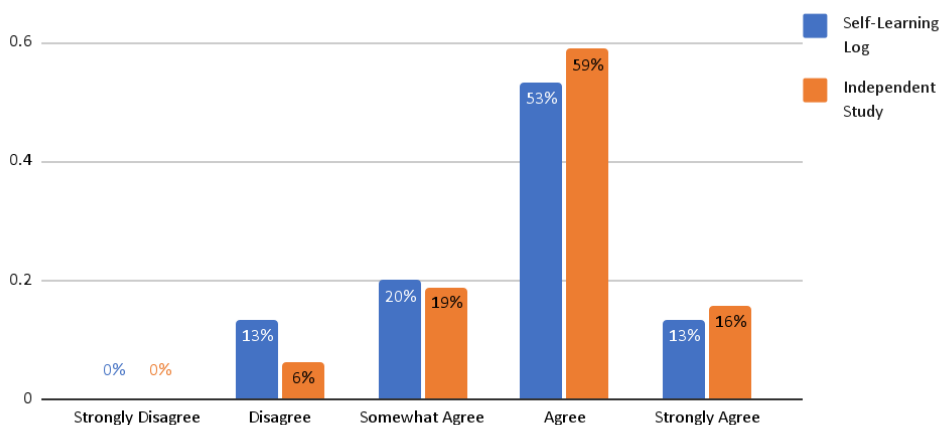
Were the self-reflection tools perceived as beneficial by the participants to improve as learners?

The simple answer to the first question is: yes. As shown in Figure 2 below, both the SLL and the IS were considered useful by the majority of participants.

Figure 2

Reported usefulness of self-reflection tools

Although to various degrees, an overwhelming majority of participants, 86.7% (SLL) and 93.6% (IS) respectively, agreed that the self-reflection tool which they had used had proved to be beneficial to them.

In what ways were the two tools perceived as beneficial by the participants?

In order to answer the question above, one must first consider the initial purpose of each self-reflection tool. As previously explained, the SLL focused on students' conscious reflection on learning both inside and outside of the classroom, while the IS focused on learning after school hours and on setting goals. As a consequence, it is not surprising to see that participants had considerably different impressions on how the two tools helped their review and in-class learning reflection process (Figure 3, next page) compared to how they helped their outside-of-class learning reflection process (Figure 4, next page).

Whilst 100% of participants agreed that the SLL was beneficial for reviewing or internalizing in-class learning, the IS was instead deemed as non-beneficial by a vast majority of participants (78%). Said result appears to suggest that there is a connection between the tool

design and the consequences for users. This rationale is confirmed by the results depicted in Figure 4 below.

Figure 3

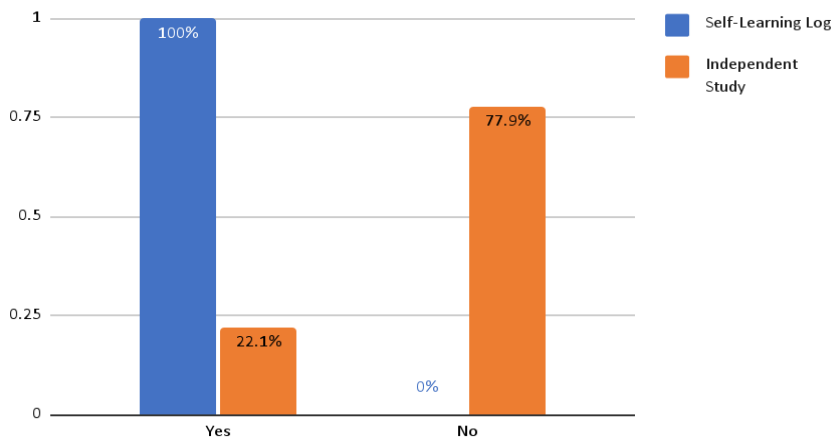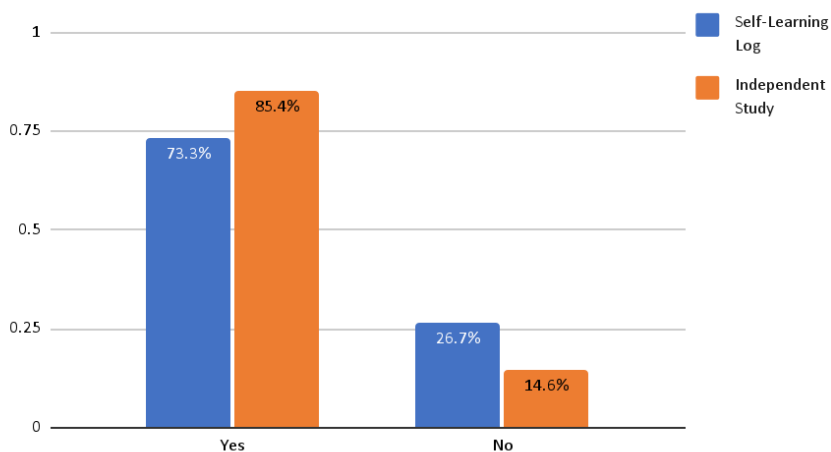*Helpfulness of each self-reflection tool for reviewing/internalizing in-class learning*

Figure 4

Helpfulness of each self-reflection tool for aiding autonomous learning outside of class

As shown above, both self-reflection tools were positively perceived by the majority of participants in terms of their usefulness for aiding autonomous learning outside of the classroom.

Since both tools included a focus on outside-of-class learning, one can interpret the comparison of the results of Figures 3 and 4 and conclude that the design of each tool might be a potential determinant of the perceived outcomes.

For a more exhaustive inspection of the usefulness of the two tools, one must look at participants' qualitative data. Tables 1 and 2 below list the codes found for each tool, and the frequency (f) with which each code appeared in students' questionnaire comments. It is important to note that not all students who participated in the surveys replied to open questions, therefore the numbers shown below are lower than the number of participants.

Table 1

Self-Learning Log codes and frequency

Self-Learning Log Codes	f
Increasing/maintaining motivation	5
Reflecting on own learning style	4
Reviewing	3
Improving or gaining new skills	3

Table 2

Independent Study Codes and frequency

Independent Study Codes	f
Being an active/ independent learner	39
Trying different learning styles	28
Increasing/maintaining motivation	12
Improving or gaining new skills	10
Reflect on language use and motivation	8

As shown in the two tables 1 and 2, both tools were considered beneficial for 'increasing/ maintaining motivation' and 'improving or gaining new skills'.

Below are student comments on how each of the tools aided their motivation:

"It gave me the motivation to do something outside of class." (SLL User)

"自分に足りないものは何か、伸ばしたい点は何かを考えることで自分の英語に対する意欲を再確認することができました"(I could confirm my motivation towards English by thinking what I lack and what I want to improve) (IS User)

The use of the tools helped many participants maintain motivation to continue learning outside of the regular class time. The second comment illustrates how the process of reflection inherent to the tools and be useful to reaffirm and maintain learner motivation. Another common reason for the tools' aiding motivation was discovered to be teachers' comments and feedback, as shown in the example comments below:

"I was motivated to study because I was given feedback on my independent study" (Anonymous)

"If my teacher's comments are good, they will make me happy, and I can keep trying." (Anonymous)

The following comment, on the other hand, focuses on how the independent aspect of a self-reflection tool (choosing how to practice outside of class) can not only enhance learner motivation but could also possibly lead to skills development:

"I had chances to study english I am interested in, and that study enhances my motivation. So, I think I could improve." (IS User)

Below are some of the reported comments related specifically to students' perceived skills development:

> *"When I did not know how to express, I used an electric dictionary and check the words. I think this process is useful for English learners."* (SLL User)

> *"I learned a lot of new words because I made tests for spelling and pronunciation. Moreover, I made it a habit of watching dramas and movies in English with Japanese subtitles. My English skills improved thanks to the Independent Study*" (IS User)

Once again, the comments confirm that the freedom of learning style given by the tools can aid skills development. Indeed, Absalom and De Saint Leger (2011) declare that "learners need to take ownership of their own learning in order for learning to take place" (p.190). For future research, this theory could be tested by comparing perceived improvements to students' TOEIC/TOEFL scores or to their grades in EFL classes.

It is, however, curious to see that although there are two common codes, the other codes are not only different, but have a different focus. In fact, users of the SLL mainly reported on the importance of reviewing and reflecting:

> *"When I looked back, I was able to look back on the study methods I did, and I was writing down what I had learned there, so it was also a review.*" (Anonymous)

> *"We were able to review our class, what we learn, how was my attitude in class, etc..So, it can help well."* (Anonymous)

> *"When I looked back, I was able to look back on the study methods I did, and I was writing down what I had learned there, so it was also a review."* (Anonymous)

On the other hand, users of the IS commented on the importance of being active and independent learners, trying different learning styles and reflecting on their intrinsic or extrinsic motivations.

> *"Independent Study があったおかげで、自主的に英語を勉強する機会が増えた。また、新聞を読んでみたり You Tube を見てみるなど、学習方法の幅が広がったため" (Thanks to Independent Study, there were more opportunities to study English on my own. Also, my ways of learning has expanded by trying things like reading newspapers and watching YouTube)* (Anonymous)

"It makes me realize that even my interests can be learning material. So I would like to keep learning English from my interests." (Anonymous)

"I was able to create some new ways to learn English in addition to my own routine" (Anonymous)

"自分から積極的に英語に触れようと行動するきっかけとなったから"(It has become an opportunity to take an action to use English actively from my own initiative) (Anonymous)

Once again, we can deduce from the results above that the design of the tools affected the ways in which the users were impacted. Nonetheless, many of the perceived benefits of these two tools, such as increase in motivation and gaining new skills, correspond to commonly reported benefits of using self-reflection tools (Halbach, 2000; Platt and Brooks, 2002; Lai, Zhu and Gong, 2015; Litzler and Bakieva, 2017).

Would participants voluntarily continue using these tools independently in the future? Why/why not?

Surprisingly, a majority of about 60% of users of each tool agreed that they would continue to use the tool in the future (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Choice of independent continuation of the use of each self-reflection tool
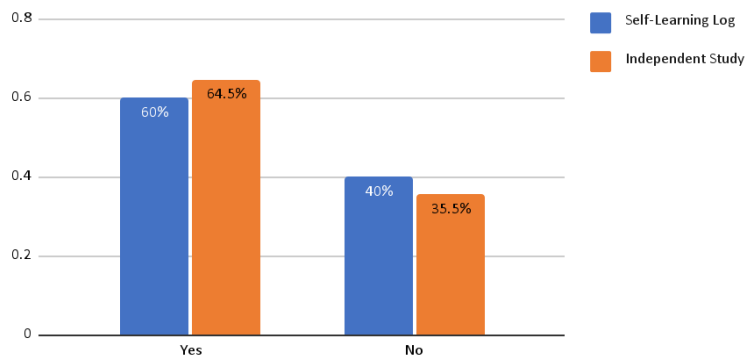
In order to acquire a more extensive understanding of participants' reasons, we analyzed students' answers from the surveys and interviews for both 'yes' and 'no' responses. Below are some reported comments on why students would not continue using the self-reflection tool:

"I think I would not do that spontaneously" (SLL User)

"I'm too lazy to continue" (SLL User)

"It is very hard and troublesome" (SLL User)

"I think it is a good way to remember what I learned, but I think I cannot continue when it is not an assignment" (SLL User)

"書くことが目的になりそうだし、自主的に勉強習慣がついたならシートに書く必要はないと思うため"(I'm afraid that writing the sheet itself would become the purpose. Also, I think I don't need to write if I've come to develop a study habit independently.) (IS User)

"It's lazy for me to do it" (IS User)

"Writing takes up a lot of time" (IS User)

Clearly, a variety of reasons can be found in participants' comments, such as not needing the activity if one has developed autonomous learning skills, or the time-consuming aspect of the activity. However, the most commonly reported reasons for not continuing either tool were laziness, and not feeling motivated to continue if it is no longer an assignment. The last reason is particularly interesting to find since the activity was given as an assignment for three out of four semesters, yet was only graded for one semester out of four. By taking that and students' comments about teacher feedback into consideration, we could therefore consider that it is not the weighting of the activity on their overall grade which drove most students to continue, but rather the encouragement which they received from teachers which helped maintain motivation and helped find value in continuing. A study by Hoge, Smith, and Hanson (1990, as cited by Park & Lee, 1996) explained that feedback from teachers is one important factor to improve student's self-efficacy. In the context of self-reflection, a study by Absalom and De-Saint Léger

(2011) considers that through the use of logs and journals, "the teacher–learner relationship is reconfigured so that the task becomes a modified dialogue between the student and the teacher in a way that other tasks are not" (p.191). The perceived value of teachers' feedback in self-reflection tools is something that necessitates further investigation, especially when such interaction is taking place in the context of remote learning. This will be further explored by discussion of interviewees' comments.

On the other hand, commonly reported reasons for continuing to use the self-reflection tool were as follows:

"I feel log with English is very useful way to improve my English, so I try continue to this custom" (SLL User)

"自分が学んだことが目に見えて自信になると思うので時間が作れれば続けたいです" *(Because what I learned becomes apparent, I believe I become more confident. Therefore, I'd like to continue if I can make time)* (SLL User)

"Because I could remember what I did last week when I look backed my reflection. And writing will also be remembered" (SLL User)

"It makes me to continue studying English"(SLL User)

"It's good to keep a record, and I think I can grow by seeing it" (IS User)

"I want to get into the habit of learning outside of the classroom" (IS User)

"日々の日記というか成長記みたいに使えるのでいいと思う" *(I think it's a good idea because it could be used as diary or the log of self-improvement)* (IS User)

Interestingly, there is little difference in comments by users of each of the two tools. Both SLL users and IS users commented that it would be beneficial to continue using it as a record for review and self-growth. Likewise, users from both groups commented on continuing using the tools as a way to keep motivation to learn English.

Finally, it is important to hear from users who actually continued to use reflection tools when they ceased to be an assignment. When asking interview participants the reasons why they chose

to continue using the tool, these varied from using it as a way to stay active during remote classes, a study method, a way to practice another foreign language for the first time, a way to recover/maintain motivation, and an opportunity. One interview participant discussed the connection between the teacher feedback on self-reflection tools and the experience of remote learning:

P: sometimes I feel happy

I: When did you feel happy?

P: Ah~ because the first semester was remote so..I.. sometimes I feel "it is OK…?.. can I submit correctly?" but if the teacher have the comments or suggestions, I can feel happy or.. "My job is OK"

I: Relieved?

P: Relieved? Yes.

I: Especially because some of the classes were remote.

From the interview excerpt we can see that the participant felt uncertainty in their experience of remote learning. As a result, the self-reflection tool was an opportunity for them to have a student-teacher dialogue and find confirmation or reassurance in their learning. Indeed, teacher feedback and student-teacher interaction have been positively connected with students' perceived improvements in self-reflection (Hoge, Smith, and Hanson (1990, as cited by Park & Lee, 1996) and online education (Bordelon, 2011; Eom & Ashill, 2016). Finally, another interview participant concluded that "With assignments, I feel like I've been forced to study but it [the IS] gives me an opportunity to study English. So, that's why I'd like to continue" (Interview Participant), highlighting the role of self-reflection tools as an opportunity, not a task.

Conclusion and Future Study

The self-reflection tools proved to be a valuable way for participants to self-reflect. The majority of participants reported improvements through self-reflection in terms of motivation, reflection on learning styles, content review, second language skills improvement, and autonomous learning skills. Unexpectedly, more than half of participants reported wanting to continue using the tools independently. The study is of relevance to educators in all environments as it shows

that the learning environment, such as online or HyFlex, was not a determinant factor of whether or how learners benefit from using self-reflection tools.

This study also has some limitations as it used a sample of participants from the same department and therefore included a certain degree of selection bias. However, since the two self-reflection tools were designed to suit different learning environments, the results are in theory applicable to other contexts. Limitations in time to follow-up also narrowed the amount of data, which could have provided information on whether and how participants used the tools after the end of the course.

Future research may explore the use of these self-reflection tools in different contexts, such as university students not majoring in foreign languages, to confirm whether the outcomes would not differ if the design of the tools remains unchanged. Further research should also be conducted to explore the impact of teacher feedback on the benefits of self-reflection. It would be effective to have control and comparison groups to compare their perceptions on improvements related to teacher-student interaction in self-reflections. Finally, this study will be replicated with a longer research term to confirm the independent use of the tools.

BIO DATA

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APPENDIX A

SLL Sample

Name:_____ Student#_____

♈ ♈ **Please keep a record of your learning inside and outside of class time.**

Please take a look at the example reflection below.

Week	In-class learning	Out-of-class learning
	Reflect on what you learned during today/this week's class.	Reflect on what you did outside of class to practice English.
e.g. Week 1	Today we learned about nurture VS nature. I didn't know that in Japan people connect blood types to personality. I couldn't participate well in group conversation, but I enjoyed pair conversation. Next time I want to participate more actively in a group, maybe ask more questions.	On Monday, I had a zoom chat in English with my classmate. Then, on Thursday, I watched a Hollywood movie in English with Japanese subtitles. Next time, I want to try watching it again without subtitles.
Week 2	Today we discussed how to cope with work stress through reading. I could relate myself to it because I used to have so much stress at a workplace where I worked part time. I could share my experience with my classmate so I felt happy. However, I couldn't concentrate on the class so much. I felt tired. I should have enough sleep everyday.	On Monday, I watched YouTube about how to exercise at home. I really enjoyed learning something new in English but sometimes it was so difficult for me to understand what the speaker was saying. New Expressions: -stay fit and active -burn calories Next time I want to learn how to cook in English.

APPENDIX B

SLL Student Sample

Week	In-class learning Reflect on what you learned during today/this week's class.	Out-of-class learning Reflect on what you did outside of class to practice English this week.
1	We thought about 'what is happiness'. I thought 8 habits happy people have is worth remembering. Among them, I like the choice of 'forgive'. To forgive ourselves is really difficult, but if we can forgive ourselves, it leads to forgive someone.	I read an interesting article on the internet. It talked about the immigration. According to the article, there are many obstacles to accept many immigrations. I thought the problem of immigration doesn't directly affect me, but I thought we should try to know that.
2	Today, we practiced the recording. That was really hard for me, because it is difficult to understand what is the happiness. We talked about 3 things which we felt happy, that was so peaceful time. I was glad to listen to small happiness.	I listen to the foreign songs. The song was 'closer' and 'Something Just Like This'. I knew the chainsmokers last year, because 'closer' was covered by Mackenyu Arata. I think their song is very cool and I like their song's lyrics. I would like to listen to other songs.
3	Today, we learn about #HASHTAG MOVEMENTS. I don't use Instagram, so I didn't know much. But I thought I should know and think about these problems. If many young people take action, our future might be better than this situation. I would like to keep researching these movements.	I studied for the TOFEL. I had a lot of part time job in this week, so I couldn't study a lot. I should use more time to practice listening and reading. I'll try to use my time more effectively!

APPENDIX C

IS Sample

Home Study Week	Reflection	Learning Goal for Next Home Study Week
When are you writing your reflection?	How did you use English during your home study week (**except** homework)?	What do you want to do/learn during your next home study week? Why?
April 23rd-April 27th (Good Sample 2)	This week, I watched YouTube videos about exercising at home and cooking. I really enjoyed learning something new in English but sometimes it was so difficult for me to understand what the speaker was saying. I learned some new expressions, like: -stay fit and active -burn calories Next time I want to learn how to cook in English.	Next week I want to have a conversation in English with my Malaysian friend who is studying abroad at NUFS. I also want to practice singing "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran. I love karaoke and I want to be able to sing English songs well.
May 12th (Bad Sample 1)	This week, I did my homework for Core English and Academic Writing. It was difficult.	Next week, I want to do my best!
(Bad Sample 2)	- I listened to Taylor Swift songs - I watched an American movie on Netflix. - I practiced for presentation day.	Next week, I want to watch another English movie.

APPENDIX D

IS Student Sample

Home Study Week	Reflection	Learning Goal for Next Home Study Week
When are you writing your reflection? (week or date)	How did you use English during your home study week (**except** homework)?	What do you want to do/learn during your next home study week? Why?
Week 1 (April 28-May 4)	This week, I listened to One Direction songs and sang that song in English. On Friday, I also watched Itzy's music video. Their song is Korean, so I watched it with English subtitles. I memorized some words. clue→手がかり、糸口 inevitable→避けられない、不可避の I want to catch the words of a song that I have never listened to before. In addition, I want to sing the songs in English at the karaoke someday.	Next week, I want to listen to the Western music at least once a day. After that, I want to check the lyrics and meaning, because I want to know how much I can understand. I enjoy learning English!
Week 2 (May 12-May 18)	On Saturday, I watched 'MAMMA MIA!' in English at the library. This is the first time for me to watch it in only English. During watching the movie, I set my dictionary close to me and looked up many words that I didn't	Next week, I want to make a notebook that I can write down the lyrics in English, the meaning in Japanese and new vocabulary. I also want to write some good words or sentences
	know the meaning as soon as possible. It was hard to catch and understand for me, so I want Mina to recommend the movie!	in English, actually I do it in Japanese now. I think this notebook will be my motivation. I'll do my best!

APPENDIX E

IS Rubric

Independent Study Rubric

	25	20	15	10	5	0
Are all sections complete?	All three were completed.		Only two sections were completed.		Only one section was completed.	Unsub mitted
Does the reflection answer the question?	Yes.		So so.		Not really. *(e.g. only talking about coursework)*	/
Does it answer the question <u>in detail</u>?	There is plenty of detail.		There is little detail.		There is no detail (e.g. *bullet points*)	
Is the goal for the following home study week updated and realistic?	Yes, it's updated and realistic.		So so. It's either updated or realistic. (e.g. *I want to learn how to speak fluently; watch another Harry Potter movie*)		No, it's neither updated nor realistic.	/

APPENDIX F

SLL Questionnaire

Throughout the academic year, you have kept writing "Self-Learning Log". I'd like to know how it has been helpful for your learning and how it can be improved for future use. Your answers will NOT affect your grades so please let me know your honest feelings and ideas about the log. The results of this questionnaire might be introduced in a journal or a presentation for educational purposes; however, it is only limited to the anonymous answers of this questionnaire. Your actual self-learning logs will NOT be used in any type of research unless you give me permissions.

After you read the explanation above and consent to answer the questions, please go to the next page. If after you read the explanation above, you feel uncomfortable with answering the questions, you do NOT have to answer the questions at all.

Thank you in advance for your time and sharing your ideas and experiences with me.

Part 1: Please tell me about how you see yourself as a learner.

1. Do you think you are an autonomous learner? (NOTE: Autonomous learner means a learner who takes control of one's own learning both inside and outside of the classroom)

(Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree)

Why do you think so?

2. Compared to yourself in April, do you think you have improved as a learner? (Yes/No)

Why?

3. Do you think writing a Self-Learning Log helped you be a good learner?

(Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree)

Why?

4. In the future, what kind of learner would you like to be? Please describe your ideal learner.

5. To be the learner you described above, what is one thing you can do from today?

Part 2: Please tell me how you kept writing the Self-Learning Log and how you felt about it.

1.   How often did you write your log?

   (Every after the class/Once a week/Once in two weeks/Just before the submission deadline)

2.   How long did it take you to write your log (for one week)?

   (Within 15 minutes/Within 30 minutes/Within an hour/More than an hour)

3.   Do you think writing the log helped you remember what you learned in the class?

   (Yes/No)

4.   Do you think writing the log helped you use/practice English outside of the classroom?

   (Yes/No)

5.   Would you keep writing this kind of log in the future?

   (Yes/No)

   Why/Why not?

Part 3: Please let me know your ideas for improvements of the Self-Learning Log in the future.

1.   Which type of the log do you prefer?

   (Google Document/Word/Paper)

2.   How often would you like to submit?

   (Every week/Every after the Unit/Twice in a semester/Three times in a semester/I do not wish to submit. I want to keep it personal)

3.   Do you prefer to receive some comments from the teacher? (Yes/No)

4.   If you have any suggestions or comments about the log, please feel free to write below.

---

5.   Is it OK with you to use some part of your log as an anonymous example in my research paper/presentation in the future? If it's OK with you, can you write down your student number below?

---

6.   If you are willing to answer a short online interview about your self-learning experiences, can you write down your email address below?

APPENDIX G

IS Questionnaire

Throughout the semester, you have been using the Independent Study sheet as part of your CE3 assignments. The purpose of this survey is to find out how helpful it has been for your learning and how it can be improved for future use. The results of this survey might be used for academic research purposes, but your answer will be anonymous so please write your honest feelings and ideas. IF you feel uncomfortable with completing the questionnaire after reading this explanation, you can close this page anytime. Thank you in advance for your time and for sharing your ideas and experiences with us.

Core English 3 の課題の一部として、今学期中 Independent Study sheet を使用してきました。この調査の目的は、この Independent Study sheet があなたの学びにどのように助けとなったか、また、将来的にどのように改善することができるかを調べることです。本調査の結果は学術的研究の目的で使用される可能性がありますが、匿名の回答となるので、正直な気持ちや考えを書いてください。もしも、この説明を読んだ後、本調査に回答するのを不快に感じた場合、回答する必要はありません。また、いつでも回答をやめてページを閉じても構いません。あなたの貴重な時間と、考え、経験を私たちと分かち合ってくれることに、感謝します。

1 Do you think you are an autonomous learner? （あなたは自分が autonomous learner だと思いますか？）

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

2. Why do you think so? (なぜそう思いますか？)

---

3. Do you think doing the Independent Study sheet helped you improve as a learner compared to April?（４月と比べて、Independent Study Sheet をやることで自分が learner として成長したと思いますか？）

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

4. Why? (なぜですか？)

_____

5. What kind of learner would you like to be?（あなたはどのような learner になりたいですか？）

_____

6. To be the learner you described above, what is something you can do from today? （上記の質問に答えた learner になるために、あなたが今日からできることは何だと思いますか？）

_____

7. How long did it take you to write your Independent Study sheet each time?　(Independent Study sheet を書くのに毎回どのくらい時間がかかりましたか？）

(Within 15 minutes, within 30 minutes, within an hour, more than an hour)

8. How often would you like to write it? (どのくらいの頻度で書きたいですか？)

(Once a week, once every other week, once per unit, once a semester, I do not wish to submit. I want to keep it to myself)

9. Do you think writing the Independent Study sheet helped you internalize what you learned in the class?（Independent Study sheet を書くことは授業内容を身に着けることに役立ちましたか？）

(Yes/No)

10. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, please explain. （９の質問に Yes と答えた場合、なぜそう思ったか教えてください）

_____

11. Do you think writing the Independent Study sheet helped you use/practice English outside of the classroom more than usual? (あなたは Independent Study sheet を書くことが、通常よりも、教室外で英語を使用したり練習したりすることにつながったと思いますか？）

(Yes/No)

12. Why do you think so? (なぜそう思いますか？）

_____

13. Do you prefer to receive some comments from the teacher? (あなたは教員から Independent Study sheet にコメントがほしいですか？）

(Yes/No)

14. Why?（なぜですか？）

_____

15. Would you keep writing this kind of Independent Study sheet in the future? (あなたはこのようなタイプの Independent Study sheet を書くことを将来も続けたいですか？）

(Yes/No)

16. Why/Why not? （なぜ続けたい／続けたくないですか？）

_____

18. If you have any suggestions or comments on how to improve the Independent Study sheet, please feel free to write below. (Independent Study sheet の改善方法について助言やコメントがあれば教えてください）

_____

19. Some Independent Study sheet student samples might be used anonymously (name and student number will be removed) for research. If you DON'T WANT your Independent Study sheet being used as a sample, please write your student number here. (Independent Study sheet の一部をサンプルとして、匿名（個人の名前及び学生番号等を削除する）にした上で研究に使用する場合があります。もしも、それを望まない場合、ここに、あなたの学生番号を書いてください。）

_____

20. If you are willing to join a short online interview about your experience with the Independent Study sheet in the future, please write your student number here. Thank you! (将来的に、この Independent Study sheet におけるあなたの経験について、短いオンラインインタビューに協力してもよい場合、あなたの学生番号をここに書いてください。ご協力に感謝します。）

_____

APPENDIX H

Interview Questions

Important Information:
*Interviews will have a 15-minute time limit.

*Interviews conducted in person will be audio recorded.

*Interviews conducted on Zoom will be video recorded. The video is <u>only for the researchers</u>, it will not be shown to the public. If you don't want to be video recorded, please let us know before the interview day.

*Interviews will be conducted in English.

Interview Questions:

1. Have you used self-reflection tools before in other classes? Explain.
2. Did you find the Independent Study useful? If yes, in what ways?
3. Are you continuing the Independent Study in semester 2? Why/why not?
4. Do you have any feedback for us?

If you have any questions, please email us.

Thank you for participating in this research study.

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Using the News to Supplement Cultural Lecture Material: A Look at Learner Beliefs

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Abstract

Engaging students in a lecture course taught in their L2 can be a daunting task. Issues such as selecting materials, pacing, including relevant and thought-provoking content, providing discussion topics and time, and using appropriate means of assessment all plague teachers when planning content-based lecture courses. News articles help alleviate some of these challenges. Students can spend their own time researching the topic in the news and then come to class to share it in small groups. However, using news articles written for native readers can be a strict barrier for implementation. This paper introduces the use of region-specific news sources as a self-study and warm-up discussion activity and explores university student beliefs about the ease of the activity, their enjoyment, and their perceived value. Data was collected by use of a 6-point, 15-item Likert scale and three open questions. Students overall held positive beliefs about the activity and reported that it aided in improving their reading and summarizing skills.

Introduction

The challenge of integrating real-world, authentic English in the language classroom has always been a challenge for EFL teachers. Finding ways to accomplish this without oversaturating and, in doing so, demotivating language learners is one goal many language teachers have. Additionally, learner ability-appropriate content which also piques learner interest and increases engagement while building motivation is the cornerstone of successful material selection.

Linguistically speaking, to achieve authentic language input, L2 learners are exposed to authentic materials including radio, songs, films, dramas, comedies, streaming media from Internet sites like YouTube, and news from the target culture in the target language. While even a decade ago some of these materials would have had a more limited selection, with the spread of online streaming sites like Netflix and Disney+ for TV-related media, Apple, Spotify, and YouTube Music for songs, and many news media companies and newspapers making their content available

online, accessing a variety of materials is no longer a barrier for the average person. This ease of access to materials opens up new avenues educators have to approach authentic material generation.

Literature Review

News articles create an opportunity to bridge this gap and at the same time expose EFL students to new ideas and different cultures. To be understood by a wider audience, news articles are often written in the most precise and direct way possible to prevent misinterpretation and increase accessibility (Blatchford, 1973; Brinton & Gaskill, 1978). Additionally, although often plagued by low-frequency vocabulary, news agenda and topics similar in theme will use specific vocabulary items and structures, thus making it beneficial as a repeated activity due to the increased opportunity for vocabulary recycling. This makes a strong case that if one was to incorporate unedited news articles in their class, repetition of the activity would be a more effective means of implementation.

Regardless of this, while literature on authentic material usage is plentiful (Yadav & Jha, 2019), literature specifically focusing on news articles in the EFL/ESL classroom is quite limited (Molgen, 2014). Topics of existing literature range from using news media such as recorded television or radio broadcasts (Brinton & Gaskill, 1978; Bahrani & Tam, 2011), material selection (Bell, 2003), and using a news-based curriculum (Molgen, 2014). Although requiring significant preparation, Brighton and Gaskill (1978) suggested using news media for listening activities to increase learner motivation and enthusiasm. Bahrani and Tam (2011) showed an improvement of learner listening performance of students exposed to news recordings over those who weren't. Content is equally important when choosing suitable materials based on the learners' level. Identifying which articles require background knowledge (*exogenous*) and which can be understood without any specific prior knowledge (*endogenous*) help instructors plan and prepare additional scaffolding when appropriate (Bell, 2003). Finally, news articles have shown to be a safe medium for introducing controversial or sensitive topics in which students have shown to hold an interest (Molgen, 2014).

Therefore, to get a more well-rounded idea of the potential of using news with EFL students has, it is key to also look closer at students being asked to engage with the materials. This study aims to explore learner beliefs about a warm-up news article activity for a content-based lecture

course where students were tasked with finding an article from a pre-selected list of news sources, reading and summarizing them, and then sharing them in small groups at the beginning of class.

Method

Participants

The participants for this study came from one, second-year and two, third-year, year-long lecture courses, focusing on Oceania culture for the second-year students, and European culture for the third-year students. The courses were taught at a private university in central Japan. Courses lasted 15 weeks, meeting once every week for a duration of 90 minutes, and were conducted in English. The total number of participants was 70 students, both male and female, however, the ratio of male to female was not investigated. Participants belonged to the British and American Studies department and could generally be described as holding positive beliefs toward the usage of English in the classroom. In terms of ability, students generally had a CEFR level of B1 and B2, allowing them to understand the lecture content, assigned reading materials, and media shown in class, with a few outliers in the A2 and C2 levels. Students were not streamed for these courses.

Implementation of News Exposure

The main theme of the three courses was to introduce physical and geopolitical geography, history, economy, traditions, cultural events, and the way of life for each respective region. To achieve this, the courses set out goals for students to achieve by the conclusion of the semester. The goals were as follows:

1. Listen to and understand lectures about the main themes
2. Conduct independent research on two topics and give two 5-minute presentations about each
3. Read news articles or watch news media from the country and summarize them
4. Discuss the news in small groups for 10 minutes
5. Create a note diary, including notes from each lecture and summaries of each news media

For the goals related to news media, students were tasked with finding a news article or other media related to the region being studied and summarizing it in preparation for class each week. Students were given a list of possible sources to select from. These sources were chosen to either

represent different areas of the respective region, or to provide students with various perspectives of the respective region (Table 1). Students were encouraged to investigate sources and topics which interested them most in the hope that it would help maintain motivation and keep students engaged. Additionally, students had to use a note diary handout to record their article summary (Appendix A) that was used to help students prepare for the in-class discussion and was collected at the end of the semester as a way for the teacher to check their work.

Table 1

News Sources Provided to Students to Use for the Activity

Oceania culture course	European culture course
Sydney Morning Herald: http://smh.com.au/	**The Guardian:** https://www.theguardian.com
New Zealand Herald: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/	**BBC News:** https://www.bbc.com/news/world/europe
Hawaii News Now: http://hawaiinewsnow.com/	**CNN:** https://edition.cnn.com/EUROPE/
The Guam Daily Post: http://www.postguam.com/	**Iceland News:** https://www.icenews.is
Fiji Sun: http://www.fijisun.com.fj/	**Ansamed:** https://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/
Samoa Observer: http://samoaobserver.ws/	**Eurasianet:** https://eurasianet.org
	Al Jazeera: https://aljazeera.com/topics/regios/europe.html

For the first 10 minutes of each class, students were divided into random groups of two to three and asked to share the articles which they had summarized and discuss the content with their group members. This activity was chosen for several reasons: (1) students were able to begin class by engaging with their classmates in their L2, essentially putting them into "English mode", (2) by having the knowledge that students would be expected to share the article with their classmates, there was added pressure to complete the task each week, (3) it was the expectation of the lecturer that by having students engage with each other first, they would be more receptive to the daily lecture, (4) by having student-centered discussions, they could have more opportunities to engage with topic-specific language, which was expected to give them increased confidence during other discussions and their presentations, and finally (5) by summarizing and sharing the news, students could be exposed to a wider range of information about each region not covered in the lectures. During these 10 minutes, the teacher would then walk around the room, listening to the various discussions and intermittently joining the conversation by asking one or two questions. After 10 minutes, the class would continue with that day's lecture.

Data Collection

Students were given a single 15-item Likert scale questionnaire near the end of the second semester (Appendix B). The 6-point Likert scale ranged from 1 representing "Strongly Disagree" to 6 representing "Strongly Agree". Questions were based around three primary categories of interest: enjoyment of the activity (six items), ease of the activity (six items), and value of the activity (three items). Seven of the questions were designed to have a negative counterpart. For example, the question "I look forward to hearing about my group members articles" had the counterpart "hearing about the news from my group members is boring." Additionally, the questionnaire contained three open questions. Both the Likert-scale and open questions were written in English only, but for the open questions, students were instructed that they could use either English or Japanese when answering. The open-question responses were coded organized based on the content. Reponses are listed in order of dominance.

Findings & Discussion

Likert Scores. When prompted with statements reflecting the ease of various parts of the activity, student's beliefs were shown to be neither strongly in agreement nor disagreement. When given the statement "finding a news article is easy" (Figure 1, next page), students gave it an average of 4.33. Of the three aspects of ease investigated, finding the article was the highest ranked by students. One possible reason for this could be the skills required to accomplish the task. Students only needed to assess the obvious qualities of each article, such as content based on the title, length, and complexity of vocabulary, when deciding which one to read.

Students were also given prompts about the ease of reading a news article (Figure 2, next page). With an average value of 3.67, students remained only slightly in agreement with the statement. This could be attributed to the difficulty of the material, as it was not specifically designed for language learners but rather native speakers, thus challenging the lower-level students more.

Figure 1

Ease of Finding News Articles

(n=70)   ■ Finding a news article is easy.   ▥ It is difficult looking for a news article.

Figure 2

Ease of Reading News Articles

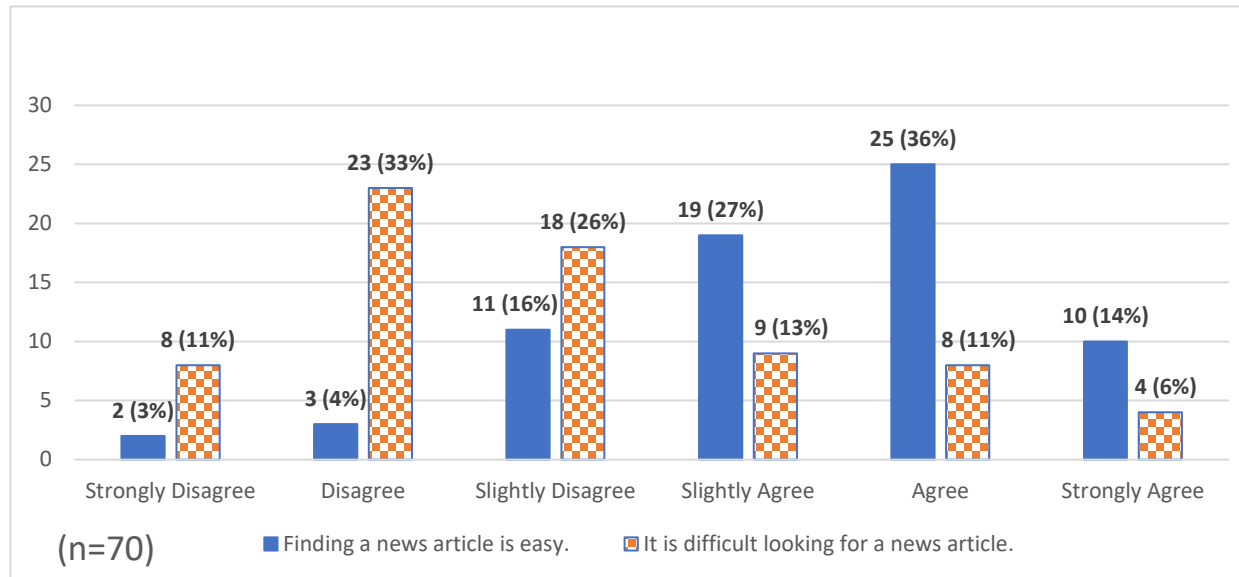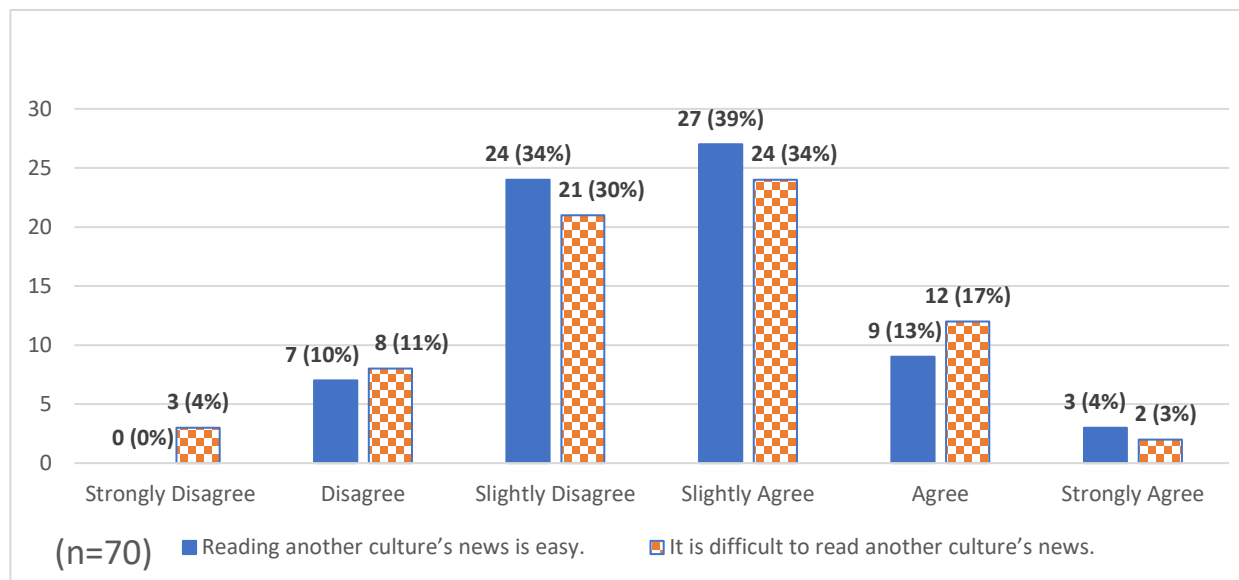(n=70)   ■ Reading another culture's news is easy.   ▥ It is difficult to read another culture's news.

Finally, students were prompted on the ease of summarizing the articles (Figure 3, next page). This received the lowest rank of the three, averaging 3.25. Students slightly disagreed with the statement, which was anticipated as summarizing was the most intensive task of the three, requiring

comprehension, advanced lexical and grammar knowledge, and the ability to simplify complex
issues.

Figure 3

Ease of Summarizing News Articles
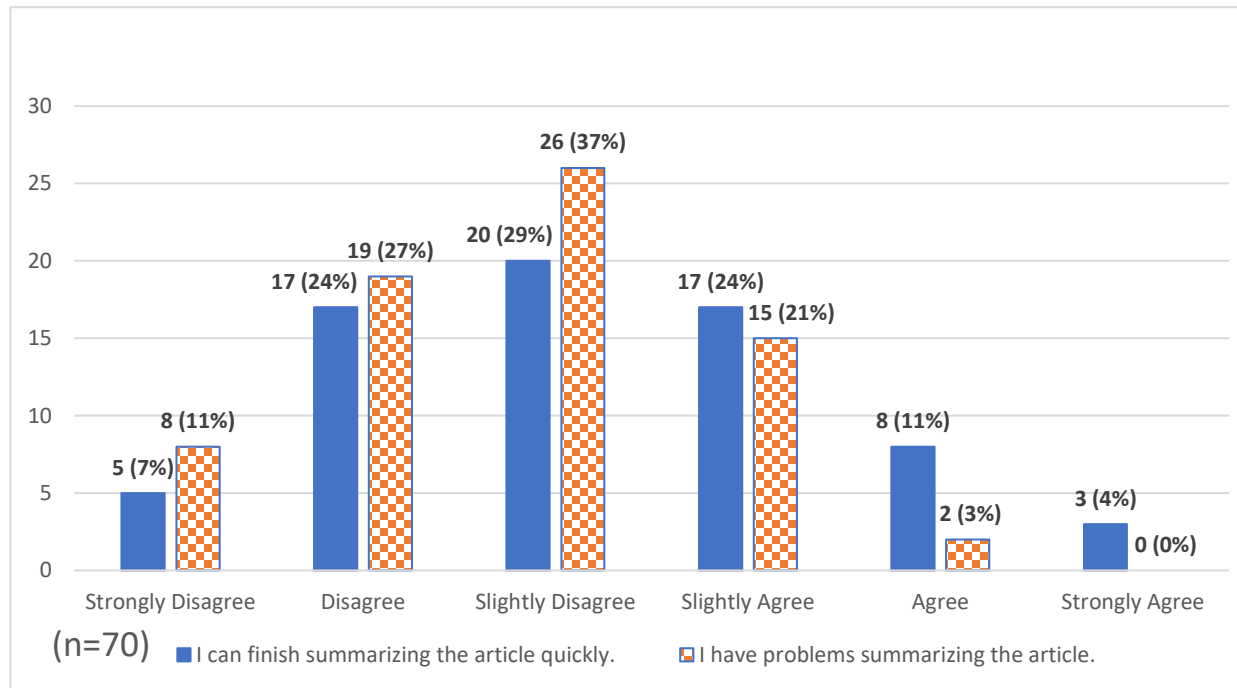
The next category students were prompted about was the enjoyment of various aspects of the
activity. One aspect investigated was the enjoyment of reading news from foreign sources (Figure
4, next page). On average, students valued this at 4.13 and, in conjunction with the ease of reading
the article results, revealed that although students might find something challenging, they could
still get enjoyment out of the task.

Students were also given statements about their enjoyment of sharing their articles with
their group members (Figure 5, next page). The average score was just slightly under the average
score for reading the articles, 4.10. This was quite surprising as it was believed by the teacher that
students preferred the more social activities in class. Yet, the questionnaire results showed that
students had near equal enjoyment of both aspects of the activity.

Figure 4
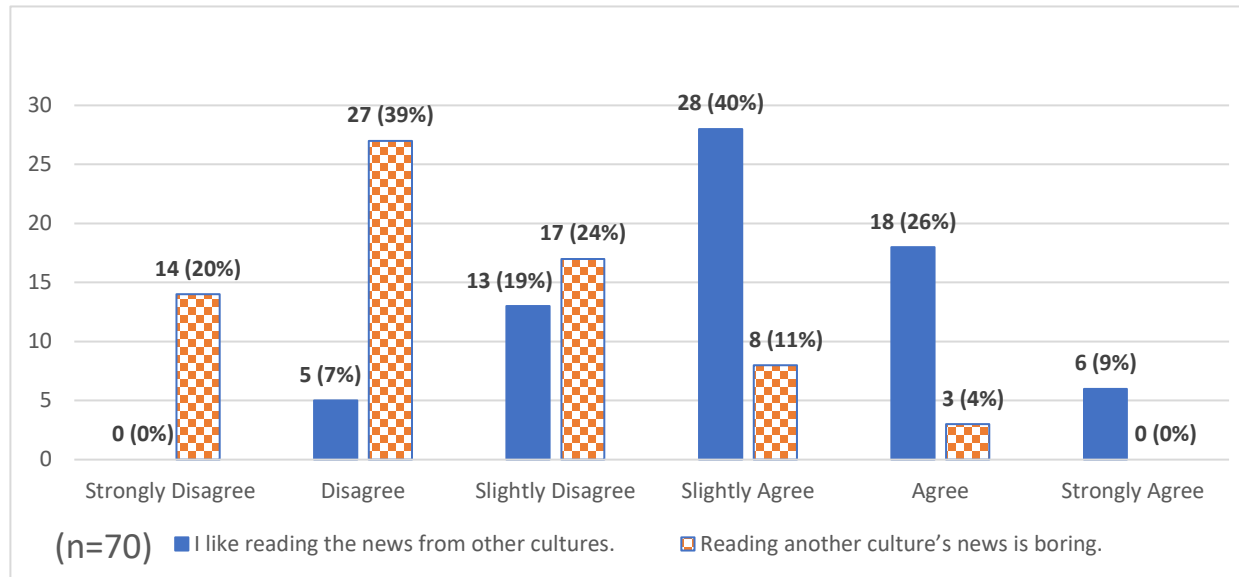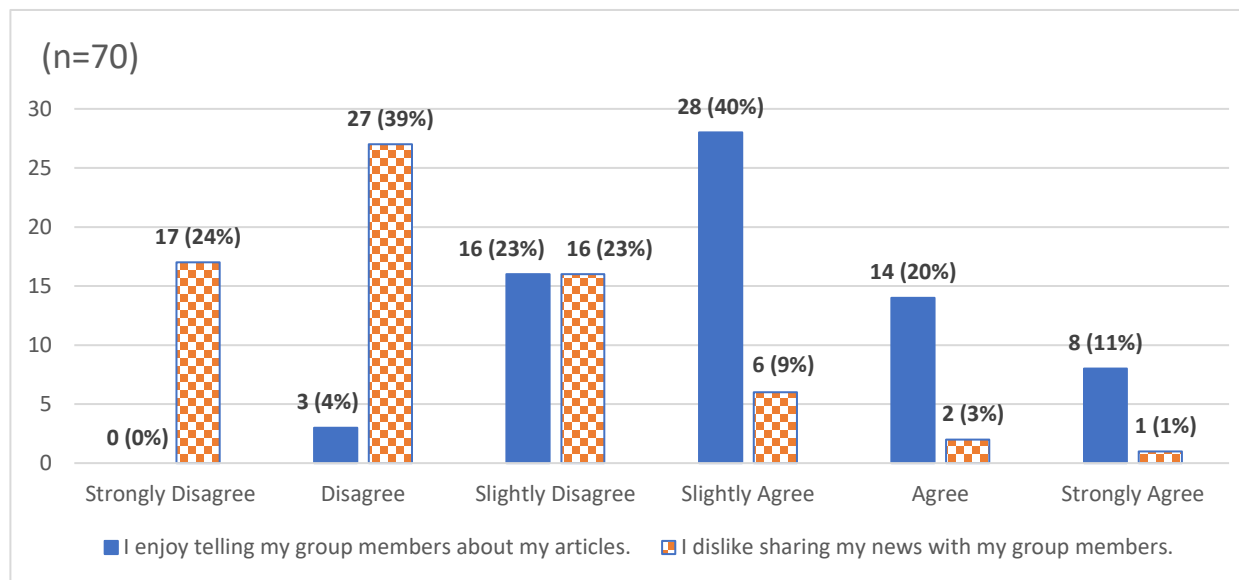
Enjoyment of Reading News Articles

Figure 5

Enjoyment of Sharing News Articles

For the last aspect of enjoyment students were questioned about was their enjoyment of hearing their group members talk about the news (Figure 6, next page). This received the highest average, 4.46. This could be attributed to the fact that students did not have any specific task to perform while listening to their group members and could focus more on the social aspect of the activity.

Figure 6

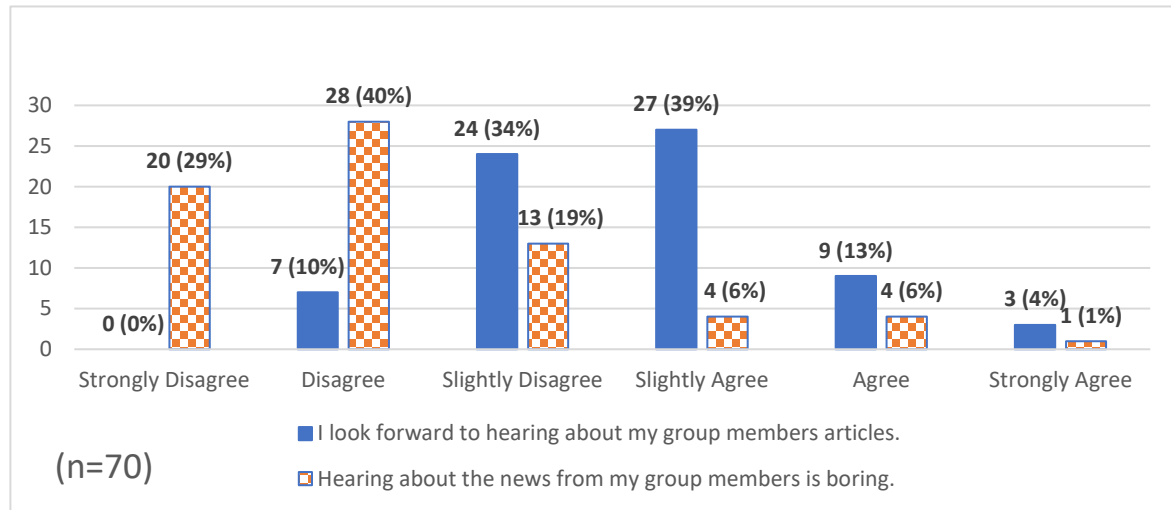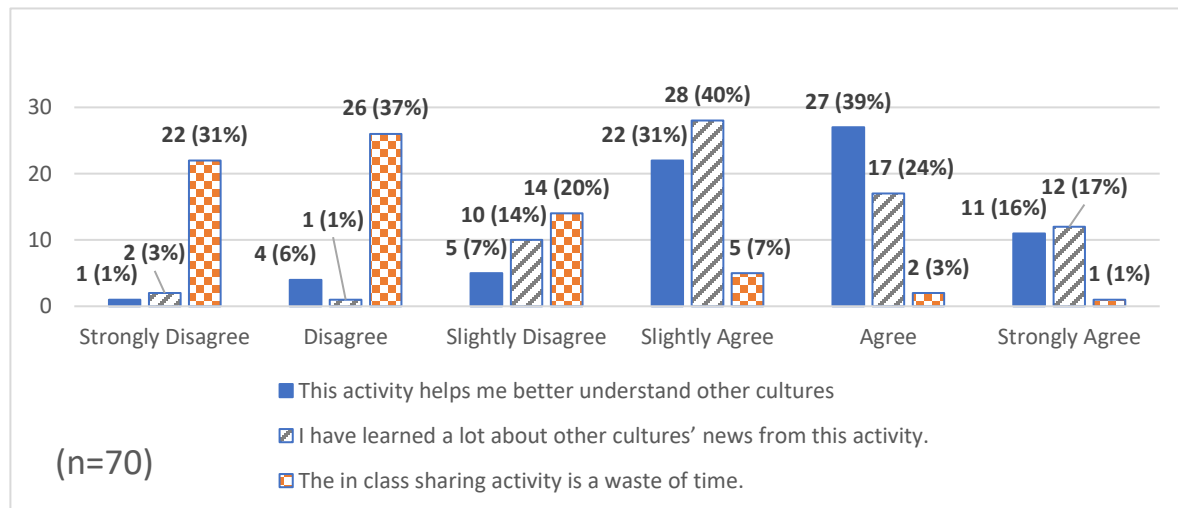*Enjoyment of Listening to Group Members*

Figure 7

Perceived Value of the Activity

The final category included in the questionnaire focused on the amount of value students placed on the activity (Figure 7, above). For this category, there were two, specific positive questions and one, general negative question. Students showed a strong disagreement of the negative question "the in-class sharing activity is a waste of time", giving it an average of 2.14. Additionally, students responded positively to the questions "this activity helps me better understand other cultures" and "I have learned a lot about other cultures' news from this activity", giving them averages of 4.47

and 4.32, respectively. Although having minimal teacher input by design, students were able to see the value in the activity and benefit from it in relation to course content.

Short Answers. Students were asked to respond to three open questions in either English or Japanese, however, a majority of responses were given in English. They were not required to answer these questions and some respondents chose not to give a response or did not answer all three questions. The three questions were as listed below:

1. What do you like about the news article activity?
2. What would you change about the news article activity?
3. Do you have any other feedback about the news article activity?

Responses to these questions were coded into five categories based on common themes among them: knowledge about other cultures, activity enjoyment, criticisms, skill improvements, and wants and desires. The responses are presented verbatim.

Knowledge about Other Cultures. Overwhelmingly, students often commented on being able to know more about the world outside of Japan while also mentioning that the activity helped expose them to reading materials they otherwise normally would not read.

> *"I could know what the world is happening. Also it became custom to search world's news story."* -Participant A

Additionally, some students identified the added benefit of the activity being continuous, as opposed to being infrequent, for example, as how the bi-semester presentations might be viewed.

> *"I can get latest information as I'm searching the news. I can know what is happening around the world, especially in Europe."* -Participant B

This response reinforces the goal of supplementing lecture material by using the news to explore avenues not covered by the lecturer. In this case, the respondent was able to learn more about current affairs happening in the region they were learning about in class.

> *"I can deepen my knowledge by knowing about other countries' culture. I think it's a good opportunity since normally I couldn't know about other cultures without taking a course like this." [translated from L1]* -Participant C

Some students recognized that this was a unique feature that only this type of course could provide. This type of activity was likely not used in the students' general English courses, so it provided the opportunity of giving the students something different, unique, and possibly memorable.

Activity Enjoyment. Several students gave responses expressing their enjoyment of the activity. One common belief held by students was the enjoyment of the social aspect of the activity.

> *"I like learning new things with my classmates. My classmates choose interesting articles every time, so I enjoy sharing news with them."* -Participant D

> *"I enjoy it as a kind of warm-up activity. I enjoy talking with my classmates."* -Participant E

Often, the students took advantage of this activity to speak English with their group members. They would use this time to greet their classmates and share summaries of their articles. Some respondents even commented on how they liked this activity as a warm-up activity.

Criticisms. Students did have several, similar criticisms when it came to the activity: including an active listening/dictation aspect, stricter time for better efficiency, and stricter time for better focus. First, some students wanted an area in their journal to also include notes taken of their group members' shared summaries.

> *"I want some spaces to write some memo about other's articles."* -Participant F

Since there was no dictation component during the summary share, it could not be verified whether students were paying attention to and comprehending their group members' summaries. One of the most common criticisms students held was in relation to the time of the activity. Some students suggested each group member have a limited amount of time to share their article, forcing them to identify and share only the most important parts of their article and to avoid "make [sic] others bored."

> *"I think its better to have a limitation like 1 minute so that I have to summarize that simply. I also have to pick important parts of the news. A long summarize may make others bored."* -Participant G

Similarly, several students also commented that the sharing time should be shorter to keep groups who finish early on task.

> *"I guess that spending time for this activity is a little bit long, so students tend to start talking with friends or doing other things… We can lessen time to do this, I think."* - Participant H

Classes have a limited amount of time, and time management is a key aspect to being an effective educator. In this quote, it becomes apparent that students were also aware of this and preferred their time not to be wasted. One final criticism that students shared was the need for more guidance when searching for news articles.

> *"If there is one theme ever week, I would be motivated to find them."* -Participant I

Several students noted that they wanted the teacher to specify a topic for them to focus on when searching for an article. This could indicate that either the teacher could give more structured instructions at the beginning of the semester and gradually give students more agency, or periodically give them a topic that corresponds with the lecture of that day.

Skill Improvements. With any class activity, the goal is always to help students improve in some way. Students recognized this and gave the most responses about how the activity helped improve their skills.

> *"I could get a lot of perspective and information about culture. And we can improve our summarising, reading, or speaking activity through this activity."* -Participant J

> *"It's sometimes difficult to summarize some news about other countries but can improve the skill to summarize the thing and think simply."* -Participant K

> *"I can read the news article faster than before."* -Participant L

By having students read authentic news articles, they were exposed to a writing style they likely were not accustomed to. Through this exposure, they were able to become more accustomed to searching for foreign news sources and reading the material. Additionally, since students were tasked with making weekly summaries of their news articles, they were able to practice this challenging skill. Through this practice, students could increase their confidence when completing

this portion of the activity. If students had more experience with reading foreign news sources, they may have attempted to incorporate those sources into their own reading habits in the future.

Wants & Desires. Finally, students gave feedback on what they wished the activity would help them improve. It may have been unclear to students whether, or by how much, their summarizing and sharing skills improved. Therefore, some students responded with the following quotes:

> *"I would like to summarize the news more clearly."* -Participant M

> *"I want to explain more easily to listeners."* -Participant N

Although students were completing these tasks on a weekly basis, in some cases, students could not notice their ability improving. Therefore, they desired some measurement by which they could clearly see improvement in their skills. It could be reasoned that this is related to their criticism about time management and their concept of what is and is not a valuable use of class time.

The final desire expressed by one student relates to a reluctance to challenge themself. In it, they explained that, although they wanted to attempt more challenging articles, they instead chose articles or content that may have appeared easier, more familiar, or more relatable. Thus, students may desire to challenge themselves, but need that extra push by an external force (i.e., a teacher's command, peer pressure during a group activity, or a change in self-motivation) to make the attempt. This suggests that a slightly more structured approach from the teacher could help give the motivation a student like this required.

Conclusion

Authentic materials do play an important role in the language classroom. With such a plethora of materials available, news articles can provide a near limitless supply of real-world content with which higher level language learners can challenge themselves. The use of articles for this course was multifaceted: learning about culture from authentic sources, using authentic materials, diversifying news habits, increasing confidence when reading an English news source, and providing students with a warm-up to discuss their homework. Based on this, there is evidence that this activity not only provided students with these opportunities, but that students held positive beliefs toward the activity. Almost all students agreed to some degree that the activity aided in understanding cultures from which the newspaper originated. Several students commented about the activity expanding their habits when accessing news. Many students explicitly stated that the

activity helped improve their skill of reading foreign news. Lastly, students found the article share to be the most enjoyable aspect of the activity.

Students do value their time and, even though they may not always directly vocalize it to the teacher, are constantly assessing what they do in the classroom and how it benefits them. While the use of news as a medium for ESL instruction does have its challenges (Moglen, 2014), it still can be used effectively as a discussion tool. Based on student feedback, providing periodic themes or topics for students to search for when choosing an article could help those who rely too much on the familiar. In addition, limiting share time would encourage students to be more concise in their summaries, forcing them to identify only the most important points in an article. However, by shortening the share time, the overall in-class activity time decreases. Therefore, one possible way to mitigate the reduction in time could be by adding a question-and-answer component to keep group members engaged and on task for the full warm-up time and which could then be incorporated into the weekly diary entries. Finally, for students who need extra support, it might be worthwhile to have a more scaffolded approach in whereby they are provided a selection of easier articles at the beginning of the year that gradually get more challenging (or are given complete agency) by the end of the semester to give a greater sense of progression.

The use of news articles is not a universal tool for language teachers. This can be seen in the lack of literature on the subject. Despite this, for motivated English majors, it has shown to be a well-received means to help bridge the gap between classroom and real-world English.

BIO DATA

Chris Lear has been in English education since 2007. After completing 5 years as an ALT in the JET Programme, he went on to get his master's in linguistic science from Nanzan university. He has been a lecturer at universities in Nagoya, Japan since 2015. He is currently a language instructor at Nanzan University. Peer feedback and virtual reality implementation are his areas of research.

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APPENDIX A

Weekly Notes

Name_____

Newspaper: Article Date: Summary	Class 2 Notes

Newspaper: Article Date: Summary	Class 3 Notes

Newspaper: Article Date:	Class 4 Notes

Summary

APPENDIX B

This survey is to better understand your opinions of the news article activity in your culture class. Read the statements below about the news article activity and check the answer that best describes your opinion.

In this part we would like you to tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by simply circling a number from 1 to 6. Please do not skip any of the items.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

(Ex.) If you strongly agree with the following statement, write this:

Waking up early is annoying.	1 2 3 4 5 ⑥

1. Finding a news article is easy.	1 2 3 4 5 6
2. I look forward to hearing about my group members articles.	1 2 3 4 5 6
3. Reading another culture's news is easy.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4. I dislike sharing my news with my group members.	1 2 3 4 5 6
5. I can finish summarizing the article quickly.	1 2 3 4 5 6
6. Reading another culture's news is boring.	1 2 3 4 5 6
7. This activity helps me better understand other cultures.	1 2 3 4 5 6
8. It is difficult looking for a news article.	1 2 3 4 5 6
9. The in class news sharing activity is a waste of time.	1 2 3 4 5 6
10. Hearing about the news from my group members is boring.	1 2 3 4 5 6
11. I like reading the news from other cultures.	1 2 3 4 5 6
12. It is difficult to read another culture's news.	1 2 3 4 5 6
13. I enjoy telling my group members about my articles.	1 2 3 4 5 6
14. I have problems summarizing the article.	1 2 3 4 5 6
15. I have learned a lot about other cultures' news from this activity.	1 2 3 4 5 6

For the questions below, you may answer in English or Japanese.

What do you like about the news article activity?

What would you change about the news article activity?

Any other feedback about the news article activity?

Adapting Classroom Activities to Prepare Students for English Language Tests

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Abstract

For many EFL students, standardized English language tests are extremely important. They may need them to study, work or live abroad, while a particular score may result in more educational opportunities, or increase the chances of being hired or given a raise. The most significant tests for EFL students in Japan are IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC and Eiken (Baughn, 2021). It is therefore important that language teachers are aware of these tests, are able to advise students on their content and can use activities in the classroom which assist students in preparing for such exams. This paper introduces the key aspects of each of these four tests and looks at how, based on my own experience, certain classroom activities can be adapted to assist students in preparing for such assessments. Specifically, the usefulness of self- and peer-assessment is emphasized, allowing the students themselves to become examiners.

Introduction

All students who choose to study English beyond mandatory education have a reason for doing so. They may wish to make friends from other countries, be able to help foreign visitors or perhaps they simply enjoy using the language. However, for many learners their goals will involve either the desire to spend time abroad, or because a certain level of English language ability will benefit their career. For almost all of these learners, achieving a particular score on an English proficiency test is essential, and thus English language tests "play a dominant role in the world today" (Shohamy, 2007, p. 521).

Given the importance of these tests to so many students, teachers of EFL have a responsibility to be informed of their content. It is true that in higher education the focus internationally has shifted more to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) rather than exclusively preparing students for assessment (Spada, 2007; Brandl, 2021), but these two areas do not need to be mutually exclusive. It is possible to both develop communicative competence while also helping

students to be more "test-ready". It is argued by some (Miller, 2003; Barnes, 2016) that simply focusing on assisting students with improving their speaking, reading, writing and listening in a general course will naturally result in higher test scores, and it may even have negative effects to focus on test preparation rather than acquiring general language skills. While this may be true to some extent, there are two issues with this argument. First, overall language proficiency does not always mean that a learner will get the score they expect on a test. This is because test-taking is itself a skill, and there is evidence that students gain confidence and can benefit generally by engaging in test preparation (Green, 2007; Pan, 2010). Moreover, tests can vary considerably. For example, students who score highly on the TOEIC listening and reading test, which is the focused more on adults aiming to improve employment opportunities (IIBC, n.d.a), sometimes receive a much lower equivalent score on tests like TOEFL and IELTS, which require all four language skills. Thus, the particularities of each test need to be considered. Second, students often ask their teachers for advice about the tests they wish to take, even if this is not a primary focus of their EFL class. It is the duty of EFL instructors to be able to advise their students appropriately, and this in turn requires knowledge of the most taken English language tests.

This paper first outlines the key features of IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC and Eiken, which are four of the most important and taken tests by students in Japan. Following this the main features of EFL classrooms that I have encountered in higher education in Japan are identified, as well as what aspects are lacking which may be relevant in helping students with English language tests. I have worked full-time at three institutions in Japan and have worked part-time at several universities across the Aichi area, so the experiences mentioned will be based on those encounters. After that, relevant activities which may be integrated into current EFL classrooms in higher education are proposed, with a particular focus on self- and peer-assessment. The proposed activities are based on those I have tested myself in the classroom, but their effectiveness is measured only by personal observations, with no empirical research yet conducted on them. Finally, the paper concludes with the drawbacks of the recommended activities and gives an overall assessment of the role such activities could play in the EFL classroom.

Four Key Tests

Although there are many English language tests, the four chosen for analysis in this paper were selected due to their prevalence in Japan. IELTS and TOEFL are the two most popular

international standardized English language tests in the country, while TOEIC and Eiken, although less taken internationally, are the two most popular English tests in the country overall, with over six million taking the tests in 2019 (Eiken, 2019; IIBC, 2020).

IELTS

The International English Testing System (IELTS) may be the most taken English language test in the world, with over 3.5 million test takers worldwide in 2019 (IELTS, 2019), although it is less popular in Japan than the other tests mentioned. IELTS scores are valid for up to two years, and the test is a recognized means of proving one's English proficiency level in over 11,000 academic and training institutions (IELTS, n.d.). The test has both academic and general versions. The former is far more commonly taken, as it is required for higher education and jobs, while the general test is usually just for those who wish to live abroad. The test itself consists of four sections covering the four main language skills, and lasts approximately three hours. The speaking test is done face-to-face in an interview and discussion style. Scores on the test range from one (the lowest) to nine (the highest). The test is still usually taken on paper, although computer and online versions are becoming more common. It is an expensive test to take, costing over 25,000 yen for Japanese test takers (British Council, n.d.).

TOEFL

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is, along with IELTS, the foremost English language test worldwide. It has slightly fewer annual test takers than IELTS at over 2.3 million, but it is similarly recognized and accepted by 11,500 institutions and over 160 countries around the world for academic and visa purposes (ETS, n.d.a). The most popular version of TOEFL is iBT, which is the internet-based form of the test. Like IELTS, it tests all four language skills, but they differ in the delivery of the speaking test, which for TOEFL is done via a computer, where the test-taker is given spoken tasks to do. Scores range from 0 to 120 for TOEFL iBT, and it is slightly more expensive than IELTS at around 28,000 yen (ETS, n.d.b).

TOEIC

Unlike IELTS and TOEFL, the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is less utilized internationally, and is instead a test predominantly taken in Japan and South Korea. There are two versions of the test, one of which includes listening and reading while the other is for writing and speaking, but the former is chosen by the vast majority of test takers. All

questions on the TOEIC test are multiple choice, and the highest possible score is 990. Vocabulary knowledge is an especially important part of the TOEIC test, and as such it is commonly required in Japanese companies where an ability to comprehend business English expressions is especially sought after (IIBC, n.d.b). Another reason for the popularity of the test in Japan is its relative affordability in comparison to other English language tests, with the current cost of taking the test at 7,810 yen (IIBC, n.d.c).

STEP Eiken

While TOEIC has an international presence despite the fact it is only widely used in the East Asia, Eiken (meaning "Test in Practical English Proficiency") is a purely Japanese test, although it can be used as proof of one's English level at some institutions internationally (EIKEN, n.d.a). The lower-level tests are commonly taken by Japanese children from elementary school, and the test has seven "steps" (grades) from 5 (the easiest) up to 1 (the most difficult). The higher-level versions of the test – pre-2, 2, pre-1 and 1, are generally taken by those in high school or above. The questions on each grade of Eiken vary, but it is only from Grade Pre-2 that all four skills of writing, speaking, listening and reading are included. Unlike the aforementioned three tests, Eiken has a pass or fail format. The cost of taking the test varies depending on the age and level of the test taker, ranging from 900 yen to as much as 12,600 yen (Eiken, n.d.b)

CEFR

As English language tests measure their results in different ways, it is difficult to accurately assess the equivalent scores across the four tests mentioned. However, using the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR), a guided estimate can be made. The CEFR is widely used internationally as a measure of language proficiency, and has six levels ranging from A1 (basic user) to C2 (proficient user) (Council of Europe, n.d.). Table 1 (next page) illustrates how IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC and Eiken scores compare across the CEFR levels.

Table 1

Standardized EFL Test Scoring on the CEFR Scale

CEFR	IELTS	TOEFL (iBT)	TOEIC	Eiken
A1 (Basic user)	2	0-31	120 - 215	5 - 3
A2 (Basic user)	3		220 - 540	Pre-2
B1 (Independent user)	3.5 - 5.5	32 – 59	545 - 775	2
B2 (Independent User)	5.5 - 7	60 - 101	780 - 945	Pre-1
C1 (Proficient User)	7 - 8	102 - 120	950 - 990	1
C2 (Proficient User)	8 - 9			

What We Do and Do Not Cover in EFL Classrooms

This section is focused primarily on EFL teaching at the university level. This is because it is only when students move into their late teens that all of the four tests mentioned above become relevant for students. This is also a section which is taken mostly from my own personal experience of teaching at the university level, and so the observations may not be applicable to all those working in other academic institutions. However, since CLT is now accepted as the predominant method of EFL instruction in most higher education settings (Spada, 2007), there are suggestions here which may be more widely applicable.

What We Do Cover

My own experiences with English language teaching have mostly seen CLT as the dominant teaching methodology. As CLT focuses heavily on discussion as a means of developing proficiency, talking in pairs and groups is extremely common in the university EFL classrooms I have encountered. Presentations and recorded conversations are, in my experience, two of the most common forms of evaluation when it comes to speaking. The other skills of reading,

listening and writing are covered to some extent in general English classes in higher education, but English majors are likely to have separate classes which focus on each skill individually as well. For listening, this will often involve hearing a conversation several times, with comprehension questions and discussion questions following. With reading, intensive reading is prevalent at universities, with each text comprehensively covered. Students are often expected to do the reading at home, with class time reserved for comprehension and discussion. Finally, with writing classes students tend to write essays over several drafts. These drafts may include one which receives peer feedback from a classmate, and another which receives teacher feedback. The focus is on producing an accurate and complete final product.

What We Do Not Cover

All of the teaching methods discussed above are valid for assisting students with their English learning, but they do miss out some aspects of English use which are vital when taking English language tests. With speaking practice, I have observed that an interview or task-style of speaking, where students are simply asked questions one after the other or given specific speaking tasks within a set time limit, are relatively rare in university classrooms. Because the discussion-based speaking activities prevalent in CLT emphasize a freer and less structured style of speaking, they differ from what is expected in the speaking sections of tests like IELTS, TOEFL and Eiken. As for listening, test takers are frequently only allowed one or two opportunities to hear the recording, but in university classes students will often have multiple chances to listen. Moreover, the listening sections of tests like IELTS and TOEFL get progressively more difficult as the test continues, something which is rarely replicated in the university EFL classrooms I have come across. With reading, as students usually do their reading tasks at home, they do not have a strict time limit. However, time limits are a key part of English language tests, and it is common for test takers to run out of time in the reading section. The same is true of writing practice, where students at university are given weeks or months to produce finished essay drafts, while they are given minutes or hours to do so during language tests. Lastly, references and citations are commonly required in written essays for university work, but they are not necessary in English language tests.

Classroom Activities

Integrating classroom activities that can assist students with English language tests can be achieved by covering some of the gaps noted above. A key concept that may be beneficial is the idea of making the student the examiner. This is a form of peer- or self-assessment, which has been shown to have great benefits to both student learning and understanding of their own proficiency level (Adachi et al., 2018). There is even some evidence that peer- and self-assessment may result in greater improvements for students than teacher feedback (Bowman, 2017). The following two activities use the concept of making the student into an examiner in order to improve their preparedness for English language tests.

Activity 1: Speaking Self/Peer Examining. With this activity, the student takes on the role of examiner to assess the performance of either themselves, their peer or a third party via a video recording. Although peer assessment in speaking activities is common at university level, standardizing the conditions and scoring is not. The student-examiners would be given criteria by which to assess the test taker, and this could follow the conditions of a relevant test such as the IELTS, TOEFL or Eiken speaking tests, all of which have public versions of their evaluation criteria. The students would then give themselves, their classmate or the third party a score along with an explanation as to why their score matches the relevant criteria for that level. Repeating this process over several iterations with the teacher monitoring and giving feedback would result in greater standardization, and this would in turn give students a better idea of their own proficiency level.

There are limitations to this approach. As Joo (2016) explains, student-examiners face more challenges than professional examiners as they have "limited proficiency in the language" and "lack of anonymity". However, there is significant evidence that self- and peer-assessment of one's speaking can enhance one's speaking ability (Joo, 2016). Moreover, Huang (2016) found that self- and peer-assessment has "great potential for learning and instruction" (p. 803). It is clear that for the conditions for standardized learner self- and peer-assessment must be thoroughly prepared. According to Joo (2016), these include "the clear provision of task-related criteria, sufficient training, considerations of the learners' traits and their perception, as well as the strong integration with the curriculum" (p. 80). With these conditions met, it is possible for self- or peer-assessment in a standardized format to be successfully integrated into the language classroom.

Activity 2: Writing Self/Peer Assessment

Like the speaking self- and peer-examining just described, this activity would involve

assessment of one's writing not by the teacher, but by the student themselves or a classmate. In

contrast to the kind of peer review that is common in universities when students write drafts of

their essays, the writing activity would follow the format of the writing section of an English

language test. Perhaps the most straightforward to utilize would be that of the Eiken test, as it

involves the writing of 120-150 words answering an essay question in 20 minutes. An example a

task question is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Example Eiken Writing Test: Pre-1 Level

Write 120-150 words on this topic. You have 20 minutes to write your answer. • Write an essay on the given topic. • Use TWO of the points below to support your answer. • Structure: introduction, main body, and conclusion • Suggested length: 120-150 words
TOPIC: **Agree or Disagree / University education should be free**
POINTS • Education • Getting a job • Student debt • University funding

Giving a time limit, as well as no time beforehand to research the topic question, would match

the conditions one encounters when writing in an English language test. Once the students have

finished writing, they would assess their own and each other's work based on the criteria given

by the teacher, which once more could follow one of the publicly available band descriptors from

the English language tests already mentioned. The students would thus become more

experienced at writing under the pressures of test-like conditions, as well as gaining a greater

understanding of their writing proficiency. As with the speaking activity, there have been studies

which have suggested standardized self- and peer-assessment of one's writing can improve the

proficiency of learners, such as the one by Mazloomi and Khabri (2018).

Conclusion

This paper has examined the different English language tests that Japanese students often take, identified gaps in higher education in terms of preparation for language tests and suggested relevant activities which can aid test preparation. It is not an exaggeration to say that the scores learners achieve on these tests can often determine their futures, so it is vital that language teachers are able to help them to achieve their goals.

Nevertheless, there are drawbacks to focusing students too much on proficiency level via the activities outlined in this paper. First, the students may become demotivated by comparing their own proficiency level to others. Moreover, not all students will require a certain score on English language tests, and may not see the relevance in engaging in activities which focus on preparing them for such exams. Lastly, there is the issue that concentrating too much on one's score may have a negative impact on the more important goal of acquiring language through practice, and that teachers should instead focus on engaging students in the process of acquiring general language skills (Barnes, 2016). However, these problems are not insurmountable. If the activities are made enjoyable and not given the pressure that a real test entails, this may assist with student motivation when they are undertaken. In terms of students comparing themselves to others, this often happens in classes anyway, and can be avoided somewhat in the activities suggested by using videos of third parties and assessing their work rather than using self- or peer-assessment. As for the assertion that the focus should be on acquisition via practice rather than preparing for tests, it is recommended that these activities be incorporated into courses as supplementary tasks, rather than primary aspects of a course. As Wang et al. (2014) put it, "teachers…assimilate more communicative language content into the teaching because of the positive washback from test preparation". Thus, CLT and test preparation can coexist.

The activities outlined in this paper are merely suggestive and although the writer of this paper has used them successfully in class, there is no specific empirical evidence to support their use. Nevertheless, given the importance of English language tests to so many of our students, it is our duty as educators to at the very least be aware of such tests, and if possible, to assist them in achieving whatever score they require to meet their aspirations.

BIO DATA

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Lecturer at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies at the time this symposium took place. He has eleven years of experience in language teaching, and his areas of research interest include corpus linguistics, English language tests and media literacy.

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A Look at the Role of Design in Education: Developments, Trends, and Practical Use

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Abstract

Research in game design has analyzed the role of design in games such as the design of conflict, engagement, and systems. Additionally, research in education has identified learning principles inherent in good games such as actionable feedback, low cost of failure, and integrated learning and assessment. However, one of the conclusions of this research questions why these principles are not more widely utilized beyond games. Design has been relevant in the field of education for over a century, but there seems to be a gap in the historical and practical context. This study investigates the development of design in the field of education (from instruction design to learning design), highlights current research (cybernetics, games and education), and offers practical ways to apply design ideas in education.

Background

I became interested in the connection between games and language learning during my master's degree. I was interested in how tasks could be inherently self-assessed by design. I found it fascinating that if a task was well designed, assessment could be built in. It occurred to me that games are similar. You never have to check whether you finished a game or not. As Gee (2013) put it, "No one needs a *Halo* test after finishing Halo…" (p. 12). To help me pursue this idea further, I was referred to James Paul Gee (quoted above). I wrote about the learning principles he defined in good games and their relation to Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Vegel, 2019). Having now engaged more in the literature of game design, I started to wonder why design ideas seem to feedforward into education rather than feedback. After all, teachers have lots of practice designing and revising lessons (among many

other considerations like designing materials and textbooks). I began to wonder what role design has taken in the education field if at all.

Design

Design, in common language, is not only referred to in terms of *design fields* like graphic design, product design, or fashion design but also in terms of its *negative associations* like pretentious, high-minded, or overpriced products like controversial architecture, ambiguous visual design movements, or designer goods. That design seems to lend more to excessiveness than practicality can be seen as a result of these popular conceptions. These negative associations are well illustrated in design that lacks a focus on function – "design for design's sake." Take the 431 m, 18º slope of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The design of an art gallery, functionally a place to view art, became a place that functionally changed the way art is viewed – Frank Lloyd Wright's intention. Negative associations may also come from conflating the nature of aesthetics and design. While *aesthetics* according to Hegel (2004) is concerned with the philosophical questions of art and fine art, *design* is concerned with concrete problems: the desired outcome vs. the actual outcome.

System

Salen and Zimmerman (2004), in their book *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, consider "games as designed systems" (p. 2). In a robust approach to game design analysis, they set out to establish precise discourse on the subject. Emphasizing the nature of application beyond game design, they define a *designer* as someone "involved in the creation of systems of interaction" and *design* as "the process by which a designer creates a context to be encountered by a participant from which meaning emerges" (p. 41). Thinking in design terms means considering how the system created will be interacted with and what will emerge from that interaction. Considering *system* within the definition of *design* extends our usual conception of design to include *interaction* among the questions of design problems.

Systems can be found in design even if the visual aesthetics first elude us. Design books such as *Good Design 1993-1994* review standout product design and highlight the striking visual aesthetics of each entry. Take the QR-10 Digital Sequencer released by Yamaha in 1993 (Japan Institute of Design Promotion, 1994, p. 49). Its shape (a top-down silhouette of a grand piano), colors (purple, grey, orange, yellow, and red), and button layout (a small octave keyboard, a

diamond of 12 chord types, and performance sections) make it clear *visually* that it is a music machine. However, the button layout and quick-access features outline a proposed *system*: The left-hand plays chords, and the right-hand solos. Quick functions are also accessible for sequencing and accompaniment (record, start/stop). The QR-10 is a unique music making machine not because it looks like a grand piano or even because it can emulate acoustic instruments. It is unique because of the design as a whole (the visual elements as well as the designed system). The possible outcomes from interacting within the system are far greater than the sum of its parts. Chomsky (1957)'s famous sentence "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously" illustrates this idea in terms of language. From limited rules, unpredictable outcomes emerge.

We can explore the role of systems in language education as well. Learning language requires acquiring both declarative and procedural knowledge. Building language skills requires interaction linked to a communicative purpose. Teachers can attempt to organize interaction and feedback by carefully designing a lesson, but the outcome depends on a range of unpredictable factors. As many teachers have experienced, when repeating the same lesson more than once, rarely do the same teachable moments emerge or are the same outcomes reached. Textbooks (and learning materials in general) offer unique examples of these design considerations as well. A *complex system* like an information gap might lead to a greater range of emergence due to its open nature and reliance on interaction. A *fixed system* like a gap-fill offers less opportunity for emergence due to its closed nature but still holds some potential for unpredictability i.e., when vocabulary choices are ambiguous. How this unpredictability is handled in the design process is essentially considering *second-order design problems*.

Salen and Zimmerman (2004) consider these design questions in terms of games, but practical considerations extend beyond. Design, whether it be a commercial music product like the QR-10 or learning materials like a textbook, needs to consider not only the parts of the system but also the potential outcome of interacting with those parts. We can design the system *directly* but experience only *indirectly*. Outcomes emerge greater than the sum of the parts of the system. With the range of our conception of design clarified, we can reflect on how design has been considered in the field of education.

Design and Education

Instructional Design

Although design has been used in the field of *language education*, there is a more general use of the word in the field of *education*. This history is covered by the historical reviews of Reiser (2001a, 2001b), An (2021), and Kang (2004). The history of instructional media and design (ID) spans over a century. Although the timeline is marked with developments in educational psychology, it is also marked by edu-tech trends and commercial investments (An, 2021; Kang, 2004). While the history of *instructional media* focuses on the use of technology for educational purposes, *instructional design* focuses on the problems of learning and performance related to instructional principles. However, Reiser (2001b) observed that "there is an obvious overlap between these two areas" (p. 64) as both have developed in parallel and in reaction to each other. Therefore, although the term *media* is used to refer to actual technology, *design* implications are inherent.

According to Reiser (2001a), ID began in the 1900s with school museums – functionally centers of *visual instruction* that utilized slide projectors. From 1908-1910 the Keystone View Company published *Visual Education*, a guide to visual media use in the classroom, and Rochester, NY adopted films for instructional use as a first in the U.S. In 1913 Thomas Edison declared textbooks would be obsolete due to the emergence of motion picture technology. From 1920-1930 radiobroadcasting and sound ushered in the *audio-visual instruction* movement. However, both *visual instruction* and *audio-visual instruction* movements failed to facilitate substantial changes in education, and commercial interests lost over $50 million. In the 1940s during World War II, military services and industry made use of audio-visual instruction. The U.S. Air Force produced 400 training films and 600 filmstrips from 1943-1945 with approximately 4 million showings. However, again, educational practices in schools were not greatly affected. In the 1950s, television channels with instructional programming started. This technological trend was accompanied by the *programmed instruction* movement. In the 1960s the Ford Foundation invested $170 million in educational closed-circuit television. Case studies among all grade levels in Washington, Maryland, a junior college in Chicago, Illinois, and a series of college courses at Pennsylvania State University utilized closed-circuit television as a medium of instruction. By 1963 the Ford Foundation had divested from educational closed-

circuit television to focus on public television exclusively. In the 1970s terms *educational technology* and *instructional technology* took hold along with over 40 different models for designing instruction. By the 1980s instruction design had still had little impact in public schools or higher education. Instructional improvement centers that were made from 1970-1980 were largely disbanded and on a downward trend. By 1983 computers were used for educational purposes in nearly 50% of elementary schools and over 75% of secondary schools in the U.S. In the 1990s computers were mostly used as an extension of traditional methods like drill and practice or teaching computer related skills like typing. From 1995 to 1998 higher education institutions utilizing asynchronous distance learning classes rose from 22% to 60%, and internet access in schools rose from 50% to 90% within the same period. However, yet again, these increased affordances garnered little uptake resulting in little actual use. Reiser (2001a) concluded that

> you are likely to note a recurrent pattern of expectations and out-comes. As new medium enters the educational scene, there is a great deal of initial interest … However, enthusiasm and interest eventually fade, and an examination reveals that the medium has had a minimal impact… (p. 61).

An (2001) similarly concluded that the history of ID "shows a recurrent pattern of enthusiasm and little effects on actual practice" (p. 13).

What is apparent in the history of ID is the overall whiplash pace of new trends, large investments, and quick divestments. This may be what Dewey warned about in 1915, with the claim that new movements in education can be seen as "at the worst transitory fads, and at the best merely improvements in certain details" (p. 4). Dewey further questioned waste in education blaming "the lack of unity in the aims of education, [and] the lack of coherence in its studies and methods" (p. 60). Dewey's century old reflections still reign true today.

Notably, however, despite the ebbs and flows of ID, some design ideas seem to have proliferated quietly throughout the last century especially in regard to systems. Although running parallel to emerging technology and commercial investments of the time, the idea of systems in education progressed with concepts like general systems theory and instructional systems design (Kang, 2004). Starting from the 1960s programmed instruction ran parallel to the investments and experimental take up of closed-circuit instruction, and a range of ideas were introduced

along with the concepts educational technology and instructional technology: system development, systematic instruction, and instructional system (Reiser, 2001b).

Cybernetics

Among these systems ideas, research in the education field has looked to cybernetics to help explain control systems and reflection in the learning process such as formative assessment, positive feedback, and procedural knowledge. Cybernetics was first introduced in *Cybernetics or the science of control and communication in the animal and the machin*e – first published in 1948 (Wiener, 1961). Cybernetics is concerned with problems of complexity and control in systems and "deviation from a stable state" in which negative feedback promotes stability and positive feedback undermines stability (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 350). A simple example of a cybernetic system (and feedback loops) is a temperature control system such as an air conditioner or heater (Wiener, 1961). This system includes an environment, a sensor, a comparator, and an activator. The *sensor*, in this case a thermometer, samples the environment and informs the *comparator*, the set temperature, which then decides how the *activator*, the cold or hot air system, should act. In the case of temperature control, a negative feedback loop works best because it is designed to return environment to the target temperature while a positive feedback loop is designed to move away from the target.

Admittedly, these ideas applied to education seem off-putting. For example, the automaticity of education comes to mind – a point Wiener (1961) ardently warned against. Ashby (1957) although similarly specifying cybernetics as focused on questions of co-ordination, regulation, and control, also proposed that *these questions* provide a "common language" with which to approach problems related to systems. The potential of cybernetics lies beyond machines and automaticity and among this common language.

Studies in the field of language education have emerged utilizing cybernetic concepts in terms of understanding formative assessment as a means of controlling a loss of meaning (Roos & Hamilton, 2005), the role of circularity in teaching and learning (Murray, 2006), positive feedback loops as a cognitive mechanism (Reigel, 2005), feedback in complex learning environments (Westera, 2013), second-order implications of skill acquisition (Scott & Bansal, 2014), and frameworks for e-learning management (Hilgarth, 2011). From this small sample, specific themes emerge:

1. A focus on feedback loops and stability

2. Second-order cybernetics: the ability of a sensor (or observer) to monitor itself

The first point borrows simple ideas like feedback loops in a temperature control system and uses this "common language" expand on language learning concepts. The second point explains the problem of self-monitoring in the skill acquisition process. Although we can easily reflect on knowledge stored as declarative knowledge (expressed explicitly), we have far more difficulty reflecting on the knowledge of skills and procedures (expressed procedurally). Although cybernetics may initially seem ridged and antithetical to the questions of education, its concepts offer unique perspectives on issues related to language learning.

Learning Design

ID grew out of the movements of behaviorist psychology and systems engineering based on developmental models used by the U.S. military in WWII. However, the term learning design (LD) has also entered the lexicon. "Reclaiming Instructional Design" (Merrill et al., 1966) gleams some light into the internal struggle within the ID field and a move towards a new approach. The authors claim that the field of ID has been too easily swayed by the whims of silver bullet ideas, and that "[education] and its related disciplines continue to flutter this way and that by every philosophical wind that blows" (p. 1). The authors lament the (then current) state of ID, and proposed signpost like directives that include understanding the learning experience, environments that support it, and utilizing verified learning strategies. They called for a more science-based paradigm by offering an anecdote from aviation. The discovery of principles such as lift, drag, and flight (the science) preceded the invention of an airplane capable of sustaining powered flight (the technology). Although instructional design is informed by principles of behaviorism (and then refined by cognitivism), lots of what has steered the field appears to come from emerging commercial technology not fundamental principles agreed upon within the field. This is well illustrated in the historical record of ID (An, 2021; Kang, 2004; Reiser, 2001a, 2001b).

Another article titled "Beyond Instructional Design: Making Learning Design a Reality" (Sims, 2006) seems to further summarize the movement away from ID simply enough, but reality appears more nuanced. Although LD, according to Donald et al. (2009), "documents and describes a learning activity in such a way that other teachers can understand it and use it in their own context" (p. 180), the overall theme of LD has been focused on e-learning and online

learning. Koper and Tattersall (2005) further frame this movement as a reaction to current e-learning tools' lack of pedagogical quality. Even the epistemological underpinnings of ID and LD (the conceptual understanding of knowledge) have been questioned as whether education is a "transfer of knowledge" (ID) or a "complex process between teachers, learners, and the context domain" (LD) (Sims, 2006, p. 1). Beyond this fuzzy discourse, the main focus of LD has been the Learning Design Frameworks that have grown out of a simple, concrete design problem: how to describe pedagogical styles within a pedagogical meta-model (Koper & Tattersall, 2005).

This meta-model in its current form describes the roles, activities, learning environment, and methods like the notation of a stage play. These descriptive elements have also been referred to as "educational notation" and compared to musical notation (Dalziel et al., 2016). Through this notation-like approach, a "toolkit" around the concept of learning activity has emerged to define *task* (type, technique, interaction, roles, resources, tools, assessment, sequence), *context* (aims, learning outcomes, pre-requisites, skills, subject, environment, time, difficulty), and *learning and teaching approaches* (associative, cognitive, situative) (Conole & Fill, 2005).

In practice utilizing LD requires coding in a learning specification language like the now Instructional Management System (IMS) adopted Educational Modelling Language (EML) and then running the encoded file in a player (Westera et al., 2005). These innovative ideas both conceptually and practically seem key to summarize, record, and distribute lessons in a robust and accurate way. As Dalziel et al. (2016) summarize "[LD's] ultimate goal … is not just representation for representation's sake, it is to help educators to describe, share and adapt effective teaching and learning activities – that is, designing for learning" (p. 22). However, the goals of making design explicit and easily reflected upon by designers and others while also allowing for refinement and sharing, Koper and Tattersall (2005) admitted, is "still a future perspective" (p. 3). Cameron (2017) helps cement this fact by showing that recent policy has already started to reference LD, yet little of what LD offers seems to be readily applied in praxis – in this case, a sample of 6 Australian universities.

There should be a further note of caution in regard to LD and the role of IMS Global Learning Consortium in LD development especially in light of the tumultuous timeline of ID. IMS is a non-profit organization (IMS Global, 2003). This, however, is not always a good indicator of incentives or intentions as Au and Ferrare (2014) illustrated in their case study of charter school reform in Washington state. IMS maintains non-profit status, but of the 18 board

of directors, 7 hold positions at for-profit institutions. Additionally, some Contributing Members, members who have voting privileges, are not only for-profit institutions but private for-profit universities or holdings companies for such universities. Private for-profit universities frequently make headlines for federal investigations, scams, false promises, and pay outs to students ordered by federal agencies. American Military University (AMU), an online-learning university system of private for-profit universities under the American Public University System (APUS), was ordered to pay $270,000 by the Attorney General who found AMU in violation of Massachusetts law (Office of Attorney General Maura Healey, 2018). University of Phoenix (UoPX), a private for-profit university, was ordered by the FTC to pay $50 million in refund checks and $141 million in canceled balances (Federal Trade Commission, 2021a). Additionally, UoPX and APUS, are both named in an FTC Notice of Penalty Offenses list, which although not directly incriminating, does include possible offenders put "on notice." This list also named IMS Global Affiliate Members, non-voting members, Full Sail University and Walden University (Federal Trade Commission, 2021b).

LD, despite its innovative and unique approach to education's problems, does not seem to stray far from ID in terms of trajectory. LD even drags edu-tech to the precipice of new trends like data collection and digital rights management in a market fraught with profit driven motives. ID and LD both have a trove of innovative ideas, but both have failed to apply substantively design ideas in the classroom.

Methods

Despite the use of the word *design* in the education field for over a century, fundamental design questions seem to have been overlooked. This point is reiterated as James Paul Gee has long shown: Design in good games utilize learning principles not often found in classrooms. Gee (2013) made these ideas more concise by suggesting that good learning is "situated embodied problem-focused well-designed and well-mentored learning" (p. 12). Some approaches to language education have developed along similar lines – TBLT notably (Vegel, 2019). However, many methods seem to have developed largely by reactionary turns. Like the long historical significance of ID, methods have played an integral role in the language education field and are well situated in teacher training. It is thus important to understand where design starts, method ends, and how these ideas function together if at all.

To approach an understanding of method, it first needs to be situated among the milieu of similar terminology. Anthony (1963) offered hierarchal categories to differentiate approach, method, and technique. *Approach* refers to the underlying principles guiding teaching and learning (behavioral science, cognitive science, psycholinguistics, sociocultural theory). *Method* refers to the plan to carry out language teaching and learning (the set of procedures or processes). *Technique* refers to the actual elements of implementation (the activities or exercises).

Design, however, is more elusive. Although the term is used in education (instructional design, learning design, material design), a clear, narrow definition is lacking and even usage in language education reference books lends more its general meaning in terms of ID or LD. Richards and Rodgers (1986) offered some insight into the use of design in language education as they explored the gap between *approach* (values) and *method* (plan/procedure) suggesting the need to develop an "instructional system." For them, considering design meant considering objectives, syllabus, learning tasks, learners, teachers, and instructional materials. Great lengths were taken to explain these six elements, but little attention was given to the concept of system. Even their critique of Anthony (1963)'s description of approach, method, and technique with their own take, "method as approach, design, and procedure" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 28), did little to help the ambiguity. Design, defined by Richards and Rodgers (1986), was not considered a value (approach) in and of itself; it was primarily considered a tool of analysis to bridge the gap between approach and method, and further left an ill-defined "instructional system." Even though design should be concerned with the problems of interaction and emergence, it appears again that little attention has been given to defining it in those terms.

However, other clues about the role of design in language education can be found by looking further into the past. For centuries even though design was not likely a serious concern in education, it seemed to be on the tip of the tongue of educators and theorists. Celce-Murcia (2013) surveyed language teaching methods from pre-20th to the 21st century. One notable case comes from the 19th Century, when von Humboldt, a German philosopher-scientist, argued that "A language cannot be taught. One can only create conditions for learning to take place" (p. 2). von Humboldt's use of "create" and "conditions" suggests an understanding of designed learning opportunities – a nod to second-order design problems.

Celce-Murcia (2013) further examined methods by observing that methodological trends have long been reactionary emphasizing that these trends are easily misunderstood without a

clear historical perspective. Three reasons are proposed to explain the state of methods in language education:

1. Methods are easily sellable and thus profitable.
2. Methods do hold a place in education but only in ideal conditions.
3. Much of the field has been bouncing between a use-analysis dichotomy.

Celce-Murcia (2013)'s first point is a call to skepticism. A movement to post-methods explains this well. Dale's Cone or *Dale's Cone of Experience* also well illustrates similarly how damaging inflated silver bullet ideas can be. Disambiguating the complex web of misinformation related to Dale's Cone has unfortunately become an important area of study. Dale's Cone is a pyramid shaped chart introduced by Dale (1946). It presented 11 learning experiences afforded to learners of the time (e.g., motion pictures, educational television, exhibits). Dale (1970) clarified the cone as "only a model," "a visual analogy," and one that "does not bear an exact and detailed relationship to the complex elements it represents" (p. 98). Despite this clarification, the cone was misread and erroneously *conflated* with ideas of retention and learning efficacy – ideas that were ostensibly generalized support of popular ID trends (Subramony et al., 2014a). Unsubstantiated percentages were applied to each learning experience (Letrud & Hernes, 2018). The cone was then *corrupted* with the creation and publication of different versions and adaptations of the conflated cone, again unsubstantiated (Dwyer, 2010; Subramony, et al., 2014a). Since the 1970s investigative and analytical work has focused on illuminating the dubious and falsified nature of the conflated and corrupted cones. However, these cones continue to disseminate at large (Subramony et al., 2014b). These cones can be found referenced uncritically on public university websites and in recent peer-reviewed academic publications referencing Edgar Dale despite the now well-established historical record. This is an alarming fact that echoes a need for skepticism and illuminates a surprising lack of due diligence in the field of education.

Celce-Murica (2013)'s second and third points consider the ideal conditions necessary to implement methods and the use-analysis dichotomy that seems to have guided reactionary trends. Kumaravadivelu (2006) touched on these two issues by looking at past methods and towards post-methods. Most prominent in the timeline of methods to post-methods is the turn to a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in reaction to the Audiolingual method. Despite

CLT's promise to be a "principled response" to traditional approaches, Kumaravadivelu (2006) summarized a range of critiques that questioned its authenticity, acceptability, and adaptability as a viable method. These critiques emphasized CLT's inability to guarantee authentic communication, its lack of divergence from past methods, and its inability to be widely adapted across teaching contexts respectively.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) summarized the post-method movement as "not an alternative method but an alternative to method" (p. 67). Post-methods grew from a perceived need to understand the lack of neutrality of methods (Pennycook, 1989) as well as reject the infatuation with finding the best method (Prabhu, 1990). Work towards a post-methods approach has thus led to alternative frameworks. One convincing contribution is the production of three operating principles of pedagogy: particularity, practicality, and possibility (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). *Particularity* considers the context and location. *Practicality* considers the theory to practice loop. *Possibility* considers the role of identity formation. Unsurprisingly, these ideas bode well with Gee (2013)'s refined principles of good learning: "situated embodied problem-focused well-designed and well-mentored learning" (p. 12):

- Meeting the needs of *particularity* requires education that is *well-mentored*.
- Meeting the needs of *practicality* requires education that is *well-designed*.
- Meeting the needs of *possibility* requires education that is *situated and embodied and problem-focused*.

Although this is a simple and generalizable synthesis, it is important to note the divergence in how these ideas were attained, consider why there is cohesion, and frame practical considerations. Kumaravadivelu (2001) approached these ideas "in the search of an alternative organizing principle" (p. 557) while Gee (2013) approached these ideas by identifying learning principles inherent in good games. In other words, despite one approach developing through the considerations of a problematic framework in language learning and the other through the analysis of how good games are designed, both come to similar conclusions about good education.

This convergence of ideas highlights the popularity of TBLT in post-methods literature. TBLT is a method blurring approach that embraces situated and problem-focused learning. Although the lack of clear definition of task has been noted (Willis & Willis, 2007), a basic if not

robust concept of task has been accomplished (Ellis, 2009; Nunan, 2004), one that falls well in line with learning principles utilized in good games (Vegel, 2019). The general concept of TBLT embraces the idea of situated learning as a value (approach). Even a basic definition of task emphasizes co-construction, negotiation of form and function relationships, and accomplishing locally determined goals (Ellis, 2009). However, designing this kind of learning opportunity requires an understanding of emergence more so than a traditional classroom lesson would.

Kumaravadivelu (2001)'s words reign true here: "Admirable intentions need to be translated into attainable goals, which, in turn, need to be supported by actionable plans" (p. 76). TBLT remains flexible because it does not manifest a single method, but this is a double edge sword that keeps TBLT somewhat esoteric. Looking at a way forward, following past trends of reductionism and more minutely defined definitions and relying on edu-tech trends to create substantive change in education seems unreasonable; moving forward with ideas that synthesize well from post-methods and learning principles found in good games, especially those with attainable goals and actionable plans, does seem reasonable.

Beyond the Winds of Change: Emerging from Under the Carpet

Strategic Interaction

The work done with Strategic Interaction (SI) seems to provide potential in terms of attainable goals and actional plans as well as practical design ideas. SI was introduced by Di Pietro (1987) through a rejection of language as a "script-based, disembodied, information-transfer process" (Danesi, 1993, p. 481). The basis for this approach is situated in the 18th century philosophy of Giambattista Vico. This philosophy established the importance of *rhetoric* and rejected the "old spectator epistemology that resulted in 'receptor' classrooms" (Perkinson, 1976, p. 756). *Dialogue* is established as a significant part of Vico's philosophy because of the concept of *modification*, only through which one can refine, change, and continually improve. SI thus grew out of the idea that learning needs to involve doing and reflecting. Danesi (1993) described an SI approach as:

> The use of the student's innate tendency literally 'to imagine' what to do in a given situation implies allowing learners to come up with the crucial concepts involved in typical social scenarios so that they can be reformulated – or reconceptualized – in terms of the target language. (p. 484)

Danesi (1993) noted the importance of situations and scenarios for discursive engagement. Building a scenario requires asking question like "*who* says *what* to *whom*; *where* and *when* it is said; and *how* and *why* it is said" (p. 483). Answering these questions helps create setting, message content, participant roles, and goals. Scenarios in SI are supported by role cards used throughout 4 stages. Role cards include a title, roles, topics, and notions/functions (speech acts) as well as robust role descriptions that clarify each interlocutors' goals for the scenario.

SI puts scenarios and roles to use in stages:

- *Pre-class Preparation*: The teacher selects or creates appropriate scenarios and prepares role cards to describe them.
- *Phase 1 (Rehearsal)*: The students form groups and prepare agendas to fulfill the roles assigned to them. The teacher acts as advisor and guide to student groups as needed.
- *Phase 2 (Performance)*: The students perform their roles with the support of their respective groups while the teacher and the remainder of the class look on.
- *Phase 3 (Debriefing)*: The teacher leads the entire class in a discussion of the student's performance. (p. 487)

The rehearsal stage is for learners to imagine and work through how the scenario can be performed. After preparation and deliberation, the performance phase stresses fluency and the use of already acquired knowledge and skills. After the performance phase, learners reanalyze the scenario and performance as a form of debriefing (Danesi, 1993). This phase considers Vico's concept of modification; learners reflect on and modify their performance.

Weber State University published 150 scenarios with an SI approach following the same scenario/role style mentioned above. One example is adapted:

- Roles: parent/child
- Topics: travel, weather, clothing
- Notations/Functions (speech acts): expressing needs, convincing
- Role A: You need to pack for a trip to France. You want your parents' help, but you also know they usually packs too much, which you want to avoid to leave room for souvenirs.

- Role B: You just got information about the weather report in France. It will be an unreasonably cold season you want to convince your child to bring enough warm clothes. (Weber State University, n.d.)

Limitations are an important part of what makes role cards work. First, there is the limitation of role. Without clear descriptions, roles would be non-functional. The descriptions introduce conflict that needs to be resolved while also limiting the scope of the scenario. Another important part of scenario is the focused speech acts that, although limiting how the conflict is approached and handled, creates a way to simulate a real-world situation. Limitations can be seen in other adapted examples as well (notice the conflict inherent in each):

- Scenario: Students on the wrong bus vs. A bus driver who needs to stick to his schedule
  Speech acts: Explaining, apologizing, asking, refusing, submitting
- Scenario: Friends planning a visit to the zoo vs. One friend wants to see a movie
  Speech acts: Convincing, describing (Weber State University, n.d.)

SI provides not only potential for practical in-class use in the form of actional plans (scenario/role) but also attainable goals (via reasonable means) in terms of the rehearsal, performance, and debriefing phases. Danesi (1993) appropriately appraised SI as allowing "the contents to *emerge* from the learner" (p. 489). By playing within the parts of the system different kinds of solutions can emerge.

Extending the Definition of System

So far, we have framed design in terms of system and second-order design problems: what emerges when we interact with the parts of a system. However, we have not yet expanded the concept of system to include the role of limitations clearly. In terms of language education, learners are tasked with not just learning the forms of language but also the functions and more specifically how both are situated in real-world scenarios. Practicing real-world scenarios within a system of limitations is thus a simulation.

According to Salen and Zimmerman (2004), "a simulation arises from the operation of a system in which every element contributes in an integrated way to the larger representation" (p. 439). This definition establishes simulations as a complex system – one that is representational. Representational proceduralism requires limitations for two reasons:

1. Simulations are abstractions in that "a simulation does not attempt to simulate every aspect of its referent, but instead only focuses on those elements necessary" (p. 439)

2. Simulations are purposefully limited as "even a supposedly 'realistic' simulation only depicts a tiny slice of any real world or imagined phenomenon" (p. 440)

Again, this discussion is in terms of game design, but the analysis is salient in terms of understanding education as a "purposeful learning process" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2004, p. 17). SI is a convincing approach because it involves simulations of real-life scenarios. There are meaningful choices to be made because of (not in spite of) the limitations. The alternative, no limitations, would result in learners struggling with available options and stumbling to proceed. In terms of design, simulations are designed systems of interaction and abstraction that are inherently aligned with the goals of language education.

Games and Education

Games, as Salen and Zimmerman (2004) define them, are "system[s] in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome" (p. 80) which situates them in the considerations of design. The use of games for educational purposes is not a particularly new phenomenon starting with military strategy games like *Chaturanga*, an ancestor of chess, and *Kriegsspiel,* a map-based board game – both popularized in the 18th and 19th centuries respectively (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005). The use of electronic, commercial games in education began in the 1970s with the Learning Company producing games like *Oregon Trail* and *Lemonade Stand.* However, the development of these kinds of games peaked in the 1990s (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005). If you were in primary school in the 1990s like me, you may recall playing the Learning Company developed Super Solvers games like *Treasure Mountain* and *Treasure Cove*. However, the fate of commercial education games unfortunately parallels the history of ID – initial investment followed by near abandonment. The decade between 1990-2000 saw education game related revenue drop nearly 50% (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005). Despite this dramatic divestment, the research field of games and education saw a marked increase from 2001-2010 (Hwang & Wu, 2012) and a relatively stable increase between 2014-2019 (Benini & Thomas, 2021).

Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2005) completed a detailed review of the field of games and education. This is a broad field distributed across disciplines. This multidisciplinary nature has resulted in the proliferation of many unique ideas. The challenge now is achieving consensus. The terms digital game-based learning (DGBL), game-based learning (GBL), game-based language teaching (GBLT), and edutainment are all used to describe the various facets of the field. Furthermore, a large focus of game-based research is bifurcated between:

1. The *use* of games for education purposes (both electronic and analog games).
2. Exploring the design elements and learning principles inherent in good games as pedagogical *inspiration.*

The *use* side of the field has focused on games' learning potential whether they be digital or analog and applying that potential in praxis. Here games are considered valuable because of the motivational affect and the situated, active learning opportunities they offer learners. In terms of language education specifically, games offer a way for learners to encounter novel language, cooperate towards shared goals, and use context specific language. This is seen in the use of massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) to promote interaction (Peterson, 2012; Bytheway, 2015), games that include repetitive game elements and particular vocabulary like a baseball game (deHann, 2005) or music game (deHann, Reed, & Kuwada, 2010), the use of role-playing board games to promote interaction and reflection (York, 2020), or the use of various games to promote language and literacy both with and around games (deHann, 2019; York, Poole, & deHann, 2021). Although Benini and Thomas (2021) identified a number of empirical studies in the field of game-based learning research, they find the research still limited and lacking rigorous methodology. deHann (2021) critiqued the current state of the field in similar terms highlighting the lack of practical implementation and praxis focus calling for a "pedagogy-first approach with games" (p. 270).

The *inspiration* side has looked at the design elements and learning principles inherent in good games. This has been the focus of Gee (2003, 2004, 2013). Gee (2013) explains that "good video games have design features that are particularly relevant to language learning" (p. 19). By playing "good" games like *Sim City*, *Civilization*, *Deus Ex*, *Half-Life*, and *Metal Gear Solid*, Gee (2003) identified 36 learning principles found in games (a small sample of which follows):

- Psychosocial Moratorium Principle: a low-risk practice space

- Concentrated Sample Principle: tasks concentrated in early stages

- Bottom-up Basic Skills Principle: basic skills learned in context

- Practice Principle: lots of practice

- Active, Critical Learning Principle: active, critical

- Committed Learning Principle: time, engagement, commitment

- Incremental Principle: builds towards more complexity

- Probing Principle: form a hypothesis and test it

The first level of "Super Mario Bros." (released by Nintendo in 1983) is a good case study to explore how these principles support the acquisition of skills and skill utilities in-game and further why such an analysis has been seen as worthwhile in general.

In 1-1, the introductory quasi-tutorial first level of "Super Mario Bros.," the player is presented with a *low-risk practice space*. If the player fails, they lose very little progress. This initial area acts as *a small sample* of skills and skill utilities needed to progress (Skill: jump; Jump utility: avoid enemy, eliminate enemy, pass barriers, traverse gap, direct shell). These skills are acquired *bottom-up*. Although this first level is ostensibly a tutorial, nothing is explained explicitly in-game; instead, players are afforded *lots of practice*. The player must *actively learn and critically test* skills and skill utilities if to progress past even the first 10% of the level. Progressing through the level, skills become more challenging to utilize as the level builds in *incremental complexity* (gaps: wider, barriers: higher, enemies: more concentrated and complex). The player is given plenty of *time to commit and engage* in the environment (400 s/6.6 min) through which they can *form and test hypotheses* (e.g., If I can jump, can the "question block" be hit and utilized? If I can jump and move up (an early skill), can I crouch and move down a tube (a later skill)?). A rough analysis identifies at least eight learning principles (17 instances), three skills, and six skill utilities. This deconstruction does not propose that *Super Mario Bros.* is a replacement for good teaching or even that utilizing the game in a classroom would be pedagogically sound. This deconstruction simply shows why the *inspiration* side of the field has found game design so convincing. Game design takes active and situated learning seriously.

Similar to deHann (2021)'s critiques, Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2005) sums up both sides of the field and suggests a way forward:

> … games should challenge educational practices while seeking the realization of realistic educational scenarios. This balance is delicate, but also critical if computer games are to have a real impact and justification in educational efforts. Without the challenge of current practice … games risk becoming of little interest to anyone; trapped in the caricature of edutainment, pointing educators back in time instead of forward (p. 11)

Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2005) is particularly concerned with the balance between the two broad areas of focus (use and inspiration). Although work has been done to identify the learning potential in games and the reasons some games are well designed learning systems, the actual use of games in education aside from experimental studies remains anemic. A need for more wide scale acceptance and interest is apparent in this still emerging field.

Games, Play, and Fun

Above we looked at the field of games in education. Games were defined as systems, and like SI, simulations that rely on limitations. Regardless of whether your interest in games (in terms of education) resides in the *use* or *inspiration* side of the field (or naturally somewhere in between), an understanding of how *play* and *fun* are related to systems, simulations, and games is required. In simple terms, why bother interacting with the parts of a system or simulation?

Although Salen and Zimmerman (2004) do not define games in terms of, fun is fundamental to games, and in fact, fun and play are inextricably connected. When we decide to play a game (or interact with a system or within a simulation), we enter a *magic circle* where we accept the rules and limitations taking on what is called a *lusory attitude*. We can then play within the limitations as the game was designed. Bogost (2016) in the book *Play Anything* offers a unique understanding of these concepts:

> We experience games by 'playing' them, and play is an activity we tend to associate with freedom, with being able to do whatever we want. This view of play stems from conditioning ourselves to see play as the opposite of work … [However,] … games and play offer the opposite: an invitation to do only what the system allows, for no reason other than the fact that it was designed that way. Games are built out of constraints, and play arises from limitations (p. 138).

For Bogost (2016) *play* is not freedom but rather acting within playgrounds of limitations, and *fun* is not an escape from reality but rather "manipulating a familiar situation in a new way" (p.

79). In short, utilizing games in education is not a shortcut or a cheat; it is a deliberative design

choice that involves organizing learning opportunities through designed conflict and interaction,

by setting limitations, and approaching problems in novel ways.

Practical Considerations

Although design in education has been, in simple terms, imprecise, I hope it is now clear that

design is concerned with concrete problems and practical solutions: the design of systems,

simulations, and emergence. These ideas fall well in-line with the goals of education. Among the

ideas covered throughout this review, here are some practical considerations:

- *Design learning (in design terms)*: Even though textbooks may be considered old
  technology, they still require careful design considerations. Avoid techniques that have
  questionable second-order design. For example, instead of directing students to "Pretend
  you don't understand and ask for clarification" (or similar instructions with vague
  limitations), design the task right. Create roles and scenarios. Describe situations. Design
  tasks that require clarification *by design*. A coin flip can be used to randomly designate
  "clarification roles." Minimal pairs or nonsense words can be used to practice
  clarification authentically and genuinely.

- *Design learning opportunities around a simple mantra*: "situated embodied problem-
  focused well-designed and well-mentored learning" (Gee, 2013, p. 12). TBLT and SI are
  both good places to start as both generally offer clear approach and technique. Teaching
  with games also offers active and situated learning opportunities that are already well
  designed.

- *Design playgrounds of limitations.* Simulations rely on limitations and abstractions. If
  education is a "purposeful learning process" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2004, p. 17), the
  procedural representation afforded by simulation is key. Set limitations and allow
  learners to test the limits and explore solutions freely. Give learners lots of feedback and
  practice in stages. SI offers techniques in stages or phases and TBLT in task repetition.

- *Use games in your classes.* The *Ludic Language Pedagogy* project (LLP) is a great
  resource on this topic and offers detailed techniques and case studies. Role-playing games
  are well-designed simulations that utilize roles and abstractions to create playgrounds of
  limitations. Playing both with and around games (researching, playing, reflecting, and

comparing) also introduces learners to a wider knowledge base that includes purposeful and authentic engagement in a language community.

Conclusion

Design is not an easy topic to review. It is, in common language, simplified, bound with negative associations, and conflated with the philosophy of aesthetics obfuscating its concrete practicality. While the fundamentals of design are not esoteric (in fact very accessible), design ideas in education have long been trapped in the whirlwind of edu-tech trends and disregarded by the microscope of reductionist research (despite falling well in-line with the goals of education). However, design concepts like systems, simulations, and emergence have proliferated in cybernetics, new and old ideas in language education like SI and TBLT, and in the emerging fields of games and education. Furthermore, limitations and especially the concept of *playgrounds of limitations* help us reframe our common conceptions of *play* and *fun* (beyond simply the opposite of work). The potential of design literacy seems essential for educators whose jobs are predicated on their ability to design learning opportunities. This look at the role of design in education hopefully illuminates how accessible and practical design ideas are, inspires creativity and innovation among educators, and promotes criticality and skepticism towards future edu-tech trends.

BIO DATA

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